

Review

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write about an author I generally read him first.' To read is for this critic to live through his author, to strike out new thought, and above all heartily to admire. In this way he leads his hearers to re-read Dante. His best contribution to the somewhat overdone discussion of 'The Grand Style' is his vindication of the conceit as a possible element. 'The Grand Style,' he insists, 'can confer its *grandeeship* on any expression to which it gives its hand to kiss or its garment to touch.'

Mr T. S. Omond contributes an essay on 'Arnold and Homer,' in which we could wish he had devoted less space to the general question of methods of translating Homer, and more to the particular question of rendering in English the metrical equivalent of the hexameter. It is Mr Omond's distinction among English Metrists that despite his learning and his enthusiasm he manages to keep his head. He puts concisely the central truth about English attempts at classical metres in two sentences, 'The right way of handling English verse must be gathered from observing the practice of English poets when writing from native inspiration,' and 'Development will come, if at all, on lines already familiar: syllable-quantity will be "counterpointed" to accent, remaining ancillary and subordinate, as in all our native verse.'

Canon Beeching in his essay on 'Blake's religious lyrics' draws an interesting parallel between the doctrines of Blake and St Paul, and touches certain aspects of the poetry with good sense and feeling. But he remains on the outskirts of Blake's philosophy. No one who has plunged whole-heartedly into Blake's thought could make the unqualified statement (p. 150) 'that when he began to generalize, whether in science or art or religion, he fell into error.'

Mr D. W. Rannie treats a fine subject laboriously and unfruitfully in his paper on 'Keats's Epithets.' The most simple of readers will hardly need to be told that 'Tiger-passion'd is short for "with such passions as those of a tiger,"' and the least passionate will cry out at the statement that 'in the great lyric of *Endymion* mushrooms are called *cold*, to express abstinence in contradistinction to vinous indulgence.' Again, when he asserts that 'Keats makes us feel (see *Hyperion* l. 74 and 353) that the stars are *always* earnest and patient just as they are always bright,' we must protest that Keats could never on a point of natural observation make us feel anything so false. But the critic himself is at any rate always earnest and patient, and his researches will probably suggest to those who already know Keats new depths in his meaning and new life in his images.

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*Le poème Anglo-Saxon de Beowulf.* Par HUBERT PIERQUIN. Paris : Alphonse Picard. 1912. Demy 8vo. iv + 846 pp.

The title of this book, its massive proportions, the high reputation of its publishers, and the distinguished quality of recent French scholarship in the field of English literature, all combine to excite pleasurable

anticipations. We may say at once that these anticipations are not realised. The Introduction to the *Beowulf* is quite inadequate, occupying a bare twenty pages, with a liberal allowance of blank spaces. It is quite uncritical, containing good and bad taken indifferently from remote and from somewhat modern writers. Thus we are informed that 'la langue de Beowulf est une variété primitive du dialecte saxon de l'ouest, à laquelle sont mêlées, çà et là, des expressions normandes.' By 'saxon de l'ouest,' as we learn from a statement on p. 738, M. Pierquin means the language of Wessex; by 'normandes,' of course, he means Norse. To the Introduction there succeeds, unexpectedly, and as it were absent-mindedly, a treatise of three hundred and fifty pages entitled 'Les Saxons en Angleterre,' in the preparation of which, M. Pierquin tells us in an unobtrusive footnote, he has followed Kemble's *Saxons in England*. 'Followed' is hardly the right word. Journeying through, or rather over, this tract we at last reach the text of Beowulf, printed in short lines side by side with a translation in French prose, and with footnotes relating to the MS. readings and emendations by previous editors.

Next come ten pages of explanatory notes, we merely remark the curious fact that these notes stop short at about l. 700, with no explanation of the deficiency. Then follows the text of *Widsith* and *The Battle of Finnsburh* with translation and footnotes; an index of proper names; a bibliography going no further than the year 1907 and omitting many important works, and an appendix with woodcuts representing weapons, ornaments, houses, ships, etc. Next we come to a treatise of nearly sixty pages on 'Rythmique Anglo-Saxonne et du très-ancien Anglais,' and one of forty-eight pages on the elements of Old English grammar, followed by a grammatical bibliography lifted bodily out of the third edition of Sievers' *Angelsächsische Grammatik*. Last of all, the prodigal but now flagging M. Pierquin presents us with a 'Lexique' or word-list to *Beowulf* covering fifty pages.

