

The plan was consequently soon adopted of softening and harmonising the names required to be used, either by translating them according to their etymology, or by resuming the forms of the same names as they were before becoming barbarised in the fourth and fifth centuries, or by suffixing convenient terminations.

For this smoothing-down of rough foreign proper names there was the authority and example of the great authors whose works were again becoming widely known. The Greek historians moulded to their own vocal organs the names of Persian and other Asiatic persons and places. Livy did the same with Etrurian, Oscan and Phœnician names. Caesar and Tacitus did the same with places and persons in the West, the writers in each instance preserving in the metonym, material of high value now to the ethnologist and comparative philologist.

The fastidiousness of taste generated by the newly-revived studies carried men too far when, as in some of the literary clubs or academies in Italy, they adopted the custom of addressing each other by venerable names that did not, even in sound, belong to them: just as, centuries before, under the influence of another partial 'revival of letters,' Charlemagne had saluted his Chancellor Angelbert as Homer, and Alcuin, the head of the Palace-school, as Flaccus. (It was characteristic of the age in which this earlier revival had happened, that Charlemagne himself was styled by a name not taken from Greek or Roman annals, but from the records of Holy Writ;—he was academically, so to speak, King David; while his superintendent of public works, and subsequent biographer, Eginhart, was addressed by the name of the ingenious nephew of Moses, Beseleel.) These are examples of pseudonyms, not metonyms: conceits playfully indulged in by great men, but not worthy of much attention. It was quite another thing to Latinise or Grecise a name that had become barbarised: or, when harsh and uncouth-looking from its Teutonic or other foreign constitution, to translate it, according to received analogies, into a corresponding equivalent term, in communications by writing or word of mouth, carried on between literary men.

The learned Greeks who found their way from Constantinople to Italy in the fourteenth and two following centuries, would readily shew their pupils how to transmute conveniently names that seemed uncouth; and to construct out of them others that would resemble those borne by themselves and by the Byzantine writers with whose works they were familiar. Here are the names of some of these literary emigrants: