

## MR. PIKE AND THE "WESTMINSTER REVIEW."

*To the Editor of the "Anthropological Review."*

SIR,—It is not without great diffidence that I ask you to find a place in a scientific review for some remarks upon a production which is not only not scientific but which is not even grammatical. And I only ask this favour at the instigation of my friends, who seem to think, one and all, that gross ignorance and gross want of good faith in a critic should not be allowed to pass unnoticed; and so, as the subject is anthropological, I appeal to you.

I do not, however, ask you to let me give a complete statement of my whole case. If I can show that the writer of a critique on the "English and their Origin," which appeared in October, 1866, in the *Westminster Review*, is not competent to write on that or any other subject, I shall, perhaps, have done enough for my present purpose. And if I can further show that this critic is no more scrupulous in his assertion than he is correct in his grammar, happy in his metaphors, or well read in English literature, I shall have committed what may perhaps be considered a cruelty. But I am glad to say that I can do all this, and yet show mercy in abundance. I shall select for the gibbet one or two specimens of bad grammar, one or two of self-contradictory metaphors, one or two of general ignorance, and one or two of deliberate misrepresentation, and I shall then leave the critic to the tranquil enjoyment of the rest.

Of bad grammar I ought perhaps, in fairness, to select specimens, which show that the critic appears to have adopted a system of compensation. If he makes a blunder of a given kind in one place he sets it right by making the converse blunder when he has an opportunity in another place. The system is not original, because its working may be observed in the very lowest classes, who compensate the blunder "you was" by the blunder "I were," who, if they have their 'ats on their 'eads have been known to carry ropes of "honions" on their "harns." Of this principle, however, the Westminster reviewer tells us that "the *picture* of the forefathers whose claims Mr. Pike advocates *are*, to say the least of it, not more attractive;" and further on, that "such *has been the positive circumstances* of the English people from the times of Edward the Confessor."

I do not know what is intended to serve as a compensation to *Belgorum*, which the critic gives as the genitive case of *Belgæ*. Perhaps it is this elegant sentence: "The Teutonic race in Germany *has*, in

every department, closely rivalled, and in some actually eclipsed, *their* Anglo-Saxon competitors." Perhaps it is the still more elegant sentence which follows: "The truth is, that within the brief period of German literature, the celebrity of German poets of the second and third order is probably far greater all over Europe than that of more than four or five of all the poets who have illuminated the whole four centuries of literary effort in England."

I confess myself unable to interpret the last quoted passage, which appears to me to be simply nonsense. I suspect, however, that the critic wishes to assert this proposition; every one of the second and third rate poets of Germany has a higher reputation than any of the first rate English poets, except four or five. Perhaps he thought this statement would not look well in grammatical English.

I shall say but little more about my critic's grammatical blunders, because, numerous as they are, they are nothing to his other absurdities. I have only to remark that he lays claim to the title of — philologist! He is quite ignorant that the leading philologists are already giving up the belief in language as an index to race, and falls foul of me because I do likewise. This, perhaps, is not much; but to discover a philologist who has no notion of grammar is better fun than to see a bridegroom of ninety, a quack doctor dying of the disease for which he advertises a specific, or a blind man leading not the blind but the quick-sighted.

Except in this same review I do not believe that anything equal in absurdity to the subjoined passage has been written since the days when Mr. Robert Montgomery announced that

"The soul, aspiring, pants its source to mount,  
As streams meander level with their fount."

The critic appears to differ from Mr. Robert Montgomery only in possessing the pompous wordiness of Dr. Nares:—

"The result is a simulation of logical methods all the more dangerous for its seductive garb; an ostentatious parade of valueless and unverified occurrences, the mere pallid skeletons of cautiously collected and indisputable phenomena; in fine, the earliest of generalisations, wholly destitute of contrary instances, exclusion of possible causes, and allowance for the plurality of causation. The old vices of ancient logicians are repeated in the dress of the most modern improvements; and unless a new Bacon arise, or the warning voice of criticism is listened to betimes, a modern *Dunciad* will be ushered in, more irremediable because more delusive and phantasmagoric, than any of old."

The critic tells us elsewhere that the Germans "can hardly use their marvellous language without handling some suggestive metaphor, or combination of imagery, or luminous trope." The Germans

may well pray to be saved from their friends. This critic's tropes are so luminous that they quite put out our mental eyes ; his imagery is so combined that it is not the likeness of anything in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth ; his metaphors are most unquestionably suggestive—of Bedlam ; indeed, a few more such articles as this on "The English and their Origin," would entitle the *Westminster Review* to set itself up as a "Comic Quarterly," with its own Special "Colwell Hatchney" Correspondent.

