

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CASE FOR GRAMMAR AND PROSE COMPOSITION

STILL, it will be said, granted the importance of studying the civilisations and literature of Greece and Rome, why cannot this be done in English? Why spend so much time on laboriously acquiring two dead languages, when there are excellent translations from them? Above all, why these miserable Latin and Greek proses, with all the grammar and gerund-grinding they entail? The present chapter is an attempt to deal with these two criticisms.

I would note by the way that the first of them ignores certain practical uses of knowing Latin. Latin lies behind French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese; it is a great help in learning these languages, and essential to a scientific knowledge of them. It has also contributed largely to English. These are stock reasons for its study, and probably more than any other have given it a predominance

over Greek. I have already glanced at similar arguments on p. 62 f., and they are too obvious to need further comment. Besides this, Latin is the key both to Roman law and to the documents which hold the history of the Middle Ages, and some persons will need it for these purposes. However, I will not dwell on these arguments, of which the first is clearly the strongest, but proceed to enquire how far those who study Greek and Latin can profitably do so in translations.

Undoubtedly such experiments might be tried, and the newer Universities in particular, which contain students who have never had a chance of acquiring the classical languages and yet wish to know something of the classical literatures, have a great interest in, and a great opportunity of trying them. This is to some extent done already, and it would be very instructive to have an opinion on the results. With certain authors little would be lost, with others something would be gained. North's translation of Plutarch is far more delightful than the late Greek of the *Lives*; Longinus<sup>1</sup> is at least as good in English as in Greek; Orrery has exactly caught the manner of Pliny the

<sup>1</sup>I use this name as a convenient way of designating the author of the *περὶ ὑψους*.

Younger ; and Philemon Holland's translations are generally more pleasant reading than the originals. Aristotle again can be read with profit in a translation, though the reader will often want to refer to the Greek, and fine shades of thought and expression (important things in philosophy) will be lost ;<sup>1</sup> translations of works of thought are never quite satisfactory ; otherwise the recovery of the Greek text of the New Testament by Erasmus would not have been so momentous an event. The thought of Plato can be found in Jowett's excellent English, though we often lose the simplicity and lucidity of his philosophical language, and, what is more serious, his exquisite style. Thucydides of all the great writers probably suffers least by translation, which disguises his eccentricities but not his genius.<sup>2</sup>

But our difficulties are only beginning here. The authors I have mentioned so far are great thinkers or interesting writers, but, except Plato and Thucydides, they are none of them great men of letters. They are none of them stylists. It is when we come to the poets and prose writers of

<sup>1</sup> Some of the difficulties and objections will occur to the reader who has noted my remarks on page 177.

<sup>2</sup> Many scholars would hotly contest this view.

genius, that translations are so profoundly unsatisfactory. We might read Johnson or Bishop Butler in a German translation ; but what should we say to a critic who suggested that Milton and Shelley, Ruskin and Carlyle were as good in a foreign language as in their native tongue? Plato, for instance—a translation renders his thought adequately—but gives no idea of the magic and charm of his style. Or try Demosthenes, a quite plain writer. Lord Brougham called him the greatest orator of the world ; but no translation which I have ever seen, not even Lord Brougham's, has caught the faintest reflection of his genius. And the difficulties increase when we come to the poets. In English, they are as an Italian scene would be to eyes that have no colour sense and view the world in black and white ; or as an oleograph of the Sistine Madonna compared with the original. If a man says that Homer is practically as good in a translation as in the Greek, there is nothing to be done but to listen politely and change the subject. Let anyone who knows Greek look at Morshead's translations of Aeschylus and then turn to the original, and ask himself how much of Aeschylus' genius has percolated into the English of what is really an excellent version. Even

Professor Murray's translations of Euripides, works of genius, and likely to live as long as our language, never quite succeed in bringing the original under our eyes; when we go back to the Greek, we feel ourselves in a different world.

