

IN ALL FORMS of intellectual activity, the present age is preëminently given to scientific method. No field of æsthetic production, whether in literature or in art, has escaped the close scrutiny of investigation. The aim of this examination has not been altogether to criticise, in the common sense of the term, but rather to determine the exact relation which every masterpiece or commoner work bears to what precedes it. Criticism and appreciation are often lost sight of in an attempt to trace the stages in the growth of a new conception or creation, or to ascertain by means of analysis its specific marks. This tendency in literary and art studies is due to the emphasis now everywhere laid upon the doctrine of development as expressed in the term evolution. No doubt the study of a literature or species of literature, viewed as a result of development, may be made to yield excellent results in real culture. Yet, in tracing the evolution of a literary type, that which is imperfect demands the same degree of attention as that which is finished and complete; and the interest in such a study must necessarily be scientific rather than appreciative.

An excellent illustration at hand is Mr. Moulton's 'Ancient Classical Drama.' From the continuity of its development, the perfection of its types, and the preservation to the last of so many traces of rudimentary elements, the Greek and Roman drama present unusual advantages for progressive treatment. In handling the subject as 'a study in literary evolution,' the author has been eminently successful. He treats first tragedy, then comedy, in regard to origin, characteristics, transition, and final form, supplementing the discussion with abundant illustrations at every stage. The closing chapter sets forth concisely the relations and points of contrast between the classical and the romantic drama. A valuable appendix presents an analysis of the structure of several representative plays, together with tables illustrating the development and blending of the elements of the drama. The style is reasonably free from technicalities, and specially adapted to those not familiar with the ancient languages. Those who read literature only as a means of enjoyment may find the book hard to grasp. But to the student of literature, who is *en rapport* with the tendencies of literary study noted above, it may be heartily recommended. Though he may think the conclusions at times somewhat forced, he can not fail to find the volume as a whole the most suggestive and stimulating treatise on the subject now in the field.

* 'The Ancient Classical Drama. A Study in Literary Evolution. By Richard G. Moulton. \$2.25. New York: Macmillan & Co.