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Klassicismus

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KLASSICIMUS GEHT UNTER

IN ANSWER to *Parnassus in Collegio* which appeared in the last *Hornbook* extolling the use of the Classics, I wish to speak for the Germanic languages.

We, as Nordic people, have no racial heritage in the Greek stories of the Iliad and the Odyssey and the Roman Aeneid. We may look at them objectively, merely as works of art. In contrast, the northern stories such as the Edda in Icelandic, the Niebelungenlied in Middle High German, and Beowulf in Anglo-Saxon were the hero legends of our ancestors. We have a feeling of kinship toward these stories which no amount of beauty in the southern hero legends can create.

The northern stories have a vitality and life, a rugged beauty of expression which is equal to that of the Greeks. Their meter, the Stabreim or rhyme of initial letters lends itself to the free expression of the thoughts of a people. It is well adapted to songs and improvisations, and was used by our ancestors as they sat about the mead hall on long winter evenings. The classic meter is more stately, more cultivated, less adapted to folk ways.

When Greece at first and, later, Rome ruled the known world, they put their stamp of culture on the people that they conquered. They left their penal code, their system of government, their customs, laws and traditions, and with this, they left their literature. Today the great colonizers of the world are the Nordics. With Teutons controlling large parts of the globe, the time has come to change our culture from the classic to the Germanic.

In the early days of secondary schools and universities, great emphasis was placed on the study of Greek and Latin. This was because of the influence of scholasticism in the Middle Ages, when learning was kept alive in the monasteries. The tradition continued and early schools in

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this country stressed the classics. However, this tradition is gradually being broken down, for Latin and Greek are not required courses in most colleges today. The number which require them is steadily decreasing, even for a degree of Bachelor of Arts.

The freeing of the student from the study of the classics is an echo of the freeing of the church from Latin. Latin was the yoke which held down religion. Until the Bible was put in the language of the common people, the church was all-powerful. When the Bible was put in simple language, the Reformation took place.

The time has come for the Germanic to be recognized as our common heritage, for it to don the kingly robe that the classics lay off. "Klassicismus Geht Unter".

Philip Stokes Van Hook.