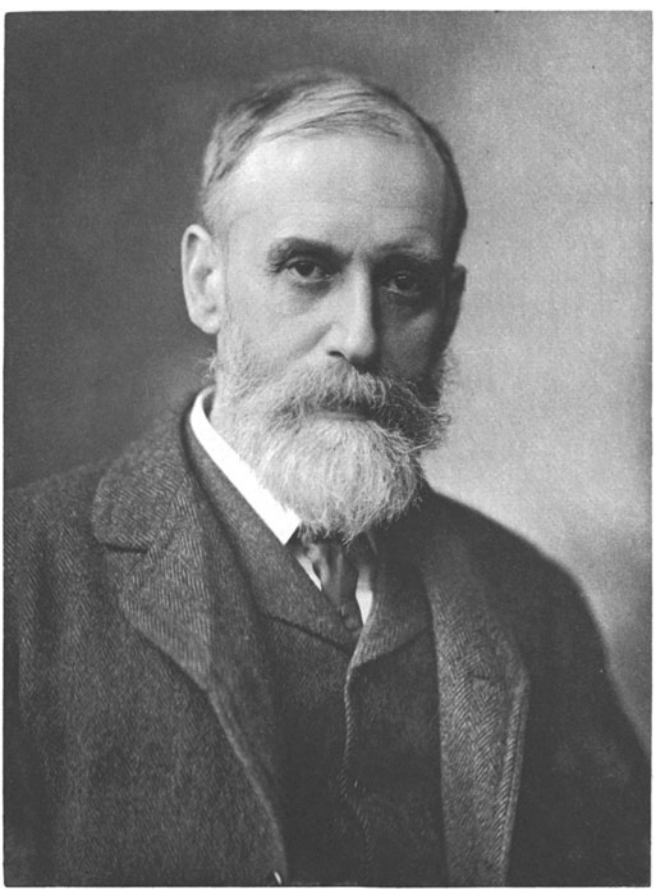
COLLECTED LITERARY ESSAYS



A. W. Verrall

COLLECTED LITERARY ESSAYS

CLASSICAL AND MODERN

BY

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WITH A MEMOIR

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PREFACE

THE essays contained in this volume have been collected from various periodicals, some of which are now difficult of access. The selection was made by the author a few months before his death, at a time when there was every expectation that he would live to see the republication. The names and dates of issue of the periodicals in which the essays originally appeared are given in the Table of Contents.

For permission to republish, our thanks are due to the editors of the *Quarterly Review*, the *New Quarterly*, the *Oxford and Cambridge Review*, the *Independent* (and *Albany*) *Review*, to Mrs M^{c}Nalty, executrix and literary legatee of the late editor of the *Universal Review*, and to the Executive Committee of the National Home-Reading Union.

The Commemorative Address by Dr Mackail, which is appended to the Memoir, was delivered at a meeting of the Academic Committee of the

Royal Society of Literature on November 28, 1912. We are much indebted to him for his kindness in allowing us to include this valuable appreciation, and we have to thank the Society for permission to reprint it.

We have also to thank Mrs Verrall for valuable assistance.

M. A. B.
J. D. D.

May 1913.

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MEMOIR

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine.

In Memoriam.

ARTHUR WOOLLGAR VERRALL was born at Brighton on February 5, 1851, and was the eldest of a family of three brothers and two sisters. His father, Henry Verrall, was a well-known solicitor who held for many years the office of Clerk to the Magistrates of the town. Since it is always interesting to trace the influences of heredity, some characteristics may be mentioned here which seem to have been part of the boy's natural debt to his parents. From his father he would appear to have derived his remarkable inductive powers, his simple tastes and dislike of ostentation, and the patient endurance with which he bore the sufferings and disabilities of his later years. His mother's gift embraced a rare conscientiousness, the aptitude for languages and teaching, the delight in music and the ear for rhythm. The tie of affection between mother and son was unusually strong.