And this is the real difficulty: it *is* a different world. Of any poetry most literary critics would say that it cannot really be translated, if to translate is to awake the feelings excited by the original; the thing becomes many times more difficult with Greek and Latin. What might be possible with a modern language, is not therefore possible with them, for, while English and German are allied tongues, English and Greek have no such kinship. The genius of the two languages is totally different, and to translate from one to the other is like the task of the alchemists who hoped to translate an alien metal into gold. It is a *pis aller* to read the poetry of Goethe or Victor Hugo in English (how many people would think it worthwhile?); it is much more to read translations of Homer and Aeschylus.

And we miss something more than a literary pleasure when we read the classics in translations; we miss the genius of the two nations which created them. The best revelation of the Greek genius is the Greek language, fine, subtle, analytic, capable

of feeling and expressing the most delicate minutiae of thought, never hard, and yet not flabby, the most malleable of tongues and equally capable in the hands of a master like Plato, of wit, dialectic, pathos, satire, poetry or eloquence. And can we really understand the spirit of Rome without knowing the march of the Latin sentence, serried, steady, stately, massive, the heavy beat of its long syllables and predominant consonants reflecting the robust, determined, efficient temper of the nation, as different from Greek as a Roman road from a breaking wave.

The idea that Latin and Greek can be equally well read in translations is a favourite opinion with those who do not know the languages at all, but few, if any, experts will share it. Besides, who would prefer seriously to study a nation and its literature at second hand and not in the original language, especially when that language is so unlike our own? So I will pass to a more serious question. Has the study of these dead languages itself any educational advantages which compensate for the time spent on them? And even if it has, can anything be said for teaching boys Latin and Greek prose? Nothing sticks in the throat of the

public more than this practice, and no wonder. It seems indefensible that time should be spent by modern Englishmen in producing elaborate studies in the style of Cicero or Demosthenes (a good prose is no less), in an age when Greek and Latin are not spoken, and in conditions in which real success is, to put it mildly, rare: and it seems, if anything, worse that small boys, far below a sixth form, should be turning small bits of Arnold's *History of Rome* into Latin, which in many cases is not Latin at all. Can anything be said in favour of such a system?

The problem is twofold, for the study of grammar and the writing of proses are quite distinct. Grammar can be studied without our ever writing prose; and proses in English education are certainly not written primarily in order to learn grammar. The two studies are quite distinct; the objects and value of them are different, and in discussion they should be kept carefully apart.

First consider grammar. The extreme commercialists would no doubt think it foolish to study grammar of any kind, except so far as it is necessary for the use of modern languages; but since all experts, however they may differ otherwise, agree that it is an essential part of secondary educa-

tion, we may assume that they are right, and that no boy is educated who has not some idea of the nature and laws of language. After all, language is the most wonderful discovery of man, and more than any other has made his achievements possible ; it is more essential to us, and more closely connected with our life than any other science : and grammar study, properly conducted, exhibits it to us as not "a mass of arbitrary rules, but a natural phenomenon governed by law and majestic in its adherence thereto."<sup>1</sup>

But why should we study this phenomenon in Greek or Latin rather than in English or French? No doubt it can be done in the modern languages, but they have certain disadvantages. In English at any rate, grammar study is artificial, we know the language already and have no real need to dissect it ; while in Latin we *must* master the grammar in order to understand the language at all, and the study is therefore spontaneous. This objection does not apply to French ; but French grammar is continually referring us back to Latin, and, if it is to be an intelligent study and not a mere learning of rules,

<sup>1</sup>Zielinski, *Our Debt to Antiquity*, p. 49. He has some excellent remarks on teaching grammar.



presupposes a knowledge of that language. How, as Professor Zielinski asks, are you to understand without Latin the mysterious genders of French words, or why a word pronounced *eh* is sometimes written *et*, sometimes *est*, sometimes *ait*, or why *heure* is written with a final *e*, and *honneur* without? Obviously such examples can be multiplied indefinitely.

