

ture—and to transfuse their whole meaning into a translation, well deserves the honors and rewards we have long bestowed upon it.

In the department of verbal criticism some of the mighty men whose names adorn our domestic history (and whose remembrance we keep alive by this day's ceremonial), have earned a lasting fame; and have proved how in their hands, that knowledge, which with vulgar minds is trifling and without fruit, can be made to assist in the illumination of history, the detection of sophistry, and the support of sacred truth. Few persons are, however, gifted with the powers of a Bentley or a Porson: and were we permitted, on a day like this, to allude to the imperfections of such men, we might perhaps lament, that so little even of their time was employed on matter worthy of the giant strength that God had given them.

I think it incontestably true, that for the last fifty years our classical studies (with much to demand our undivided praise) have been too critical and formal; and that we have sometimes been taught, while straining after an accuracy beyond our reach, to value the husk more than the fruit of ancient learning: and if of late years our younger members have sometimes written prose Greek almost with the purity of Xenophon, or composed iambics in the finished diction of the Attic poets, we may well doubt whether time suffices for such perfection—whether the imagination and the taste might not be more wisely cultivated than by a long sacrifice to what, after all, ends but in verbal imitations—In short, whether such acquisitions, however beautiful in themselves, are not gained at the expense of something better. This at least is true, that