At the age of nine, his health being thought too fragile even for the conditions of a preparatory school, he was sent as a private pupil to the Rev. R. Blaker, Vicar of Ifield. Mr Blaker soon discovered the boy's genius for languages, and Greek was immediately begun. Progress was exceptionally rapid, and two years later Mr Blaker wrote:

> He certainly gives promise of more than ordinary scholarship, and if his health is good, I augur an honourable future for him....He evinces a quickness of comprehension which is remarkable for so young a boy. His memory is excellent, and he is able to retain facts and draw inferences from matters connected with his reading with wonderful clearness.

An amusing little story of nursery days perhaps gives an even earlier indication of his bent in this direction. The child was looking at some pictures of red-legged partridges, and was overheard saying to himself, 'Arthur is a good boy; he doesn't say *them's grouses*, he says *them's grice*.'

In 1863 he went to Twyford, the well-known preparatory school for Winchester, where he stayed a year and a half. His health during this time was, however, much broken. In 1864 he competed for a Winchester scholarship, and failed. No doubt the failure was a disappointment at the time, but in after years he would refer to it as really a piece of good luck, since if he had gone to Winchester, he would have been sure to go to Oxford! In this judgement we may concur, for we can see that Oxford would hardly have helped him to 'find himself.' The Greats course would have led him

into fields of study foreign to his intellectual temperament, and for metaphysics he had a whole-hearted dislike, as he had for all speculation that promised to lead to no definite conclusion. Nevertheless, he had a great respect for Oxford and a special affection for Winchester, where he was a frequent visitor. The defeat was almost immediately retrieved. In October of the same year, at the suggestion of Dr Beard, a friend of his father, he was hurried off at a few hours' notice to compete for a scholarship at Wellington College. Though his name had not been previously entered, his candidature was accepted, and he gained the second scholarship, being just beaten by E. Heriz Smith, afterwards Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge. In a letter now before me, Dr Benson wrote that the boy 'was nearly though not quite equal to the first candidate....I like very much the boy's clear and unassuming manner, and am very glad nothing prevented him standing.' It was like Benson to add that he hoped he had 'been comfortable under the odd and hurried circumstances of his competition.' While at Wellington, Verrall must have experienced and observed many such instances of thoughtful courtesy, and as we know, they bore abundant fruit.

Mr Wickham of Twyford, in a letter written when the boy was leaving the school, repeats Mr Blaker's impression of his character and augury for his future. An earlier letter of Mr Wickham's contains one significant remark: 'I must try to get him to read a little Ovid next half year, to get him into more

style in his verses.' The boy, then, was capable of independent reading at the age of thirteen, had learned to dislike Ovid, and needed persuasion before he would read him. This dislike Verrall never lost, and I can recall the tone of real sadness with which he once referred to the essential triviality of Ovid's art; it actually distressed him that a man who could have done better things 'should have left only piffle.' One can well believe that the boy dimly felt the same disappointment, that he was even at that early age seeking in his author something more than the 'topmost froth of thought.'

He entered Wellington at the end of his thirteenth year. Naturally reserved, of a temperament unusually refined, and with enthusiasms predominantly intellectual, he was not one of those best fitted for the rough and tumble of public school life. 'Something of home-life,' he wrote in his contribution to the Archbishop's *Life*, 'something like the sympathetic and intelligent circle from which I came, was almost as necessary to me as bread and butter.' When he got into the Sixth, as he very soon did, Benson's keen observation detected this want, and he and Mrs Benson supplied it in the best of ways, by treating the boy as one of the family. He was continually in and out of the house, and whenever he liked, which was two or three times a week, he used to join the 'nursery tea,' at which Dr and Mrs Benson were habitually present. The value to him of this happy modification of the

ordinary conditions of school life, and the incalculable gain from these closer relations with two such natures, he always felt he could not overestimate. He would say, referring to those days, 'the Bensons made Wellington possible for me'; and he has written, 'He [Dr Benson] saved my health and my sense; I believe that he saved my life.'

If Verrall had written an autobiography (a thing incredible), not the least interesting period of it would have been that of his later school years. Unfortunately even recollections of him as he appeared to others are disappointingly meagre. One school-fellow writes, 'As soon as Verrall was in the Upper Sixth we were aware that his mind was of a different order from ours,' and mentions 'the width of his reading.' In an obituary notice in the *Wellingtonian*, Mr E. K. Purnell, also a school-fellow, gives a little *vignette* of unmistakable fidelity:

> A contemporary, who knew him first as a clever boy of 18, described him as in those days a most talkative vivacious youth, his eyes kindling with life and enthusiasm as he talked, his voice running up into a kind of falsetto. He observed and was interested in everything and everybody, and his personality, with its many-sided sympathies, impressed itself on all with whom it came in contact. The same person, meeting him when he was examining for the Benson a few years ago, was drawn irresistibly by the charm of his intense vitality, and the unconquerable courage which still helped him to keep up his part in the scheme of life—in a Bath chair.

These two brief scraps are all that can now be obtained. One episode, however, Verrall has himself related with curious but characteristic detachment and candour in the contribution to the *Life* of the Archbishop referred to above.

> I saw that after the approaching holidays I should... almost certainly be 'Head of the School,' a really laborious and responsible change. I was then a rapacious student and (except perhaps an infamous player of football) nothing else. My perturbation may be measured by my helpless impertinence. Without any intimation of the Headmaster's purposes, I actually went and told him that I could not be 'Head,' and that I should leave! I ought, I dare say, to have been snubbed. What I know is that a harsh or light word then would have ruined my best chance in life, and (as I make bold to say) would have lost a good year to the school....He discussed the matter with me almost daily, always from my point of view....In a fortnight I was a very little ashamed and exceedingly sanguine. And during my year I was to the Headmaster like a third hand.

In the spring of 1869 he obtained a Minor Scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, and a Foundation Scholarship in the following year. He was bracketed with Henry Butcher from Marlborough and Walter Leaf from Harrow—a remarkable trio to have entered for the same examination. When the result was known, Dr Benson wrote to Mr Henry Verrall:

> He has done beautifully, and he deserves success. For his heart is wholly in his work, and that with so much modesty and so much affectionateness, that no one can rejoice too much at his success or fear that it may spoil him. His two co-equals are respectively thought the best of their two

> schools for several years past. And one of the examiners has written to tell me that if it had been possible to make a difference it would have been in Arthur's favour.
>
> We may congratulate each other most sincerely—only on one point you must not congratulate me, for it is hard to part with him, I assure you.

Of the undergraduate period available information is scanty, and no letters have been preserved. In the time at which he went up to the University he was not a little fortunate, for among his contemporaries and friends were such men as Walter Leaf, Henry Butcher, F. W. Maitland, J. G. Butcher, Frank and Gerald Balfour, A. J. Mason, A. T. Myers (a younger brother of F. W. H. Myers), T. O. Harding, Edmund Gurney, G. H. Rendall, W. Cunningham, and F. J. H. Jenkinson. With all these, and the first three especially, he maintained a life-long friendship, and the deaths of F. W. Maitland in 1906 and of Henry Butcher in 1910 were blows little less than overwhelming. Among his older contemporaries were Henry Sidgwick, R. C. Jebb, Henry Jackson, and Frederick Pollock. One event, which occurred early in his University career, he spoke of at the time as 'the best thing that ever happened to me in my life.' This was his admission to a private but not obscure society, consisting of graduates and undergraduates, which met, and still meets, for intimate discussion of any and every subject. Dating at least as far back as the time of Tennyson, it counts among its numbers, I believe, many of Cambridge's most distinguished

men, and Verrall always considered that he owed more to his membership of this 'glorious company' than to any other influence of Cambridge life. Another surviving incident of the undergraduate life is sufficiently characteristic to deserve record. It fell to him to have to read in the College chapel the lesson about the feast of Belshazzar from the Book of Daniel. Those who were present declare that the solemnity and dramatic power with which he delivered it, combined with the rare quality of the voice, were astonishingly impressive and made the occasion quite unforgettable.