Again, if our object is to train exactness of thought, modern languages are far inferior to Latin, which has in a unique degree, in a degree no modern language exhibits, that logical quality of which so much is said in these discussions. The Latin here, if nowhere else, was an intellectual. He disciplined his thought, as he disciplined himself; his words are drilled as rigidly as were his legions, and march with the same regularity and precision. Modern languages, and English most of all, are lax and individualistic; in our grammar as in our politics we are non-conforming, dissenting, lenient to passive resisters and conscientious objectors; we have almost as many exceptions as rules. Our way is interesting and has its merits—more perhaps in life than in language. For in the ideal language law is supreme; Reason governs its grammar and the expression is exactly measured

and fitted to the thought which it expresses. Latin is such a language. Consider the rarity of exceptions in it. Consider how its grammar has to keep exact step with its thought, so that where the English loosely say, "If you come, you will see him," and the French more exactly, *Si vous viendrez, vous le verrez*, the Latin insists on absolute precision, marks the exact time relation of the main, and the relative, sentences, and, noting that the seeing will only take place when the action is completed, says: *Si veneritis, eum videbitis*, "if you shall have come, you will see him."

Consider too the strict marshalling of the Latin sentence, where there is one main verb, and only one, representing the main thought, while the other subordinate thoughts, qualifications of time and place, etc., are each in their subordinate positions, like a regiment on parade with the colonel at its head and the other officers each in his rank; and then contrast the lax discipline of the English, where nearly every verb is apparently a main verb, and it is impossible at the first glance to tell what is the main thought. Compare the English and Latin forms of the following thought: "The siege had lasted six months, and food-supplies were running low, when the consul left Capua and set

about the relief of the town." *Sex iam menses durante obsidione, ita ut frumentum deficeret, consul Capua egressus oppido ferre auxilium paravit.* Note as logic how vague and even inaccurate the English is. The main thought 'set about' is actually in a subordinate sentence, and even there nothing in the grammar indicates that it is more important than 'left.' "The siege had lasted . . ." and "food-supplies were running low," are constructed as two main verbs, as though they were of equal importance in the thought. But Latin sifts them all out, seizes the main thought and puts it, as the conclusion and sum of the whole, in the last sentence, and then arrays the other clauses in their due and logical subordination. It need not be pointed out that the study of a language like this is a good mental discipline, an exercise in precise expression, in correct dissection of thought.

No other language, least of all a modern language, has this rigid logical cast. Greek itself has not got it. From Greek we learn a different kind of accuracy. It is less logical, but more sensitive. Think, for instance, of its wealth of particles *καί, δή, γέ, δέ* and the rest, which can express on paper shades of sarcasm, scepticism and emphasis that we express by an inflection of the voice, and

that our written language requires some awkward periphrases to render. (*αἱ δὴ γυναικες* is Xenophon's way of describing the men in female dress, who were introduced into the Cadmeia to kill the Spartan harmost ; try to put this into English and note how much more clumsy is our corresponding expression.) Think of its two negatives, one for facts, the other for conceptions and ideas ; of its verb, with three moods where we have two, and with a subjunctive and optative for expressing different shades of unreality or uncertainty, where the most flexible modern language has only one. English says : " If you go, I will follow " ; Latin, more logical, says : " If you shall have come, I will follow." Greek by its optative allows us to express the greater or less probability of the event in question (*εἰαν ἔλθῃς* or *εἰ ἔλθοις*). In fact, compared to any other Western language, Greek is like an organ with more stops, or, if we want a prosaic comparison, like a typewriter with a bigger keyboard.

The topic requires a book ; but these few pages will indicate roughly how the classical differ from modern languages and why the latter cannot really replace the former for the purpose we are considering. No doubt there are more important

things in education than the study of grammar ; but it is not an overstatement to say that not to know Greek is to be ignorant of the most flexible and subtle instrument of expression which the human mind has devised, and not to know Latin is to have missed an admirable training in precise and logical thought.

What then are we to say of translating into and from Latin and Greek ?