We feel now constrained to ask ourselves what was M. Pierquin's object in compiling such a book. He tells us in the preface that his sole aim is 'populariser un grand poème national dont les origines sont aussi fièrement revendiquées par l'Angleterre, que celles du *Roland* par la France.' Further, he says, that his labour will not have been in vain if the reader 'a compris notre effort vers la vérité.' The book therefore is apparently intended by its compiler to be popular and at the same time scientific. Let us examine it from this standpoint. M. Pierquin frankly admits that the various treatises in this volume are compiled from the works of a few earlier writers. They certainly give a good deal of information, but the treatment is uncritical, nor is it up-to-date, a defect which runs through the book. The treatise on Old English versification is very detailed in its account of verse-types, but there are notable omissions, and no account is given of the relative stress of the various grammatical classes of words. The outline of West-Saxon grammar is fairly correct, so far as it goes, but while too succinct and technical for the general reader, it is of no use to the student

who has Sievers' Grammar on his bookshelf. The 'Lexique' to *Beowulf* is a mere word-list, with many words omitted. The meanings are given first in English, which is odd, and then in French, and one reference only in each case is added, followed by 'etc.' This is likely to be a disappointment to the French reader who wishes to make some acquaintance with the language of the poem.

We have reserved the text of *Beowulf* and the French prose version to the last for consideration. Here it is that we have a real test of M. Pierquin's scholarship, of his knowledge of Old English, in a word of his fitness for the work he has undertaken. The text certainly presents an exceptional number of new features, in the shape of misprints which occur with incredible frequency, and are by no means always due to the printer. Instead of the usual symbols þ and ð, we generally find *th* used. But now and again we come across *p* and *d*, which are tell-tale survivals of the process adopted by M. Pierquin in the making of his text. Stops are inserted or omitted at random, so are the hyphens of compounds. Prefixes thus set at liberty have in quite a number of cases deserted to the preceding word, so that linguistic monsters appear, which will sorely puzzle the readers for whom M. Pierquin has provided the glossary and manuals of the language. The text seems to be based on those of the older editors, modern authorities such as Klaeber, Holthausen, Schücking, etc., being ignored. But it is the French prose version which is the least satisfactory part of M. Pierquin's performance. To substantiate this statement we append a few of the choicer specimens culled from the first seven hundred lines, which will, we trust, dispense us from specifying errors in other parts of the book. In l. 27 *felahr* is 'tout caduc'; l. 32 *hringedstefna* is 'à la proue sonore' (!); l. 70 *æfre gefrunon* is 'célébreraient à jamais'; l. 226 *sæwudu sældon*, *syrcan hrysedon* is 'ils rangèrent leurs rames, laissèrent leurs cottes de mailles'; l. 231 *beran ofer bolcan* is 'suspendre aux mâts'; l. 258 *se yldesta* is 'le plus hautain'; l. 312 *hildedeor* is 'le guetteur au cheval de guerre'; l. 330 *irenpreat* is 'faisceau hérissé d'airain'; l. 333 *fætte scyldas* is 'boucliers épais' (!); l. 434 *for his wonhydum* is 'grâce à sa peau maudite' (!); l. 440 *þær gelyfan sceal* is 'c'est là que dormira'; l. 489 *on sæl meoto* is 'mange avec joie' (!).

This list could be greatly extended, but we refrain. M. Pierquin would have done better if he had given a literal translation of one of the German or English versions of the poem. Indeed, we may say in general that M. Pierquin has missed an opportunity. If he had only taken the trouble to do his compiling with average carefulness and discernment he could have produced a book which would have been a real boon to those French students, now not a few, who are interested in Germanic origins and literatures.

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