To begin with the first metaphor in the sublime passage above quoted : a simulation is made more dangerous by having a seductive garb. I have heard of butter upon bacon, of a light hidden under a bushel ; but these are nothing to a simulation hidden under a garb. How can a simulation be a simulation when it is concealed, or even partially concealed ? If we could see a wolf in sheep's clothing we should see a good instance of simulation ; but if the wolf thought proper to clap on a peacock's tail, the illusion would at once be destroyed. But perhaps the greatest beauty of my critic's metaphor is that he never tells what the garb is. I suspect if he had any definite idea at all, it was that the simulation and the garb were identical ; but in order to impress us with his eloquence, he went on to assert that his simulation was more dangerous than itself, simply because it was itself and nothing else.

Not less absurd is the metaphor which closely follows the garb of a simulation of methods. Valueless and unverified occurrences are the pallid skeletons of cautiously collected and indisputable phenomena. But what sort of a thing is a pallid skeleton ? *Pallid* is an epithet applied to the complexion ; but where is the complexion when there is no skin ? and how, on earth, can an unverified occurrence be the skeleton, pallid or otherwise, of an indisputable phenomenon ? A skeleton is that which underlies the flesh, and before the skeleton can be reached the flesh must in some way be got rid of. If it were suspected that a certain bony structure supported certain soft tissues, the only way of testing the truth of the suspicion would be to tear away the flesh, and the thing verified would be the existence of the skeleton itself. If, then, there is any connection at all between an indisputable phenomenon, a skeleton, and an unverified occurrence, it is the indisputable phenomenon which is the skeleton of the unverified occurrence, and not the unverified occurrence which is the skeleton of the indisputable phenomenon. For my own part I do not quite see how any occurrence can deserve the name and be unverified at the same time. If any one were to tell me that a meteor, weighing forty pounds, struck him in the eye and inflicted no more injury than a raw beefsteak would counteract, I should consider not

that there had been an unverified occurrence, but that there had been no such occurrence at all. To use the expression "unverified occurrence" is to admit that some event has happened, and yet to express a doubt whether it ever happened or not.

"The old vices of ancient logicians," it will be remarked, are "repeated in the dress of the most modern improvements." I know neither what particular vices are referred to, nor what is the dress. But my critic is extremely liberal in the distribution of superfluous clothing. He has elsewhere bestowed a "guise" upon me for which I am very much obliged to him; and I do not doubt that he had the very best intentions when he thus carefully wrapped up "the old vices of ancient logicians."

But the end of this passage is the very climax of absurdity. Unless a new Bacon arise, or we listen to the warning voice of the critic, we shall have a new *Dunciad*. It is a great thing to know that if we cannot get a new Bacon, the critic in the *Westminster Review* will do as well; but it is a still greater thing to know that if we cannot have another Bacon we are certain of another Pope. The Reviewer does not appear to be of this opinion. He seems to think that the advent of a new Pope would be about the greatest evil that could befall him. Perhaps this is not to be wondered at, as Pope was harder upon dull and ignorant critics than any writer who preceded or succeeded him, and it was in the *Dunciad* that he displayed his severity. But what is the meaning of a *Dunciad* "more delusive and phantasmagoric than any of old?" How many *Dunciads* have there been? I am almost ashamed to confess my ignorance, but I am acquainted with only one *Dunciad*, and that Pope's, which is neither delusive nor phantasmagoric, but full of the hardest hits, in downright good English, that ever I met with. May I be permitted to recommend this poem to the notice of the critic? Perhaps he will repay me for the treat thus provided for him by telling me where I can find any more old *Dunciads*, and especially those which are delusive and phantasmagoric; perhaps, too, he will add to the favour, by stating precisely what he understands by a *Dunciad* that is irremediable.

I suspect he has some vague idea that a *Dunciad* is not a poem, but a collection of dunces; if so, what harm could possibly be done by dunces not real but phantasmagoric?

As I am now on the subject of the *Dunciad*, I may perhaps be permitted to say that I have no quarrel with any of my critics except the Westminster Reviewer. I considered myself ill-used by two others out of about a score; but the opportunity of setting myself right was most courteously granted to me by the editor of one paper in which I had been misrepresented; and the other critic, who did

not adhere to facts, received such a punishment at the hands of Mr. G. W. Cox as I should have been unable to administer myself ; and if I were to say another word on the subject I should be justly accused of hitting a man who is down.

But to return to the Westminster Reviewer. He announces that I have accused the Germans of "incapacity to blush at the most outrageous violation of decency and comeliness." Not only have I made no such accusation, but I have no idea what a "violation of comeliness" can be. It looks like rape ; but why a rape should be committed upon the abstract term "comeliness" rather than upon a girl that is comely, and what the act would be like, I no more know than I know what could have put such an expression into the critic's head. There is not a word about rape in my book. But to quote from the *Dunciad* :—

"In clouded majesty here Dulness shone."

And as the reviewer would, without doubt, like to know still more about the *Dunciad*, here is another passage which is specially applicable to him :—

"Ductile Dulness new meanders takes."

And these meanders are of a most extraordinary character, as will be seen in the following remarkable sentence :—

"The most accomplished of positivists does not owe his power and skill to having learnt to despise or underrate the mysteries of life and being ; but having travelled to the farthest limits of human experience, he finds the desert lengthening as he goes, and almost distraught by the ineffable revelation, he comes back a more sombre man, prepared to work out his little day in finding out such narrow truths as alone lie within his ken, and doing such beneficent works as best promote the happiness of man."