Before answering this I would call attention to a curious fact. These much abused exercises are singularly unerring tests of intellectual ability. I have heard a modern history tutor say that he would be ready to ignore the marks on the history papers in a scholarship examination, and elect on the results of Latin Prose and Unseen translations ; and anyone who has had the misfortune to spend time in examining knows well that, when he comes to the Essays and General papers, he will find a very few first class papers which reveal the exceptionally able boy, and a fair number of bad ones which reveal the stupid and muddleheaded, but that the majority range from  $\beta +$  to  $\beta$ , reaching a very fair level, but leaving him quite uncertain as to the real intellectual quality of the writers.

He will read them and become still more baffled, and then retire to the very dull business of examining minutely the proses and unseens. It will be rare that he completes this task without discovering which of the candidates who puzzled him have brighter imaginations or more accurate or more logical minds. That is a curious and suggestive fact.

In discussing the exact value of proses and translations, let us first deal with the elementary work done in lower forms. And here let me quote from an article by a science master. "The great majority of public school boys are not going to achieve the culture which is the goal of the classics, but neither are they any the more going to feel the moral exaltation of the trained researcher whose one desire is to know the truth. . . . It is that necessary power of intellectual concentration which the public schools must above all develop, and our business is to examine how best it can be done ; whether or not this stage of education should be combined with vocational, and therefore specialised, training. The lessons we would teach are not, of course, purely intellectual ; they must needs carry a host of moral qualities with them (concentration is itself on the borderland of morals) and perhaps the whole training is better described as the power

of 'sticking' to a task, if need be, in the face of difficulties and discouragement. One thing, moreover, is certain, vocational equipment may come later, but concentration, if not acquired by the age of seventeen, is little likely to be won at all. No medium for education can be judged as to its power of developing this quality of concentration apart from the way in which it works out in practice when large classes of boys have to be dealt with. There is little doubt that the reason why the classics have held their place in education is just because they are peculiarly adapted for the efficient teaching of boys collectively. A piece of English is set to be turned into Latin. The task involves concentration, close attention to detail, and considerable logical reasoning; there are no short cuts, no formulae as in the science problem, the reasoning involved cannot be avoided by mere effort of memory as in the writing-out of a proposition in geometry; finally, the task when done can be quickly checked and the care taken very fairly judged."<sup>1</sup>

The commonsense of this is obvious; and anyone who will try to substitute geography, history

<sup>1</sup> *Science and the Public Schools*, by D. R. Pye (Physics Master at Winchester), *Nineteenth Century*, July, 1916.

or science, will find by experience that they are very little use for this particular purpose of developing intellectual concentration, and that they do not exact the same amount of hard and continuous thought as Latin. To dissect a Latin sentence, to find out which is the subject, the verb, the object, and how the other words fit in (the order of the words which guides us in modern tongues gives very little help in Latin), needs close attention, and a continual readjustment between your idea of what the passage means and the sense which the grammar admits. The same is true of Latin prose. You have a number of English sentences written in our lax, coordinate English style, loose bricks that must be built into one Latin sentence. You cannot lay them side by side as they lie in the original ; for Latin demands that the main thought be selected to form the main verb, and that the other thoughts be grouped round it in due subordination. So you must find the main thought, and fit the other thoughts into their proper places ; a work that requires hard thinking, and a logical mind, and develops these powers, which are among the roots of success in life, and, as grown-up amateur educationalists sometimes forget, are very rudimentary in school boys. If



the reader will glance back at the specimen of Latin Prose given on p. 218, and note what the translating of the English into Latin involves, he will see what is meant.

