

Latin is the mother tongue of the Church, the language of the Fathers and of the seminary. It can never be dislodged from their colleges, and ecclesiastical students may trifle with Greek and be innocent of a modern tongue, even about their own, but they must, at least, be passable Latin scholars. Latin and Greek would never have retained their dominion in colleges were it not for this circumstance. Homer is very fine in the original epic, and Horace is lively reading; but you can get the translations for half the price of the original. But, it will be said, you will miss the beauty of the language; the charm of the expression, the sublimity of the aorist will escape you. Well, that may be, you will miss it all the same, unless you are a very exceptionable youth, even when you are in your finals in the best university in the land. You know English for some time, but can you see the same beauties in Shakespeare that Coleridge or Mrs. Jamieson can? In really learned men there is a cant about the beauties of the dead languages that in an ordinary student is simple silliness. The meaning will be easier to understand from a translation, the language will be even quite secondary to the most of us.

I know that it is barbarian, or perhaps Philistine, to say the beauties of the classics elude us in this way, and perhaps, for those who think otherwise, no one has a right to complain; but I tell the student, unless you can rival DeQuincey or Dr. Parr, you will barely know good Latin from bad at the end of your college course. You may be able to assert as to the grammar or quantity, but you will be no judge of Latin style. You may have the words, the turn even, but you haven't compare the hold on the language to rival expressions or balance the shades of contending beauties. In that case don't pose as Paris of old, lest allusions

to bundles of hay be cast at you. The chief use of the study of the ancient classics in Oxford and Cambridge has been cynically said to be a capacity to use occasionally a quotation in the House of Commons. Woe betide the man who was guilty of a false quantity there. He was ruined for life, and so the necessity of a study for the classics arose. That would not be a good reason for their study here in this new country where the thought, whether in literary rags or in fine raiment, is paramount to the expression of it. You will be told that to the right understanding of English a knowledge of these dead languages is necessary. There is much truth in that, but the student may ask is there no way to trace the genealogy of such words as come to us through these languages other than by a drudgery of years in their attempted mastery? Ordinarily speaking, I think, there is; but if a boy is to devote himself for some years to perfect himself in his own language he might as well study the languages with that end in view. At the same time I believe that the most ordinary boy can learn all the foreign roots in the language in one year and not disregard his studies either. If the classics did no more than this they might be superseded at any time.

The real truth is, I judge, that the boy must be kept occupied with something. He can always turn to his Greek grammar when he knows all things else. I suppose were these dominant studies to be thrown out of our colleges nothing would be left for the employment of our youth. Not sciences, for our colleges are not equal to them; not mathematics, lest they all shrivel up and blow away. Why there would be nothing except English and history, with decay and ruin in the near future. When these languages are set aside the average college will find its occupation gone.