To *The Tatler in Cambridge*, an unusually good example of those short-lived periodicals with which the undergraduate genius from time to time promotes the gaiety of University life, he contributed four clever papers. The most amusing of these is perhaps one on Bain's *Mental and Moral Science*. The book, he discovers, has running through it a vein of subtle humour, and he gently warns the author that this is a talent which in such a work should be exercised with philosophic discretion. The criticism of satire is perhaps all that the work deserves, and an admirable piece of fooling closes with the following poetical summary of Mr Bain's views.

> There was a Professor called *Bain*
> Who taught, in the Land of the Rain,
> That the ultimate Fact
> Which induced you to act
> Was an Inkling of Pleasure or Pain.

He proved that Volitional Force
Depended entirely on Sauce,
    Inasmuch as the Question
    Was one of Digestion,
And Morals would follow of course.

Your Head was impressible Batter
Compounded of White and Grey Matter,
    So your Measure of Reason
    Would flow from 'Adhesion'
To a tender and merciful Hatter.

He laid the Foundations of Virtue
In finding by Trial what hurt you;
    And spite of your Terror
    Would stick to his Error,
And at last, and at best, would desert you.

Religion and Duty he made
A Manner of feeling afraid;
    And Tact, on his showing,
    Consisted in knowing
The Feel of the Tongs from the Spade.

Faith, Charity, Hope were reducible
To Phosphate or Salt in a Crucible,
    Dissent and Dysentery
    Both 'Alimentary,'
Manners and Mammon both fusible.

If Flesh can be sane or insane,
And Meat the sole Factor of Brain,
    Then hey! for the Cooks,
    Since the Moral of Books
Is 'Leave Writing for Eating,' O *Bain.*

In 1872 he obtained the Pitt University Scholarship, and in the next year passed out in the Classical Tripos, being bracketed second with T. E. Page; Henry Butcher was Senior Classic. In the

examination for the Chancellor's Medals, which immediately followed, the three were bracketed equal, and a third medal was awarded,—a thing never done before or since.

In connexion with his Tripos Verrall used to tell an amusing story, which he always regarded as illustrating in a remarkable manner the perverse vagaries of the human mind. He had to translate a passage from Tacitus in which Tiberius is described as doing something *Rhodo regressus*. These words he rendered by 'on his return to Rhodes,' and added two marginal notes, the first explaining and endeavouring to justify the use of *Rhodo* for *Rhodum*, and the second explaining how Tacitus came to speak of Tiberius as having done after his return *to* Rhodes what it was common knowledge that he did after his return *from* Rhodes. Not till he got back to his rooms did it occur to him that it would have been simpler to write *from* in his translation!

In the same year he was elected Fellow of Trinity College, and resided in Cambridge until the summer of 1874, taking private pupils. I was myself an undergraduate at this time, and knew him by sight, but alas! did not know what I was losing by not asking to be allowed to join those lucky youths.

In July Benson, who had now left Wellington, wrote to him that there was a vacancy on the staff of the School:—

> I need scarcely say to you that the idea present to all men's minds is what would have been present with me, viz.

> whether it would be compatible with your arrangements that you should give them any help....I need scarcely put into words the fact that you would be more useful to Wellington College than any man living. What they want is *enthusiasm* —high-couraged work—with *scholarship*. And of course they want a feeling, understanding soul.

Happily he resisted this earnest appeal.

