

assisted him by twisting the candle-wicks and filling the moulds all day, and at night I read by myself. At twelve my father bound me to my brother, a printer in Boston, and with him I worked hard all day at press and case, and again read by myself at night.'

Here the governor, spanking his hands together, put up a loud whistle, while his eye balls, wild with surprise, rolled about in their sockets as if in a mighty mind to hop out.

'Impossible, young man!' he exclaimed; 'impossible! you are only sounding my credulity. I can never believe one half this.' Then turning to the captain he said: 'Captain you are an intelligent, man and from Boston; pray tell me, can this young man here be aiming at any thing but to quiz me?'

'No, indeed, please your excellency,' replied the captain, 'Mr. Franklin is not quizzing you; he is saying what is really true, for I am acquainted with his father and family.'

The governor then turning to Ben, said more moderately:— 'Well my dear, wonderful boy, I ask your pardon for doubting your word: and now pray tell me, for I feel a stronger desire than ever to hear your objection to learning the dead languages.'

'Why, sir, I object to it principally on account of the shortness of human life. Taking them one with another, men do not live but about forty years. Plutarch, indeed puts it only thirty-three. But say forty. Well, of this full ten years are lost in boyhood, before any boy thinks of a Latin grammar. This brings the forty down to thirty. Now of such a moment as this to spend five or six years in learning the dead languages, especially when all the best books in those languages are translated into ours, and when besides we have more books on every subject than such short lived creatures can ever acquire seems preposterous.'

'Well, but what are you to do with their great poets, Virgil and Homer, for example; I suppose you would not think of translating Homer out of his rich native Greek in our poor, homespun English, would you?'

'Why not, Sir?'

'Why, I should as soon think of transplanting a pine apple from Jamaica to Boston.'

'Well sir a skilful gardener, with his hot house can give us nearly as fine a pine apple as any of Jamaica. And so Mr. Pope, with his fine imagination, has given us Homer in English, with more of his beauties than ordinary scholars would find in him after forty years study of the Greek.—And besides sir, if Homer was not translated, I am far from thinking it would be worth spending five or six years to learn to read him in his own language.'

'You differ from the critics, Mr. Franklin, for the critics all tell us that his beauties are inimitable.'

'Yes, Sir, and the naturalist tells us that the beauties of the basilisk are inimitable too.'

'The basilisk, sir! Homer compared with the basilisk! I don't really understand you, sir.'

'Why, I mean sir, that as the basilisk is the more to be dreaded from the beautiful skin that covers his poison, so is Homer; for the bright colorings he throws over bad characters and passions. Now, as I don't think the beauties of poetry are comparable to those of