

ætate, hæc Disticha memoriter discere; sed hoc ridebunt hodierni *doksisophoi* [would-be wise men]). Cordierius, of whose ever-memorable Colloquies I shall have to speak presently, wished to get rid of the Distichs in schools as being, in his judgment, not well adapted to the capacity of the very young, and as exhibiting a tautology of synonymous expressions. He would have been pleased to see them replaced by suitable extracts from Cicero's Epistles; but there was the old difficulty in the way—the prejudice of schoolmasters. Thus he speaks to his friend Robert Stephens, for whom he edited the "Book of the Distichs" in 1561: "Ejus usus adeo inveteravit ut etiamsi pro eo et utiliora et ad parvulorum captum magis accommodata proponuntur, vix tamen efficias ut è scholis prorsus extrudatur; tanta est vis consuetudinis et vetustatis!" Nevertheless, he adds, he does not say this with an intention of condemning a manual which the most learned men have approved of amongst them especially the profound and acute Laurentius Valla (quem doctissimus quisque, et imprimis vir acerrimi iudicii Laurentius Valla probaverit). This Laurentius Valla, the greatest scholar and critic of the period, had, as I have already noted, spoken of our Dionysius Cato as being among the lesser Roman writers *Latinissimus*, on account of the excellence of his Latin.

From an assemblage of maxims inculcating wisdom, fortitude, frugality, friendship and so on, divided into four books, but otherwise poorly classified, it is difficult to make a selection. Two or three samples however of the *Disticha* must be given. Here are three couplets in which something is finely said of God, of His spirituality and inscrutableness, and of the course which it is most expedient for man therefore to pursue.

Si Deus est animus, nobis ut carmina dicunt,
Hic tibi præcipiut sit purâ mente colendus.

Mitte arcana Dei, cœlumque inquire quid sit:
Cum sis mortalis, quæ sunt mortalia cura.

Quid Deus intendat, noli perquirere sorte:
Quid statuit de te, sine te deliberat ipse.

These relate to a man's proper estimate of his own ability; to the advisableness of mingling manual and mental accomplishments, and to the practice of economy.

Quod potes, id tentes, operis ne pondere
præssus

Succumbat labor, et frustra tentata relinquas.

Disce aliquid; nam cum subito fortuna
recessit

Ars remanet, vitamque hominis non deserit unquam.

Exerce studium, quamvis præceperis artem:
Ut cura ingenium, sic et manus adjuvat usum.

Utere quæsitis parcè; cum sumptus abundat
Labitur exiguo quod partum est tempore longo.

Quod vile est carum; quod carum est vile
putato:

Sic tibi nec cupidus, nec avarus habebis ulli.

Here are cautions against wordy persons, and against the lying wonders of the poets or writers of fiction.

Noli tu quædam referenti credere semper:
Exigua his tribuenda fides qui multa toquantur.

Contra verbosos noli contendere verbis:
Sermo datur cunctis, animi sapientia paucis.

Virtutem primam scis esse, compescere
linguam:

Proximus ille Deo qui scit ratione tacere.

Multa legas facito: perlectis negligè multa;
Nam miranda canunt, sed non credenda poetæ.

Another sample and I have done: it is one which urges a man to do instantly the thing which his conscience or judgment tells him he should do. The second line of the couplet will be recognized as an old acquaintance: we have in it "the Antiquary Time," with his forelock set before us:

Rem tibi quam nosis aptam dimitter: noli:
Fronte capillata, post est Occasio calva.