

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE INFINITIVE.

§ 239. The infinitive is, properly speaking, not a mood, but a verbal substantive of the neuter gender, simply naming the action or condition. It has only two cases, the nominative and the accusative, the other cases being supplied by the gerund. But it differs from ordinary substantives inasmuch as it governs its case as a verb, and cannot be accompanied by an attributive adjective, but only by an adverb.

The infinitive has three tenses, the present or imperfect tense, the perfect, and the future. What is called the present or imperfect infinitive is nothing more than the simple name of an action, without any regard to time, as :

Legere bonos libros utile est.

To read, or the reading of, good books is useful.

The perfect infinitive represents an action simply as past, and the future as one that is to come, as :

Pudet me haec dixisse.

I am ashamed of having said this.

Hancrem tibi profuturam existimo.

I believe that this thing will be useful to you.

NOTE 1.—Poets sometimes use the perfect infinitive in the sense of a Greek aorist instead of the present, as : *sunt quos pulverem Olympicum collegisse* (for *colligere*) *juvat*, some delight in stirring up the Olympian dust ; *fratres tendentes Pelion imposuisse Olympo*, the brothers trying to place mount Pelion upon Olympus.

NOTE 2.—The present infinitive is often used after *memini* (I remember), when the person who remembers wishes to intimate that he personally witnessed the thing he remembers, as *memini Catonem anno antequam mortuus est mecum et cum Scipione disserere*, I remember Cato, the year before his death, discussing with me and with Scipio.

NOTE 3.—Instead of the future infinitive, both in the active and in the passive, a paraphrase is often used with *fore* (i.e., *futurum esse*) *ut* and the subjunctive, as : *clamabant homines fore ut ipsi sese dii immortales ulciscerentur*, men exclaimed that the immortal gods themselves would avenge themselves ; *spero fore ut contingat id nobis*, I hope that this may happen to us. This paraphrase is almost invariably used after the verb *spero*, and must be employed if the verb has no supine.

§ 240. The infinitive being used only in the nominative