For the next three years he lived in London, reading for the Bar and doing a certain amount of teaching work. From 1875 to 1877 he was 'Supernumerary Instructor in composition and extra reading' at S. Paul's School. He gained the Whewell Scholarship for International Law in 1875, was called in 1877, and held one brief, if not two. A legal career, however, had no attraction for him: in October he returned to Cambridge, and was soon afterwards placed on the teaching staff at Trinity. From that time onwards Cambridge was his home. For the next five years he combined with his work at the University some teaching at Wren's well-known coaching establishment in London. He also taught at Newnham College, and in connexion with his work there Miss Jane Harrison tells a delightful story.

> I have sometimes wondered if a brilliant dramatist was not lost in the finding and making of a subtle classical scholar. One day, as quite a young man, he was looking over my composition in the then library of Old Hall. Coals were wanted and no coal-scuttle in sight. After a longish hunt I remembered that the library coal-scuttle always lay *perdu* between the double doors that led to Miss Clough's sitting-room. The arrangement, owing to its ingenious economy in coal-scuttles, used to cause Miss Clough a quite

> peculiar and intimate joy. No less though a slightly different joy did it cause Mr Verrall. On catching sight of the coal-scuttle and the double doors he stood transfigured and transfixed. 'What a scene for a play!' he exclaimed, and coal scuttle in hand, me and my composition utterly forgotten, the plot of that play he then and there constructed and enacted.

In 1881 he published his first book, an edition of the *Medea* of Euripides. He had been asked by Messrs Macmillan & Co. to prepare a school edition of the play, but on getting to work he found that the limits of a school-book, even if that were the proper medium, would be far too narrow for what needed to be done for the *Medea*, and what he felt he could do. The book was remarkable not only as the production of a young man of thirty, but in itself; it was strikingly original and brilliant, and was at once recognised as the work of a scholar of the first rank. Nothing of the kind, nor perhaps anything approaching it, had previously been done on the Greek tragedians. While he breathed fresh life into the play itself, the effect of his work went further; for it suggested what might be done for other legacies of the Attic stage, interest in which seemed to be steadily sinking into the mere formal respect one pays to a dull old man whose former dignities do not permit him to be quite ignored. The volume was welcomed with delight and admiration, and I think I recognise the hand of Professor Tyrrell in a long and frankly eulogistic article unearthed from the file of the *Saturday Review*. The

textual restorations, of which something will be said below, naturally attracted special attention, and confirmed to their author, if they did not originate, the half-jesting, half-earnest *sobriquet* 'Splendid Emendax.' But this part of the work was by no means the chief or the most valuable. Other merits were found in rare and perhaps unprecedented combination: a peculiarly delicate appreciation of the subtleties of the language, a fine discrimination between expressions superficially identical, a subtle appreciation of the poet's skill in delineation of character, and an acute perception of the necessities and possibilities of a dramatic situation. In the two last Verrall had no rival among his predecessors, and few if any equals then or later among his contemporaries. As one perused the text afresh after digesting the commentary, one found the scenes leap into life, one saw and heard the drama in progress; or rather—but here we have first to thank Euripides—one felt one was in the presence of a living Medea and a living Jason. The notes were enriched with illustrations drawn from English literature and even (as the writer in the *Saturday Review* notes) a parallel from *Lohengrin*, 'which to a commentator of the older school would have appeared unpardonably frivolous.'

Of these qualities of the book there was but one opinion, but the textual work divided readers into two camps. While the teachable, old or young, were only grateful, there were some who were offended by the originality and alarmed at the