Sixth form prose and translations are the same thing in a much more advanced and elaborate form. Here is a specimen taken from the *Times*' leader on the death of Queen Victoria: "The extension of political interest among the masses of the people has brought into existence a great body of politicians, who are acutely familiar with constitutional forms and processes, but have little conception of the personal element which should be behind them." Now turn this woolly bit of English into Greek, and you may have a rendering which translates literally as follows: "Since the masses have taken a greater share in the state a large crop of politicians has appeared who have an exact knowledge of prytanies and preliminary votes and the forms of the constitution, but do not understand that we need besides men to administer them."<sup>1</sup> That is not, nor is it meant to be, good

<sup>1</sup> ἐξ οὗ δὲ μᾶλλον μετέλαβε τῶν κοινῶν ὁ δῆμος, πολλὴ ἔγενετο ἡ φορὰ τῶν πολιτενομένων, οἱ περὶ μὲν πρυτανειῶν καὶ προχειροτοπιῶν καὶ τῶν τῆς πολιτείας σχημάτων ἀκριβῶς ἐπαΐουσι, τοῦτο δὲ οὐ συνιᾶσι ὅτι καὶ ἄνδρων δεῖ τῶν ταῦτα διοικησομένων.

English, but it shews several things: first, the Greek language's hatred of abstract phrases, which it immediately turns into the concrete, making "extension of political interest among the masses of the people" into *ἐξ ὧ μᾶλλον μετέλαβε τῶν κοινῶν ὁ δῆμος*, and clearing up "personal element that must be behind them" into something much less indefinite; the cloudy shapes of the English take a harder outline, and become substantial, solid things. Second, it shews that doing Greek prose is, largely, rethinking in new and concrete language what English has given us in a different dress, and very often, as in the passage above, thinking it far more clearly. Most people who have tried it would agree that an hour of this work takes more out of a man than an hour of any other intellectual exercise; and it is not surprising if this is so. For almost every muscle of the mind has been exercised: imagination to grasp the real meaning in a new and concrete form, accuracy to let slip no ounce of the original thought, logic to fit the parts together in a coherent whole, besides the aesthetic sense to give it proportion and shape. The result in itself is, in a sense, worthless, but the process is invaluable; and to condemn Proses because bits of artificial Greek and Latin are of no actual use,

is like ridiculing physical training on the ground that it is waste of time to spend an hour putting the body into uncomfortable positions.

Translation into English is a closely allied intellectual exercise, which reinforces composition, but is not a substitute for it. It does not demand the same recasting of thought as is required in an attempt to turn our abstract English style into Latin and Greek, and is therefore neither so difficult nor so testing. On the other hand, it is perhaps an even better discipline in minute and accurate observance of language. The use and position of the article in Greek, the tiny particles with the various shades of meaning which they carry, compel a close and constant attention, and any carelessness is easy to detect. The dissection of the complicated structure of a Latin and Greek sentence—so much more complicated than any sentence in English—needs observation and thought; and the slight differences in meaning between a Latin or Greek word and its nearest equivalents in English have to be noted and rendered. Let anyone translate: *Omne ævum ferro teritur. . . . Canitiem galea premimus. . . . Exercita cursu flumina. . . . Sanguineisque inculta rubent aviaria bacis. . . . Venatu invigilant pueri silvasque*

*fatigant. . . . Iam pulvere coelum stare vident. . . . Victoria Graium haesit* ; if he tries to get words that an English poet might use, and that yet catch the exact shade of the Latin, he will understand what a training translation affords, not only in resource and command of English, but in sympathy, insight and delicacy of perception. A boy doing an unseen is working, so to speak, in a laboratory of language, analysing, measuring, weighing, compounding, the subtle substances of which it is composed.

“We regard,” says Mr. J. L. Paton, “Latin prose as a real piece of strenuous work ; to tackle it requires mental grasp, it probes into anything that is slipshod in a boy’s learning, it calls into play all a boy’s knowledge, and shows whether he has made it really his own ; it needs all-round alertness and resourcefulness of mind ; we regard it as far more heuristic than any method of science teaching as yet proved feasible in schools, and the product we regard as the product of a boy’s own mental effort in a sense which attaches to no other piece of his work, and as an index of the real inward quality of his mind.”<sup>1</sup> If this is true,

<sup>1</sup> *Board of Education, Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, vol. 20, p. 156.

