

ful minds of the present age. Without such skill in the ancient and modern literatures alluded to, one cannot fully appreciate the grandest of them all either ancient or modern—that of our noble English tongue destined to be doubtless in the coming age the universal language. Little argument is needed to prove this. All will at once concede that the study of language, if properly conducted, accustoms us not only to correct thinking, but also to a correct and appropriate manner of expressing our thoughts. If the study of language in general then does this, what reason is there for giving a preference to the study of the dead languages of Greece and Rome, as the formation of all literary knowledge and excellence. First, because a very large and increasing proportion of the words of our own language are taken from the Greek and Latin, and cannot be properly understood without a knowledge of those tongues, and secondly, that the whole of our literature is in form and substance so much interwoven with that of the Greeks and Romans that it is impossible thoroughly to comprehend the one and thus a knowledge of the others. Examine the best authors in our literature from Chaucer down to the present day and you will find yourself obliged almost in every page to go back to Greece and Rome to light the truth that is to guide you on your road. Without that aid, half of our literature would be an unintelligible mystery. This is a great and stubborn fact which we cannot get rid of unless indeed we destroy our whole literature and begin afresh on an entirely new principle. Time and circumstances have made it and we cannot alter a single iota, but must take it as it is and accommodate ourselves to it. Nay, the literature of all Europe—that of the present day and that of all time to come is and will be connected and in a great manner dependent upon that of the ancients—and the more we advance in science, literature and art, the stronger will become the tie that connects us with the ancients, for it is to their languages that we are perpetually obliged to resort for new terms and forms of words. It would be difficult then, I say, nay, almost impossible, to discover any languages, the study of which combines so many and surpassing advantages for the prosecution of literature as the languages of the Greeks and Romans, for we have in

them the languages which are no longer in a state of progress and change, but complete in themselves. The national mind of the Greeks and Romans in them, reveals itself to us in all its phases. We can trace it from the very dawn of literature to the time when it reached its highest point of development, and we may witness the gradual decay of their languages until, in form and character, they became different tongues. We have thus placed before us two languages, as it were, in their entireness manifesting in their organic development the same, or similar, phenomena that all other languages have to pass through. Every point is fixed and established and our investigations are not impeded by any of the conflicting opinions and fashions which, in a living language, so long as there is any vitality in it, we must needs encounter; and thus, for our mental training and progress in literature, we may choose the languages such as they were at the very best period of their existence, and as they are handed down to us by the best writers of whom their respective nations can boast. What a vista opens up before us to gaze upward and inward into the profound beyond, and as we stand and gaze on with eager eyes, we hear as it were the melody of the spheres. We hear Homer, in melodious hexameters, chanting for us with inexpressible simplicity and beauty the heroic age of the infancy of the world. We behold the passions or the human soul depicted for us in stern and awful grandeur in the tragedies of *Æschylus*—a grandeur which under serene aspects shines forth to us in the milder depths of *Sophocles*—we listen to the riotous irony of *Aristophanes*; the gay, pictorial narrative of *Herodotus*; the cutting and pregnant brevity of *Thucydides*; the simple and graceful wisdom of *Xenophon*; the soaring, ærial, fancy tinted philosophy of *Plato*, and the last accents of Roman virtue breathed forth in the austere pages of *Tacitus*. We prize and reverence and love the noble band of thinkers and poets whom time and the human race have dignified with the title of *Orient* classics. And doing so, ladies and gentlemen, would you say I am Utopian in insisting upon it that a knowledge of these authors and with it the time in which they lived and moved and had their being, is a good thing for all teachers, and especially for those