

**SUGGESTIONS FOR THE
IMPROVEMENT OF GREEK AND
LATIN PROSE COMPOSITION,
FOR PRIVATE USE BY STUDENTS
IN THE UNIVERSITY**

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Suggestions for the Improvement of Greek and Latin Prose Composition, for Private Use by Students in the University by W. Linwood

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W. LINWOOD

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FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF



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ΟΡΑ ΗΜΟΥ ΤΟΙ ΚΟΠΙΕ ΟΥΔΕΝ ΕΥΤΥΧΕΙ.
Soph. Electr.

BY THE

REV. W. LINWOOD, M.A. M.R.A.S.
STUDENT OF CHRIST CHURCH.

OXFORD,
FRANCIS MACPHERSON.
1845.

BAKER, PRINTER, OXFORD.

THE practice recommended in the following pages will probably be familiar to many; it does not appear however to have been hitherto urged with that earnestness and publicity which its efficacy deserves.

In publishing these remarks, the Author has had in view especially the benefit of those who not being able to procure good private instruction, may imagine themselves placed by this circumstance at a disadvantage as respects others. The Author cannot too strongly urge upon all such the great principle, that a well-directed perseverance on their own part (supposing of course fair ability and an adequate amount of previous information) may lead to a result equally successful, and more satisfactory in itself.

The Exercises here suggested are of course not intended to supersede, but only to precede and accompany, the practice of original composition. When the Student has become familiar with the style and phraseology of the classics, from the observation of their actual writings, he will be able to apply the knowledge thus acquired to any matter or subject which may be presented to him for translation.

Sept. 1845.

SUGGESTIONS,

ETC.

1. THE object of every modern writer of Greek or Latin, whether in prose or verse, should be, not to write what Thucydides or Cicero, Æschylus or Virgil wrote, but to write what it is conceivable that they might have written, if they had wished to narrate the same circumstances, or to give expression to the same ideas. The mere appropriation to our use of the actual phraseology of the ancients, without considering sufficiently under what circumstances, and in what exact connexion, this phraseology was employed, and whether it is probable that they would have regarded it as a suitable vehicle for that which we ourselves wish to express, belongs to that species of imitation which has been justly characterised as servile, and which, as respects the Latin language, has been very happily ridiculed by Erasmus in his *Ciceronianus*. For as no two series

of facts or thoughts can be precisely and in all respects similar in themselves, it follows that words and phrases which have been already appropriated to the one, can seldom with exact propriety be transferred to serve as the expression of the other.

2. But although this species of imitation, however ingenious it may be, is neither deserving of praise nor recommendation, nay, is to be cautiously avoided as positively destructive of all propriety of composition, there is an imitation of another kind, not only free from objection, but absolutely indispensable to success. We cannot, except after long habituation, be original in our attempts to write the languages of ancient Greece and Rome. Every thing which we do in this department must proceed solely upon the imitation of the Classical authors of Antiquity, whose works are the only standard and authority by reference to which we can discover whether what we have written is correct Greek or Latin or not: whether in fact it is Greek or Latin at all. It is only by a careful observation of the manner in which these writers used to express themselves, and by accustoming ourselves to their style under certain known circumstances, that we come gradually to produce something for ourselves, which although it may not

approach, may at least bear a certain definite resemblance to the model which we have proposed for our imitation.

3. It is to the want of a more careful and energetic habit of observation that may be traced those miserable and abortive efforts which are so often made in Greek and Latin composition: and which degrade what is in itself a most useful and elegant accomplishment into mere fruitless drivelling. It is evident that the writing of detached sentences, such as constitute the majority of School exercises, although it may teach the rules of Accidence and Syntax, can never impart a vigorous and manly style: and hence the original composition which is grounded upon such a discipline, is frequently either an incoherent assemblage of phrases collected from various sources and dovetailed together by the ingenuity of the pupil, or else is little more than a series of English words rendered into their Greek equivalents. But these are the legitimate fruits of such a system: from which the utmost that can be expected is the absence of grammatical inaccuracies, and where the highest praise that can be hoped for is, not to have attained excellence, but to have simply avoided the commission of mistakes.