



STRICTLY BUSINESS-LIKE.

SENIOR PARTNER (to head clerk)—“You’ll excuse me for mentioning it, but—er—your face is hardly as tidy as I would like to see it.”

HEAD CLERK—“I’m letting my whiskers grow, sir.”

SENIOR PARTNER—“So I see; but I can’t permit employé to grow their whiskers in business hours. They must do that in their own time!”

MODERNIZING HOMER’S ILIAD.

“Is Hon. G. W. Ross in?” asked a visitor at the Educational Department, looking at the clerk with an anxious air.

“No, sir, he’s out of town. Can I do anything for you?”

“Well, that depends. I’ve got a work here that I’d like to get authorized by the Department. It’s a big thing.”

“You’ll have to see the Minister himself. But what is the book?”

“It’s a new kind of a venture, I guess, but if it could be got before the public it would go. Ever read Homer’s Iliad?”

“Certainly; at least, I’ve read extracts—got the run of the story, you know,” said the clerk.

“It’s a real well-written, interesting work, ain’t it, now? and yet there’s mighty few people who’ve read it. You mightn’t think so, but it’s a fact. Not more’n about one out of twenty—and yet everybody allows that Homer was an A1 writer, and feel bound to kind of apologize because they ain’t read it. Now, you feel cheap, I’ll bet, having to admit that you never sat down and read it clear through. The point I want to get at is this—why don’t folks catch on to the Iliad? Well, I’ve figured it out this way: it’s the jaw-breaking Greek names that knock ’em out. They commence it, and after a while they get all tangled up, what between Agamemnon, and Patroclus, and Andromache, and them fellers. People now-a-days can’t be expected to take interest in men with such names as Melanippus and Ajax Telamon, can they? Sounds just like a lot of Injuns or Zulus. Now, my scheme is to modernize Homer—bring the thing right down to nineteenth century ideas by changing them outlandish names. Call the fighters Smith, and Higgins, and Bill McGillivray, and such-like names, instead of

Hector, and Polymorphus, and it won’t sound so far off and foreign like, will it? You can get interested in a fight between Harry the Tough and Jake Cummins—that sounds modern and realistic. But who in thunder cares about old Neoptolemus killing Eurymachus?”

“A rather peculiar idea,” replied the clerk. “Have you the book with you?”

“No, I haven’t finished it yet. I wanted to see if the Department would authorize it for use in schools first. But I have a sample or two I can show you. Listen to this from the 4th Book. It’s just the regular translation by Pope, with the names changed:

“At Johnson, Mulligan his javelin threw,
The pointed lance with erring fury flew,
And Jenkins, loved by wise Jake Bradley, slew.
He drops the corpse of Moriarty slain,
And sinks, a breathless carcass, on the plain.
This saw Jake Bradley, and with grief enraged,
Strode where the foremost of the foes engaged.
Armed with his spear, he meditates the wound,
In act to throw, but cautious looks around.
Struck at his sight, the Trojans backward drew,
And, trembling, heard the javelin as it flew.
A chief stood nigh, who from York township came,
Old Riley’s son, Smart Aleck was his name.
The weapon entered just behind his ear,
Cold through his temples glides the whizzing spear.”

“How does that catch you, young feller? That sounds natural—just as good as a sensation novel. People will read that. Them names sound familiar—no trouble to stop and spell ’em out. Don’t you see what an advantage there is in giving it to ’em in this shape? It retains all the poetic beauties of Homer, while it brings it right down to popular comprehension. Or take this here from Book II:

“Great Sam McMullen then the slaughter led,
And slew Mulcahy at his people’s head,
Whose squire, Jim Walker, with a sudden spring,
Leaped from the chariot to avenge his king.
But in his front he felt the fatal wound,
Which pierced his brain and stretched him on the ground.
McMullen spoiled and left them on the plain,
Vain was their youth, their glittering armor, vain.”

“Isn’t that grand? Don’t it convey more idea to you than when you read of the killing being done by a man with such a ridiculous name as ‘Agamemnon’? I tell you that all Homer wants to make it the most popular book of the day is to give the characters good, sensible, every-day kind of names, so you might fancy the thing was going on in the next township. Sorry Mr. Ross isn’t in. I’ll call round again and see him. Perhaps if I was to make some of the names French, as a sort of recognition of the French influence, it might please him. I’ll do it if you say so. Better see himself about that, eh? Well, good-morning.”

CAUSTIC.

UPSON DOWNES—“When I marry, I shall take good care that my wife is not my intellectual superior.”

MISS CLASSLIST—“Then you do not intend to marry for some time, I presume.”

IRATE BUT PRECISE.

MRS. KROZ (appearing at the club)—“Thomas, isn’t it about time for you to repair to your home? You are out later and later every night.”

MR. KROZ—“But then (hic) you know, my dear, ‘it’s never too late to (hic) repair.’”