It seems, according to this, that it is when man is distraught that he does "such beneficent works as best promote the happiness of man." If so, the sooner the earth is converted into one vast lunatic asylum the better. But first of all it seems we must have an *ineffable* revelation. As the revelation is ineffable, it is rather hard to see in what way it can be made, and, of course, no man can tell another what it is. This is, however, the less to be regretted, as it appears that the sombre man knows less after the revelation than he knew before, and they are but "narrow truths which lie within his ken." But the way of getting at this revelation must be excessively unpleasant, because it appears to be necessary either to stand still and move on at the same time, or to move in two different directions at once. The unfortunate positivist having reached the farthest limits, still goes on, and finds the desert lengthening as he goes. The rack was nothing

to this process of infinite stretching which is too suggestive of nightmare to be dwelt upon any longer.

So much for the critic's competence ; now for his good faith. He says, "Not to linger at present over the special instances of weak and fallacious reasoning with which Mr. Pike's book abounds, the sum of its shortcomings may be conveniently gathered up in the allegation that Mr. Pike ignores from first to last the nature and strength of his opponent's case." The word "allegation" is, perhaps, better chosen than any other in the review ; it is a term which may without impropriety be applied to any breach of the ninth commandment. The state of the case is simply this:—I have devoted a whole chapter to the consideration of the historical evidence, and the critic's "allegation," if it means anything, means that this particular chapter is not to be found in my book. In confirmation of what I assert, I need only refer to No. 34 of the *Fortnightly Review*, in which there is an excellent *résumé* by Mr. G. W. Cox of the chapter in question. It is the Westminster Reviewer who has from first to last ignored one of the most important portions of my book, not I who have ignored the case of my adversaries.

I cannot quote a chapter in a letter ; but it fortunately happens that I can expose another of the critic's "allegations" in very few words. He gives his readers to understand that in my book will be found no "exclusion of possible causes," no "allowance for the plurality of causation." The absurdity of using these two expressions will be obvious to every logician. It is, however, true ; and the critic may have meant to say, not only that a given effect may possibly be produced by one cause, possibly by another, but that some effects are produced by the conjunct action of several causes. Having now assumed that the reviewer really had more than one meaning in his double-barrelled accusation, and having allowed the accusation the widest possible range, I shall demonstrate its accuracy by a very short passage from my book :—

"But let us not too hastily rush to a conclusion. Let us consider all possible hypotheses which may account for the phenomena. Of such hypotheses three suggest themselves : the first is that the medium (*i.e.* the climate, food, aspects of nature, &c.) may so modify physical and psychical characteristics that in the same place they will always conform to the same type, and that therefore the English type resembles the Cymric type ; the second hypothesis is that a preponderance of Cymric blood in the invaders who came from the Cimbric Chersonese and its neighbourhood may have caused, wholly or in part, that resemblance which is to be traced between the ancient Britons and the modern English ; the third hypothesis is that the ancient pre-Roman inhabitants greatly outnumbered the invaders of different blood who at different periods obtained a footing in the island."

It is not necessary for me to quote the reasons which induced me to adopt one hypothesis rather than another, because the question is not whether I have adopted the right hypothesis, but whether I have made allowance for other possible explanations. I believe I have now said enough to expose the true character of my critic; and that, it must be remembered, is the only object which I have had in view—not a complete defence of my book. I cannot, however, refrain from making a very simple statement: I have found in the *Westminster Review* a misrepresentation wherever I have found anything which touches my argument. There are many passages in which the attempt to get up a case is so apparent and so clumsy, that any one who has not seen my book can detect the trick; for the rest, I hope my word will be considered as trustworthy as that of an anonymous and ungrammatical writer in the *Westminster Review*, some of whose statements have already been shown to be false.

I have only further to say that no one appreciates honest criticism, however severe it may be, at a higher value than I do myself; and I am sincerely sorry to see discredit brought upon a periodical which has been honourably associated with the names of Mr. Stuart Mill and Mr. Herbert Spencer.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

L. OWEN PIKE.

New University Club, Nov. 17, 1866.

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### THE CELTIC TUMULI OF DORSET.\*

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THE anthropologist ought to have a special reverence for tumuli, for they alone can give him any solid information concerning the physical structure, habits, and social economy of races, whose existence lies altogether beyond the range of history, or receives but scanty illustration from it. He is an antiquary in the truest sense of the word; for his object is not the mere gathering together of what is curious of antique art, or venerable for its age, but his aim is to acquire data that will serve as a basis for building up a theory to supply the place

\* *The Celtic Tumuli of Dorset.* An account of personal and other researches of the sepulchral mounds of the Durotriges, etc. By Chas. Warne, F.S.A., author of an Illustrated Map of Dorsetshire, etc. John Russell Smith. 1866.