brilliance. They mistrusted the cleverness of emendations which took their breath away, making familiar passages unrecognisable, and they feared the effects of a pernicious example. Thus did the mediaeval world regard Galileo. It is an attitude towards Verrall's work as a textual critic—whether here or in later books—which has always filled me with astonishment, for his methods were essentially sound. As all his labours in this department show, his decisions were not based on mere guess-work (of which he always spoke with some impatience), but were conclusions arrived at from the evidence furnished by the MSS. themselves. Where he differed from others was in the possession of unusual inductive powers, which enabled him to *see further*; and these powers were assisted by a rare sense of literary and dramatic fitness, an apparently complete acquaintance with the extant vocabulary of classical Greek, and an exceptional memory. We may, if we please, sum up all this as 'ingenuity,' but if we do, we must not use the word in a disparaging sense. Of course, and he used readily to admit it, the sharp-edged tool sometimes slipped. Impatient of the 'fluffy' explanation that does not explain, he was occasionally tempted to offer something which still fails to satisfy, and which only he could have made plausible. Again, as some think, he sometimes finds a point where none was intended. It may be so, but it is surely well to err on the side of respect for one's author, and if we do not believe in pointless lines in Aristophanes, why should we

tolerate them in the texts of the tragedians? And after all, to accompany Verrall even on an inconclusive quest, is to learn things by the way which are perhaps as valuable as what we may have set out to seek.

In emendation he kept two ruling principles always before him: he did not accept or offer a correction as more than possible, unless the supposed corruption were accounted for, either by the correction itself or otherwise; and he held that an *odd* variant, just because of its oddness or grotesqueness or absurdity, might possibly conceal the true reading, as against the passable respectability of the *textus receptus*. The first, of course, was a well established canon, though one freely ignored; the potentialities of the second had been but dimly apprehended. Three examples, taken from the *Medea*, will show his methods at work.

At *v.* 668,

τί δ' ὀμφαλὸν γῆς θεσπιῳδὸν ἑστάλης;

is the text of all the MSS.; but the second hand in B (one of the inferior class s) has superscribed ἱκάνεις. ἑστάλης is irreproachable, but ἱκάνεις cannot be a gloss on it, and Verrall deduces ἵζάνεις as the true reading. If anyone cannot see this, there is no more to be said; in the name of all that is dull, let him hug his ἑστάλης and be happy.

At *v.* 531 the 'superior' class of MSS. give

ὡς Ἔρως σ' ἠνάγκασε
πόνων ἀφύκτων τοὐμὸν ἐκσῶσαι δέμας.

The 'inferior' class give *τόξοις ἀφύκτοις*. Paley's note is, 'There is a variant *τόξοις ἀφύκτοις*, approved by Elmsley,' and he passes on with the crowd. Verrall was not so easily satisfied. Both variants are passable though feeble, but their presence as alternatives is unaccounted for, and he offers *τόνοις ἀφύκτοις* as the common original. If anyone thinks there was no problem to be solved, again there is no more to be said.

At *v.* 1183 the 'superior' MSS. have

> *ἡ δ' ἐξ ἀναύδου καὶ μύσαντος ὄμματος*
> *δεινὸν στενάξασ' ἡ τάλαιν' ἠγείρετο.*

The 'inferior' class give a variant *ἀπώλλυτο*. No one had seen that *ἀναύδου* (*ἀναύγου*, Verrall) required correction, and since *ἀπώλλυτο* passed unheeded, *ἠγείρετο* of course incurred no suspicion. But it is just from this absurd *ἀπώλλυτο*, as a correction of ΑΝΩΛΛΑΤΟΥ, a misreading of a mis-spelt ΑΝΩΜΑΤΟΥ, that our 'daring' editor restores ΑΝΩΜΜΑΤΟΥ. Unfortunately *ἀνομματῶ* is not an extant word, and that fact has been to some, in this case and others, a stumbling-block in the way of acceptance. One reviewer solemnly deprecated 'these attempts to enrich the Greek language.' The logic is somewhat Chinese, but minds work variously. In China the scholar himself, on returning from a journey, is in danger of being refused recognition by his family, argue as he may, unless he can produce the tally which is the one sure proof that he is not a masquerading devil. So the English editor

should perhaps not be surprised if, when he says 'Take my word for it,' his word is regarded as some such masquerading devil, unless he can produce from the lexicon a reference to its respectability.