and I have tried to shew that it is so, we have a more than sufficient justification for the presence of Latin Composition in education. And if anyone, still unsatisfied, asked what is the practical use of it all, the defender of compositions would say: 'Whatever our business, we shall need to use words, and there is no better way of learning to use them. Not that Latin Prose will teach us to write good English; a glance at the books of some great scholars would soon undeceive anyone who thought that. But it trains us, as nothing else trains, to be precise in our use of language, and to exact precision from other people—an uncommon but very important gift. For we shall be often writing letters in which we want to be sure what precise meaning our words carry, and to what exactly we are committing ourselves. And we shall be receiving letters and hearing speeches, the exact meaning of which it may be important to discover; and as we scan them carefully, in order to guess what was really in the mind of the speaker or writer, where he was putting us off with a phrase, or evading a point, or wrapping up a weakness of his own in words, or slipping in a qualification, or using language which might be interpreted in more ways than one—we are simply

doing what we learnt to do when we turned Latin into English. The Press, if no one else, will always be throwing phrases over us—Reaction, Efficiency, Scientific Method, etc.—and before we take these flies, we shall want to know what they are made of. Otherwise we may get hooked on a phrase which has no fact behind it. Half the work of a Latin Prose is analysing conceptions and seeing exactly what they mean. (If we wish to test a bit of English prose or poetry, and see how much of it is thought, how much mere words, and how it hangs together, there is no test in the world so effective as turning it into Latin or Greek: that soon discovers the weak places. Could there be a better testimony to the intellectual value of Composition than this?) In it we are continually having to translate words like ‘fanaticism,’ ‘heretic,’ ‘sympathy,’ ‘heroism,’ ‘compromise,’ ‘religion’; and since there are no Latin words exactly corresponding to them, no convenient synonyms into which we can shuffle them, without troubling as to the precise idea behind, we find it necessary to think exactly what they mean. And we have not only cleared up our thoughts on a point of modern dispute, when we have decided whether to translate ‘religious educa-

tion' (simply disposed of in French as 'l'éducation religieuse') by *pueros pietate erga deos imbuere*, or *pueros de deorum natura certiores facere*, but we have been practising an art that will help us later in sizing up the phrases of politicians and press.'

'But is there no other way of learning this art?'

Accuracy in language can only be learnt from the use of language. We cannot learn it from science, which teaches accuracy, but only in its own sphere. So much the psychologists have established beyond a doubt. The most precise chemist or mathematician does not necessarily keep his precision beyond the sphere of chemistry or mathematics; as, indeed, we can discover without going to the psychologists. It is therefore no use looking to mathematics or science to help us here.

Nor can French or German take the place of Latin and Greek. German is a first, French a second, cousin of English, and the family likeness is so strong that it is child's play to translate into them compared to translating into Latin or Greek; it can almost be done without understanding what the English means. Take the sentence put into Greek on p. 225: its translation was difficult and

called for close attention and hard thought. Now put it into French. It is an easy task ; no thinking is wanted, only a half-mechanical knowledge of vocabulary and idiom. It goes in a straightforward way something like this: *L'extension des intérêts politiques parmi le peuple a fait naître un grand nombre de politiciens, auxquels les formes et les lois de la constitution sont familières, mais qui n'ont qu'une idée imparfaite des éléments personnels qui devraient être leur soutien.*

It is easy to see why its translation into Latin and Greek is so much harder. In them we must know much more than the necessary vocabulary ; we must arrange our words on a new principle, we must rethink them, and when we have to deal with 'personal element,' instead of putting it down as 'éléments personnels' we have to consider what it really means. Here is another instance to shew how poor an exercise of thought French prose is. Translate into French and Latin 'a romantic affair' and 'a romantic woman.' In French the business is done at once, and the difficulty is decently veiled in '*une aventure romanesque,*' '*une femme romanesque,*' but when we come to Latin we find not only what 'romantic' really means, but also that it means two totally different



