

like a tree or plant. It was not made on general rules. Therefore, when you are trying to resolve that into general rules which was never formed on general rules; you are sowing the sand; and the result is that after the earlier years of one's life have been made miserable by being crammed by these rules, you find that the exceptions are almost as numerous as the rules, and you never know which is the rule and which the exception. Well, then, gentlemen, there is another thing I enter my protest against, and that is Latin verses. (*Applause.*) I do not think the history of poets is so prosperous that the aim and object of mankind should be to try to make as many young people as possible poets or poetasters. Probably the worst talent of all the little talents a man can have in society is that of scribbling verses—(*laughter*)—and yet years of our lives are taken up in the attempt to teach us to learn Latin verses, which, after all, are generally a *cento* of expressions stolen from different authors, the very meaning of which the borrower very often does not himself understand. (*Laughter.*) Their is another thing to my mind, almost as absurd, and it is the way we learn a language. I consider that a man understands a language when he can read with fluency and ease, a good, plain, straightforward author, who writes grammatically and sensible. That is very soon done, in Latin and Greek, if that is all that is wanted. But that is not half enough; there is no torture in that; that is very simple (*Laughter.*) What you must do is—you must take a place that is hopelessly crabbed, where the amanuensis has gone to sleep, or been tipsy, or has mistaken the meaning of the text, or something or other; and then you must read, perhaps, two or three pages of notes of wise men who have ever read this passage written in very bad Latin, each stating his idea of how it ought to be re-formed, and then you must give your own opinion on it. Why, I venture to say if Æschylus were to come to life again, he would be easily plucked on his own verses by an Oxford examiner. (*Loud laughter and cheers*) And as for Homer, I am quite certain he did not know the difference between the nominative and accusative cases, and had never heard of it. (*Laughter.*) Well, gentlemen, I proceed to another thing which has always struck me very forcibly, and that is, the immense time given to ancient history—do not misunderstand me—ancient history is a very important matter, a most beautiful study, but it is not so important as modern history and does not bear nearly so much on our transactions. Consider what it is—ancient history has but two phases, the one is a monarchy, the other is a municipality. The notion of a large community existing by virtue of the principal of representation—of a popular government extended beyond the limits of a single town—is a thing that never entered into the minds of the ancients. So that the best years of our lives are spent in studying a history in which that which makes the difference between modern history and ancient—the leading characteristic of our society, the principle of representation—which has made it possible in some degree to reconcile the existence of a large country with the existence of a certain amount of freedom, was utterly unknown; and yet it is these histories—which want the very essential of modern history—that the best

years of our lives are devoted. If a man has a competent knowledge of modern and mediæval history it is most valuable, undoubtedly, that he should have a knowledge of the history of those ancient communities, so as to compare the one with the other; but if he has not a knowledge of modern history, what avails the other? He has not the means of comparison, and the study becomes fruitless and useless. Then, gentlemen, there is another great fault in this exclusive direction of the minds of youth to antiquity, and that is that the ancient conception of knowledge wants entirely that which is our leading conception in the present day. Well, gentlemen, I do not think you will find anywhere in the study of antiquity that which is now in everybody's mouth—the idea of progress. The notion of the ancients was that knowledge was a sort of permanent fixed quantity; that it could not well be increased, though it was to be sought for. This conception of progress, of a change and development that never ceases, although we may not be able to mark it day by day, is entirely wanting, as far as I am aware, in the antique world; and I think it is not too much to ask that that idea should, among others, be imparted to youth before they give so very much time to the study of a state of society in which it is wholly wanting. We are dosed with the antiquity of the ancients. We are expected to know how many archons there were at Athens, though we probably do not know how many Lords of the Treasury there are in London. (*Laughter.*) The pupil must know all about their courts, though he hardly know the names of his own. He must be dosed with the laws and institutions of the ancients, things exceedingly repulsive to the youthful mind, and things only valuable for comparison with our own institutions, of which institutions he is kept in profound ignorance. (*Cheers.*)

Another thing not a little irritating is ancient geography. A large portion of time is spent in studying the divisions of countries that have long since ceased to exist, or to have a practical bearing on the affairs of the world. There is nothing which is more neglected than geography. I have been as you are aware, in Australia; but it is very rare that I have found any one able to tell me what the colonies of Australia are, unless they have been there, or have some relations there. The island of Java is said to have been given up by Lord Castlereagh, at the Congress of Vienna, to the Dutch, because he could not find it on the map, and was ashamed to confess his ignorance. (*Great laughter.*) I remember hearing a very eminent member of the House of Commons—I will not venture to mention his name—who made a speech in which it was quite manifest to me that he thought Upper Canada was the province nearest the mouth of the St. Lawrence, and that Lower Canada was the province higher up the river. (*A laugh.*) Well, gentlemen, we are going to make an expedition to Abyssinia. The whole thing turns upon the nature of the country. What do we know about it? There is a great deal to be known about it. Many persons have visited it, and written upon it; but what are we taught about it? It is as much as a man can do to find where Abyssinia is on the map, let alone the finding out of a single town in it. Yet it is surely as