There is naturally no trace in Verrall's *Medea* of the theory of Euripides' art which he afterwards elaborated, and the one miraculous incident in the play, the dragon-chariot, is passed over without special comment. One paragraph in the Introduction is, however, noteworthy in this connexion. It was a traditional commonplace that the poet's concern in the stories which he dramatized was predominantly with their human interest, but so far as I am aware, no one had previously laid stress on the significant completeness with which the marvellous and all reference to it are excluded from the *Medea*, at any rate until the play's proper climax has been reached. The observation appears to have been fruitful.

> To Euripides, therefore, the story of Medea is interesting wholly as a plot of passion, and all other aspects of it are thrown into the background. Indeed, considering the rich fabric of romance with which her name had been interwoven, it is not a little curious to observe how strictly it is reduced by the dramatist to its human and ethical elements. The splendid and marvellous story of the Argonauts is of course a necessary presumption, but the allusions to it are so curt and so colourless that, even with the story before us, it is sometimes a matter of difficulty to interpret them (*Med.* 479, 487); and it is plain that any other story would have been as acceptable, which furnished or admitted the essential points of the situation, the proud barbarian wife and mother abandoned by the Greek husband to whom she has sacrificed all.

> Even the chorus in their lyric songs occupy themselves with the ethic and pathetic aspects only, with the social and intellectual position of woman, the virtue of self-control, the blessings and trials of parents, the sanctity of hospitable Athens, with anything, in short, rather than the clashing rocks and the fire-breathing bulls, the ram of Phrixos and the cauldron of Pelias. (p. xviii.)

In 1882 (June 17) he married Margaret de Gaudrion Merrifield, daughter of Frederic Merrifield, Barrister-at-law, of Brighton, now Clerk of the Peace of East and West Sussex. Miss Merrifield, after a study of Latin and Greek extending over practically no more than the period of her University life, had taken honours in the Classical Tripos Examination of 1880, and was at the time a resident Classical Lecturer at Newnham College. For many years after her marriage Mrs Verrall continued to take part in the classical teaching at Newnham, and her valuable work in connexion with the Society for Psychical Research during the last ten years is well known to a large section of the public. Of the married life of these my dearest friends I cannot trust myself to say more than that the union seemed to be as ideal as that of Robert and Elizabeth Browning, and to realise to the utmost the beautiful vision of *The Princess*:

> Two heads in council, two beside the hearth,
> Two in the tangled business of the world,
> Two in the liberal offices of life,
> Two plummets dropt for one to sound the abyss
> Of science, and the secrets of the mind.

There is one daughter of the marriage, Miss Helen de G. Verrall, who has inherited largely both the gifts and qualities of her parents. She obtained a First Class in the Classical Tripos Part I in 1905, and a First Class in Part II in 1906.

Verrall's next book, *Studies in Horace*, published in 1883 and now out of print, is a collection of essays on the *Odes* of Horace. The volume is written with charming freshness, and the poems discussed gain a new life and often a quite unexpected interest from the originality and independence of the criticisms. The most important essay is the one entitled *Murena*. Identifying the famous conspirator of that name with the Murena of III 19 and the Lucius Licinius Varro Murena whose 'sister' Maecenas married (and on this identification the main weight of the contention rests), Verrall endeavours to show that the first three books of the Odes were not published before B.C. 19, as against the generally accepted lowest date B.C. 23.

Although he failed to commend his view on either point to some of those best entitled to form an opinion, nevertheless both questions are still matters of dispute, and an eminent Italian historian, ignorant of the existence of Verrall's book, has recently expressed agreement with him so far as to hold that the *Odes* 'are a single poetic work, animated by a central idea, and not a miscellany of disconnected verse.'

