

did not rule supreme; by its greatest representatives, and even by those who took the extreme view and opposed the more liberal and vaguer conceptions which grew up in the school of Wolf, criticism was regarded as a means to an end, namely, the reconstruction of the culture of classical antiquity or, in more modest phrase, of the texts and works of the classical authors. Something positive was to be done, something definite was to be attained. The result was that critical labours were very frequently cut short and reconstructions attempted long before the necessary material had been collected or the sifting process carried far enough. The preliminary nature of their constructions was probably not always clear to the minds even of such men as Bentley when he wrote his letters on Phalaris, of Niebuhr in his fanciful reconstruction of early Roman history, or of Ritschl in his rehabilitation of archaic Latin and the text of Plautus. What are now looked upon as merely brilliant examples of method, were to their authors the very aim and object of their studies, and not merely tentative results of subjective criticism and ingenuity.¹ At a much later date, when the histori-

be overestimated, and the drift given through it to philology one-sided (see vol. i. p. 282, &c.) His manuscript notes of the year 1868, there quoted, close with the following sentence: "Where may the fructifying power of philology lie so that we may become somewhat reconciled with her and admit that out of all this immense exertion some germs have sprung up? Wherever these studies touch upon something of general human interest. Thus her fairest triumph is comparative linguistic with its

philosophical perspective." This is hardly spoken in the spirit of Ritschl himself.

¹ See specially on this point what Wilamowitz says in *Lexis, loc. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 472, &c.

The great Niebuhr himself, whose celebrated reconstruction of earlier Roman History made, especially in this country, so great a sensation, but has hardly stood the test of subsequent research (see Wilamowitz, *loc. cit.*, p. 464, also Wachsmuth, 'Einleitung in das Studium der