

A Classicist Learns the Ropes: Francis Kelsey at Lake Forest University (1880-1889)

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Francis Willey Kelsey, Professor of Latin at the University of Michigan (1889-1927), President of the American Philological Association (1906-1907) and President of the Archaeological Institute of America (1907-1912) began his professional career at Lake Forest University 30 miles north of Chicago.

Lake Forest was the brainchild of a group of Chicago Presbyterians who in the mid 19th century founded a community? a town and a university together ? with the church at its center, to embody their Puritan ideals of education and the virtuous life. Fueled by the industry and savvy of Chicago businessmen, the community would link bustling city with tranquil country, good thinking with good business, godliness with good learning. By 1880, the year in which the 22 year old Francis Kelsey joined the faculty, the University was firmly established.

In 2 articles written for the *Lake Forest University Review*, Kelsey outlined two of his major intellectual concerns: the value of the study of Latin, and the career of Julius Caesar. Since Latin is a logical system, he wrote, with underlying laws of form and syntax, it teaches concentration of thought, trains the memory and develops judgment. Since Latin is also a historical organism, it invites comparison with other languages in terms of growth, linguistic influence, and power as an instrument of thought. Since language represents thought, Latin also paves the way for the study of the workings of the Roman mind and for an appreciation of Roman literature, art, law, philosophy and civilization. At the end of this article, he addresses the question of relevancy (an issue he would take up in greater detail in an edited volume, *Latin and Greek in American Education, with Symposia on the Value of Humanistic Studies* (New York: Macmillan 1911; 2nd. ed. 1927).

In the second article Kelsey examines the career of Julius Caesar and the unraveling of republicanism at Rome. He places Caesar's life in the context of the growth of the state from municipality to republic tracing the tensions between localizing and centralizing tendencies, and describes the constitutional paralysis that followed the struggles between the plebs and the elite. He suggests that the principle of imperialism had been flexing its muscles since the second century and that Caesar's dictatorship was the inevitable outcome. These two articles, revealing something of Kelsey's early educational philosophy and pointing to an enduring interest in late republican Rome and Julius Caesar, foreshadow his influential edition of Caesar's *Gallic War*.

In the spring of 1883 he set out for Europe. Though details of his itinerary are unknown, he certainly visited Rome, Naples, Pompeii and Sicily. It seems likely that this summer is when he met the German scholar August Mau and began the friendship which culminated in his publication of an edition and translation of Mau's *Pompeii in Leben und Kunst* (Leipzig: W. Engelmann 1900). Rather surprisingly, Kelsey's version appeared sooner, *Pompeii, Its Life and Art* (New York: Macmillan 1899). Following the example of many American classicists who went to Germany to pursue their studies, Kelsey took leave from Lake Forest in 1884-1885 and enrolled at the University of Leipzig. Before long however he left Leipzig to spend much of the year in Italy and Greece broadening his knowledge of the physical context in which the languages he loved had been written, visiting ancient sites and contemporary excavations, taking account of vistas and landscapes.

In the United States a lively debate about the future of higher education was taking place. Some argued that colleges should be for undergraduates alone teaching the standard humanistic curriculum, training the mind and molding the character. Others claimed that colleges should have graduate programs for professional training (e.g. law); and others that there should be research programs in all literary and scientific subjects. At Lake Forest differences of opinion surfaced, the trustees in favor of an undergraduate model, several of the faculty supporting the addition of graduate study and research. With reference to the Classics, Kelsey believed both in research and graduate programs, and in the centrality of undergraduate teaching.

His views on the value of the Classics and the significance of broad contexts found their natural stage in the textbooks he was preparing. In 1882 the first of his editions appeared: *Cicero's De Senectute and De Amicitia* by James S. Reid. In revising Reid's Cicero for an American audience Kelsey expanded the textual commentaries to include studies of literary form, history, topography and archaeology. The second came in 1884: *Lucretius's De Rerum Natura*. The 50 page introduction included studies of Lucretius the poet and Lucretius the philosopher, while the notes (168pp) range over art, philosophy, geography, nature, myth, history and archaeology as well as grammar and syntax. Then in 1886 came his *Caesar's Gallic War*. This book became a huge success for the breadth, density and variety of its commentaries, and for its extensive use of lithography, line drawings, maps, colored plates and monochrome illustrations. It ran to no fewer than 21 editions in Kelsey's lifetime, morphed under his guidance into *Caesar's Commentaries* (1918) and was still available as recently as 2007 in a reprint edition.

Before the decade was out he collaborated with another Lake Forest faculty member, Andreas C. Zenos to produce a 4th textbook: *Xenophon's Anabasis Books 1-1V*.

The man who wrote the textbooks was matched by the professor who used them. Kelsey's skill as a teacher was remarked by the January 1889 issue of the student newspaper, the *Stentor*, which singled out two professors: "it would pay to study closely the teaching of Prof. Halsey and Prof. Kelsey". A teacher with gifts such as Kelsey's is most appreciated when about to leave. When the editors of the *Stentor* learned of his resignation they published in their July 1889 issue "with great regret" a remarkable testament to his talents and the admiration in which he was held: "We feel we are wholly unable to pay a proper tribute to the professor's ability as a teacher. All who have been familiar with his classroom work know how eminently successful he has been as an instructor. Professor Kelsey has endeared himself to the students whose best wishes he assuredly has as he goes to his new field in Ann Arbor."

Kelsey's leaving was driven partly by his wish to join an institution more clearly committed to graduate education and research, partly by his belief in education for all and open to all. Yet Lake Forest University had offered the young scholar the opportunity to spread his wings, and Classical learning in Chicago was diminished by his departure.

Professor John Griffiths Pedley has written a full study of the life of Francis Willey Kelsey in *The Life and Work of Francis Willey Kelsey. Archaeology, Antiquity, and the Arts* (University of Michigan Press, 2011)

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