things in the two cases. 'A romantic affair' may be *res mira et inusitata*, if we interpret romance here as a strangeness and unusualness; 'a romantic woman' may be *mulier novitatum deliciis dedita*, if we are thinking of some one with a whimsical fondness for out-of-the-way experiences. If we try to translate 'romantic poetry,' while *la poésie romantique* will serve us in French, Latin takes us far afield for an equivalent. It compels—French dispenses with—hard thinking to find the real idea concealed behind the word, and, educationally, it is therefore far more useful. Does anyone really doubt that Latin Prose exercises the sinews of the mind as well as gymnastics exercise those of the body, or deny that to attempt to get the same result out of a modern language, is like supposing that the muscles will be satisfactorily developed by changing from one chair into another?

The study of *Realien* or the subject-matter of books, is, of course, highly important; but it does not give the command over words, the analytical power of which we have spoken. No education can ignore the analysis of thought as expressed in language, and no method of practising it has yet been devised so effective as Latin and Greek Composition and Unseens. It would be anything but

again if these disappeared or were greatly reduced. Ben Jonson has mentioned a danger, against which they are the best safeguard. "Some that turn over all books, and are equally searching in all papers ; that write out of what they presently find or meet, without choice. By which means it happens that what they have discredited and impugned in one week, they have before or after extolled the same in another. Such are all the essayists, even their master Montaigne. These, in all they write, confess still what books they have read last, and therein their own folly so much, that they bring it to the stake raw and undigested ; not that the place did need it neither, but that they thought themselves furnished and would vent it."<sup>1</sup> No one can be a College Tutor for long without meeting, even under the present system, persons who have a general interest in ideas, and a considerable power of handling them, but are vague, dilettante and at the mercy of phrases. For these Prose Composition, with its precision and its compulsion to think hard and clear, is the best of medicines ; it will not let you play with phrases, but demands to know exactly what you mean ; it will not let you slur

<sup>1</sup> *Timber*, lxxv. *Nota* 6. (The grammatical peculiarities are Ben Jonson's.)

over a meaning, on pain of immediate detection. It is a perpetual discipline of accuracy in thought and word and a rod for the back of journalistic chattering.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter I have been dealing indirectly with the one really strong argument against the classics—the doubt whether the time spent in learning the languages is compensated by the results. No critics who have a real knowledge of Latin and Greek doubt the excellence and value of their literature and thought, but they might ask if the labour of disinterring them is worth while. That is a question we must answer by computing in our minds gain and loss, and in doing so, we cannot expect a result as definite as if we were weighing pounds and ounces; education deals with imponderables.

The case for the classics is cumulative; no single item may turn the scale, and yet all together they may do so. Review the arguments in turn.

<sup>1</sup> Defenders of the classics are often suspect for crying their own wares. Such a charge cannot be made against this particular defence of composition; for the writer's whole interest is in the subject-matter of Latin and Greek, and though he gratefully acknowledges what prose have taught him, he would be thankful if he never had to write or correct one again.

Against the difficulty of learning Greek and Latin set the fact that without them we cannot have a scientific knowledge of much in our own and other modern tongues, and that Latin is a real help in the learning of these ; that Latin and Greek are admirable schoolmasters in the study of human thought as expressed in language, and that they give a mental discipline and gymnastic of thought, absolutely necessary in education, and not to be got so completely and satisfactorily in any other way. Add that if we know nothing of Greece and Rome we are ignorant of our origins, and lose the key to much in our own literature and much in the modern world ; that we are cutting ourselves off from the two greatest and most influential civilisations on which Europe is built up, and from two literatures, of which one, in completeness and excellence, has never been surpassed ; that we are declining intimacy with poets and pioneers of thought, among them some of the greatest masters of the human mind ; that we are refusing the educational advantages which come from the simplicity and completeness of Greek history and literature ; and that we are neglecting to provide ourselves with the only independent standards there are, with which to compare and test our own

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ideals and civilisations. These advantages have kept the classics in our higher education, and we must consider very seriously whether we shall become a better or more efficient nation by sacrificing them.