

## Great Minds Speak on the Classics

*Sir Winston Churchill*

"I would make everyone learn English; then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honor—and Greek as a treat."

*Thomas Jefferson*

"To read the Latin and Greek authors in their original is a sublime luxury. I thank on my knees him who directed my early education for having put into my possession their rich source of delight. I would not exchange it for anything .....

*Dr. Lewis Thomas*

*New England Journal of Medicine, 1979*

"I propose that Classical Greek be restored as the centerpiece of the undergraduate curriculum. The loss of Homeric and Classical Greek from American college life was one of this century's disasters...The capacity to read Homer's language closely enough to sense the terrifying poetry in some of the lines could serve as a shrewd test for the qualities of mind and character needed in a physician."

*Dr. Victor Vaughan*

*Dean of Department of Medicine  
University of Michigan, 1920*

"The careless or the superficial man is not suited either to the practice of medicine or to the conduct of experiments for the elucidation of medical problems...Now there has been found nowhere a better training for the thinking apparatus of the young than the study of Latin and Greek. Carelessness and superficiality are incompatible with any thorough study of them."

*Nicholas Murray Butler*

*President of Columbia University, 1945*

"It was the colossal triumph of the Greeks and Romans and the great thinkers of the Middle Ages to sound the depths of almost every problem which human nature has to offer, and to interpret human thought and human aspirations with astounding profundity and insight."

*Dr. Fred C. Zappfe*

*Secretary of the Association of  
American Medical Colleges, 1930*

"In my opinion, Latin and Greek are the most valuable subjects in the college curriculum... This Association is opposed to too much science, and it definitely favors and recommends a cultural education, with the Classics as a basis. Personally, I would unhesitatingly accept as a medical student one who is long on the Classics, especially Greek, and short on science. Physicians should be educated, not trained...If the arts colleges will stop their pernicious and objectionable 'premedical' propaganda and stress education, self-education, many of our problems concerned with better scholarship will be solved...the purpose of a college is education, not preparation by 'pre' something or other. A sound, fundamental education is 'pre' to any and every future field of activity."

*Col. Benjamin W. Venable*

*of the Army General Staff, 1945*

"In the army, there is always a dearth of good leadership. Character is essential to good leadership, and mental discipline is essential to character. It is my opinion that Latin, Greek, and mathematics have never been displaced as the greatest producers of mental capacity and discipline and therefore the most effective molders of character and leadership. I feel very strongly about our present neglect of the classics, and I hope to see a revival."

*J. W. Mackail*

"After trying many substitutes, we shall have to fall back on the fact that in Greek and Latin we possess languages unequalled for organic structure and exquisite precision, and literatures which, because they reached perfection, cannot become obsolete....The Classics include certain specific things which are unique in the world and without which human culture is, and always must be, incomplete."

# HIGHLANDS LATIN

## *Helen Keller*

"It was the Iliad that made Greece my paradise. I cannot measure the enjoyment of this splendid epic. When I read the finest passages, I am conscious of a soul-sense that lifts me above the narrow, cramping circumstances of my life. My physical limitations are forgotten; my world lies upward; the length and breadth and sweep of the heavens are mine."

## *Andrew Lang*

"Homer is a poet for all ages, all races, and all moods. With the Bible and Shakespeare, the Homeric poems are the best training for life. There is no good quality that they lack: manliness, courage, reverence for old age, and the hospitable hearth; justice, piety, pity, a brave attitude toward life and death, all are conspicuous in Homer."

## *Tracy Lee Simmons* *Climbing Parnassus*

"The ancients recognized that a sound culture must strike a balance between the rival claims of authority and liberty. Whenever we talk about education, we do well to keep this in mind. Any curriculum presupposes a vision of the good, well-run society."

## *Cyril Bailey, Oxford*

"The value of a classical education does not lie in its immediate usefulness. It has a much higher aim than any vocational purpose: the training of the mind and character to meet life and its problems, and the filling of the mind, as Plato has it, 'with breezes blowing from pleasant places.'"

## *Dean Roscoe Pound*

### *Harvard, 1930*

"Modern literature is full of allusions to the classics, and one who knows nothing of the great authors of antiquity is cut off from great authors of the modern world as well."

## *W.H. Auden*

"The people who have really suffered since classical education became 'undemocratic' are not the novelists and poets – their natural love of language sees them through – but all those, like politicians, journalists, lawyers, the man-in-the-street, etc., who use language for everyday and nonliterary purposes. Among such one observes an appalling deterioration in precision and conciseness."

## *Thomas Arnold*

"Expel Greek and Latin from your schools, and you confine the views of the existing generation to themselves and their immediate predecessors; you will cut off so many centuries of the world's experience, and ...place us in the same state as if the human race had come into existence in the year 1500."

## *George Santayana*

"The merely modern man never knows what he is about. A classical education, far from alienating us from our own world, teaches us to discern the amiable traits in it, and the genuine achievements; helping us, amid so many distracting problems, to preserve a certain dignity and balance of mind, together with a sane confidence in the future."