If we have done our work properly, the texts that we arrive at for X and for Y will be freer from error than the texts of the separate members of the families B, C and D, and E, F, G respectively, and that of Z freer from error than that authenti­cated by any existing MS.

The procedure, however, is by no means always so simple. That a text may be improved by the comparison of different MSS. is not a modern discovery. It has long been known, and the knowledge has led to the production of what are known as *conflated manuscripts* or *Misch-codices.* These are MSS. pro­duced by “ crossing ” or “ intermixture.” In the following stemma M and N are “ mixed ” or “ conflated ” MSS., being formed by the blending of readings from the “ pure ” or “ un­mixed ” codices A, B and D, E respectively.

Intermixture may take place to any extent, and the more of it there has been the more difficult does it become to trace the transmission of a text.

Whether crossing improves a given text or not depends ultimately on the knowledge and the judgment of the crosser, and these will vary indefinitely. On the whole it is probable that it does, provided it is not accompanied by other attempts at improvement. If it be, as may very well be the case, the text will probably suffer. For but a small proportion of scholars’ corrections are really amendments, and a far smaller proportion of scribes’.

The “ genealogical ” method, as we may call it, cannot in strictness be applied to conflated MSS., as their mutual relations can rarely be with certainty disentangled. But it is often possible to detect in such MSS. a common strain, shown by their agreement in peculiar corruptions or in probable readings when these latter would have been hard to discover by con­jecture. This is practically an application of the method to a portion of such manuscripts.

A special value attaches to a conflated codex when one of the MSS. from which it has been compounded has perished and its readings are thus otherwise irrecoverable. This is exemplified in the *Neapolilanus* of Propertius, a manuscript now at Wolfen- büttel.

It not unfrequently happens that good or instructive readings are found in manuscripts which are in general of small trust­worthiness (see below), and whose relations to the general tradition it is not worth while to investigate. These readings may be cited by the name of the MS., or if still greater brevity is required as the readings of inferior MSS. *(deteriores),* or, as is frequently done, by the symbol S.

*Non-extant Manuscripts.—*Some of the most valuable of ancient MSS. have disappeared since their discovery in modern times. When this has happened we have to rely upon mere copies, many times of inferior quality, or upon the information which old scholars have given us respecting them. In the latter case what we have are not “ collations,” for the art of collation was not understood till the 19th century, but selections or “ excerpts ” of readings which we have reason to fear are often imperfect and erroneous. Further, it must not be assumed that all readings which are cited as being “ *ex uetustis codicibus ’’* are necessarily from older or better MSS. than we now possess or indeed from MSS. at all. Scholars since the Renaissance have not always been above inventing codices to obtain currency for their own conjectures. The codices of Bosius (1535-1580) are just as imaginary as the “ old plays ” which appear as the source of so many of the quotations that head the chapters of the Waverley novels, and suspicion rests on Barth, Lambinus and others.

Some texts and portions of texts of ancient writers are now only known from printed books. The metrical treatise of Terentianus is now preserved in the *editio princeps* (1497) alone. All known MSS. of Silius Italicus have a considerable gap in the 8th book, first filled up on the authority of Jac. Con- stantius (1503), and not printed with the rest of the poem till the edition of Aldus (1523). The early printed books are often called by old scholars *codices impressi (typis),* “ printed manuscripts,” a phrase which at first seems curious to us but becomes perfectly intelligible when we examine these *codices impressi* and observe how closely they follow the *codices scripti.*

By the methodical employment of these means we shall arrive at a text different from any existing one. It will not be the best one, possible or existing, nor necessarily even a good one. But it will be *the most ancient one* according to the *direct line of transmission,* and the purest in the sense of being the freest from traceable errors of copying and unauthorized improvements.

The textual critic has occasionally to deal with the effects of *oral* transmission. A text so transmitted must in the lapse of time be profoundly though insensibly modified, its forms and expressions modernized, and, if widely disseminated, local variations introduced into it. This is the case with the Homeric poems, the ascertainment of the original form of which is a task beyond the powers of criticism. Even where, as in the Vedas, the sacred books of India, there is proof that the work has been transmitted without change through many centuries, the exist­ence of unintelligible passages and unmetrical verses shows that here too there is work for textual criticism to perform, though in the opinion of most scholars it should be confined to the res­toration of such forms as would be unconsciously and inevitably corrupted through changes of pronunciation and the like.

The invention of *printing* has naturally limited the province of textual criticism, and modified its operations. The writer’s autograph, if it is preserved after it has been through the hands of the printer, has seldom more than an antiquarian value. As a source for the text it is superseded by the printed edition, and if there is more than one, then by the latest printed edition, which has been revised in proof by the author, or, in certain cases, by his representative; and the task of the textual critic is restricted to the detection of “ misprints,” in other words, of errors which the compositor (the modern analogue to the scribe) has made in “ setting up ” the manuscript, and which have escaped the notice of the proof-reader and the author or his representative. If, however, this revision has been neglected or incompetently performed, the number of such mistakes may be considerable.

Another question with which the textual critic of modern authors must be prepared to deal is the relative importance of different editions, each of which may have a prima facie claim to be considered authentic. Thus Shakespearean criticism must decide between the evidence of the first folio and the quartos: the critic of Shelley’s poems must consider what weight is to be attached to the readings in the posthumous edition by Mrs Shelley, and in unpublished transcripts of various poems. Where there is great or complicated divergence between the editions, as in the case of Marlowe’s *Faustus,* the production of a resultant text which may be relied upon to represent the ultimate intention of the author is well-nigh impossible.

For the bettering of the *transmitted text* we can call in aids of a