Scattered through the volume are vivid pictures of Roman society in the Augustan age, drawn with

a rare dexterity, and the power exhibited in appraising the significance of historical events, the liveliness and sureness of touch with which they are described, and the insight which marks the portrayal of character, show that when we gained a scholar and critic, we perhaps lost an unusually gifted historian. A great Latinist wrote at the time: 'The essay on Murena was to me the one of most fascinating interest. If a drama or historical romance on the personages and incidents of the Augustan age were to be written, the writer would find his materials in that essay.' The following brief extract may serve as a specimen of much more that is equally striking.

> For the difficulty lies not in the fact of the allusion to Murena, but in the tone of it. That Horace, writing or publishing after the conspiracy, would pass the history of Murena in silence can in no way be presumed. As a poet, indeed, he could ill afford to do so. A theme more suggestive for poetry of a tragic cast, especially as the ancients conceived of tragedy, it would be difficult to imagine. The whole story from prologue to catastrophe—the hard lessons of experience learnt and forgotten, the humiliation, the sudden rise and ill-sustained prosperity, the insolent tongue which made enemies when it was the time to propitiate envy, the doubtful guilt and certain ruin, the wide-spread sympathy not unmixed with horror—all that our authorities give us unites in a subject such as Aeschylus chose, a veritable τραγῳδία of real life, acted not in the theatre of Dionysus but in the midst of the society of Rome. Nor would the relation between the poet and Maecenas forbid the subject, if only it were touched in a proper spirit. What was the private opinion of Maecenas on Murena's crime and the emperor's justice, it would be vain to conjecture. But on no view could he desire silence. (p. 31.)

From 1886 to the summer of 1889, in addition to his other work, he lectured at Pembroke College. An interesting anecdote falls somewhere in this period. On a certain Saturday he was going to London for the day. On the following Monday the Trinity lecturers would be wanting to distribute to their pupils printed copies of a piece of English for translation into Latin hexameters. It was Verrall's turn to set this piece, and at the Cambridge station he remembered that he had not done so. Moreover, his Latin version of the piece should be in the lecturers' hands on the Tuesday morning. From London he telegraphed to the University Press to print and send out to the lecturers that day '*Merchant of Venice*, Act v. sc. 1, from "The moon shines bright" to "footing of a man,"' and he composed the version, from a perfect recollection of the English, during the day. A few final touches were given next day, and the copy sent off to press. It will be found, with about a score more from his pen, in *Cambridge Compositions* (1899). He wrote Greek and Latin with almost as much facility as English, and in a style that has the true ring, as a man writes a language which he speaks. All his compositions possess distinction and individuality, and some of his verse is such as an ancient poet might have published with advantage to his reputation. One merit of his versions is sufficiently uncommon, even in the best work of this kind, to deserve special mention: he never failed to catch the spirit of the original. I regret that there is not space to quote

here the copy referred to above, for it affords an excellent illustration of this, reproducing with an absolute fidelity (so at least it seems to me) the extremely delicate tone of Shakspeare's sole but perfect idyll.

In 1887 he published an edition of the *Septem contra Thebas* of Aeschylus. The play offers no scope for such a comprehensive view of the poet's art as we have in the commentaries on the great trilogy, but this volume inaugurated a new era in the interpretation of the play and in the study of Aeschylus as a whole. The same faculties which had been so fruitful in the case of the *Medea* were brought to bear, and now by a reconstruction of the text, now by a more satisfying interpretation, he gave to passage after passage fresh or fuller significance. At the same time he did much to quicken and enlarge our appreciation of the characteristic qualities of Aeschylean diction and style. There were of course, here and there, instances of the inevitable over-subtlety,—he expected it himself, no less than did his readers; but we have learned to regard these things as mere spots on the sun, which are, I believe, due to uprushes of excessive energy from the solar subliminal, and doubtless not without their use. No man was less disposed to hold to 'a poor thing' because it was 'his own,' and I can remember points, both in this play and in others, which upon discussion he instantly abandoned when a reasonable objection was presented. Sometimes (and every scholar could illustrate this from his own