

Review

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kings, it is to be regretted that Miss Clarke does not seem to have been able to consult the second volume of Dr Olrik's *Danmarks Heltedigtning*, with its full discussion of the Starkad story and of the later Skjoldung kings.

The book is an invaluable storehouse of reference and quotation which must make it a handbook for every student who wishes to make a thorough study of O.E. heroic poetry, and considering the mass of reference and quotation it is as a whole remarkably free from error. We may, however, point out two slips, one somewhat serious, in the references. On p. 111 the reference for the long rule of Hrothgar and Hrothwulf should be to *Widsith*, ll. 45 ff., and not to *Beowulf*, ll. 1163 ff., while the quotation from *Waldere* on p. 190 has no reference at all to the Hilde saga. The translations are at times slipshod and inaccurate. 'Ðæs ofereode, þisses swa mæg' is not satisfactorily rendered by 'That came to an end, this may likewise' (p. 7) or 'wæs sio hond to strong se þe meca gehwane mine gefræge swenge ofersohhte' by 'too strong was the hand which, as I have heard, surpassed every sword in its stroke,' and the translations from the Latin chroniclers on pp. 43 and 44 are equally at fault. These inaccuracies make it the more to be regretted that in many cases the original is not quoted. This is almost uniformly the case in the passages quoted from Old Norse, which are given only in translation. In a book which must always be read by scholars rather than by the general reader it would have been well to quote the original in every case where a full translation is given. Space might well have been found for this by sacrificing the somewhat superfluous sketch of Old Norse Literature on pp. 13-24. There are numerous small slips in spelling and expression, and one cannot but condemn the publication of a book of this character without an index. Amid the mass of detail it is almost impossible rapidly to find the exact reference to a particular person or poem which one may require; and this detracts very seriously from the usefulness of the book. Criticisms of detail must not however blind us to its great value and interest as a whole, and the writer only makes them in the hope that a second edition may be called for ere long and the author be able to remove these blots.

ALLEN MAWER.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

The Spirit of Romance. An Attempt to define somewhat the Charm of the pre-Renaissance Literature of Latin Europe. By EZRA POUND. London: J. M. Dent. n.d. 8vo. x + 251 pp.

Mr Ezra Pound is right in his admiration of poetry, and in the claim which he makes on behalf of the troubadours and others that they should be valued as living authors. Some of his attention is given to Dante, and in his later studies he comes down beyond the Middle Ages, to Camoens and Lope de Vega, poets not without honour; but the chief part of his work is concerned with poets less generally known,

with Arnaut Daniel and Guido Guinicelli and others in Provence and Italy. His argument is that those earlier composers are not to be treated as mere curiosities or literary antiquities. He is not the first to whom they have seemed beautiful, but their old poetry is not so well known as to make his generous advocacy superfluous. His book ought to be an encouragement to many young people to undertake some explorations, and make discoveries for themselves, especially among the lyric poets who were the masters of Dante. Generally speaking Mr Pound (like many other critics) is happier in his admiration than his censure. He ought not to speak disrespectfully of philology. He has escaped from it, he says, in order to follow pure poetry. There seems to be a fallacy in this, and a misconception of the nature of pure poetry. It is true that the enjoyment of poetry is a different thing from a philological demonstration, but the study of poetry, if it is to be anything but monotonous praise, is bound to be technical and analytic. The student of pure music or architecture does not boast of escaping from the scientific foundations of his art. One might appeal to Dante, whose analysis of his own poems is as strict as Euclid, and whose treatise *De Vulgari Eloquentia* is (for the most part) pure and dry philology. There is also the example of Jacob Grimm. The Preface to the *Deutsche Grammatik* shows more toleration and more comprehension than Mr Pound. Grimm's immediate motive for his linguistic work was his interest in the poetry of Walther and Wolfram, and he is not ashamed as many philologists would be to speak of poetry in his preface; nor, on the other hand, is he troubled as Mr Pound appears to be, by any fear lest philology should hinder his appreciation of the poets.

Mr Pound has not paid quite enough attention to small things; some dead flies have escaped his notice. There is a grating misquotation of the most beautiful of all Provençal lyrics, the poem of Bernart de Ventadour which begins with the song of the lark, in a passage which Dante could not outdo. Some of the minor conventions are neglected; why should 'Dr W. P. Ker' be treated with outward respect (even though his conclusions are rejected) when 'Paget Toynbee' is spoken of without ceremony (though on the whole with approbation)? Miss Farnell's translation of the *Lives* of the Troubadours has never yet had all the gratitude it deserves; Mr Pound speaks of her, abruptly, as 'Farnell'; otherwise he does no injustice to her admirable book. The great fault of Mr Pound's work is that it shows too little consideration for the readers who know nothing, but who are prepared to learn. The readers who know as much as Mr Pound about these poets are few in number; those who know less will have great difficulty in making out the meaning of his arguments. No doubt, it is one of the hardest problems in historical writing: how to make an intelligible story about a literature wholly unfamiliar and foreign. The thing can be done; Mr Nicholson's *Literary History of the Arabs* is a fascinating book for many readers who know nothing of Arabic and who were previously little interested in the subject. It is not everyone who can perform a feat of skill like this; Mr Pound has certainly not come near to equal it.

Those who wish for a clear statement of the aims and the several kinds of Provençal poetry will find nothing here to compare with the three papers by M. Jeanroy, published a few years ago in the *Revue des deux mondes*.

If many of Mr Pound's opinions seem debatable, that is no more than may be said of the greatest critics. Is not his estimate of Camoens rather too low, and unjust to the lyrical poetry? Coming back to the earlier poets, we might ask whether the Count of Poitiers—'William Earl of Poitou'—did not deserve more attention than is given him. 'The Spirit of Romance' is in his rhymes; more particularly, his poems are interesting for their mediation between popular and 'courtly' forms; for their ribaldry, their pathos, both equally genuine and characteristic; for their mastery of the shorter forms of verse, unlike the statelier and slower measures which have the heroic line as their base. Prosody ought to have been used more freely in explaining the character of the early lyric poets; it is repulsive to many students, but those who are engaged in the history of poetry cannot afford to do without it. The patterns of verse can be described in such a way as to explain many poetical things outside of prosody. In the earlier lyric poetry of the Romance languages—French, Provençal and Italian—(not to speak of the lyrics of the Minnesingers) there are frequent anticipations of later forms; not only of stanzas (such as the *rhyme royal*) but of phrasing and poetical syntax. There are many Provençal poets who are Elizabethan in their poetical language—in verse, in ideas, and in the way their ideas are disposed. It might be interesting to consider in what respects the following passage differs from the manner of the Elizabethan sonneteers—say Drayton or Daniel:

Amors et ieu em de tal guiza pres
 Qu'ora ni jorn, nueg ni mati ni ser
 No s part de me, ni eu de bon esper
 E mort m'agra la dolors, tan grans es,
 S'en bon esper no m fos asseguratz.

A survey which goes from the earliest Provençal to Camoens and Lope de Vega, and which is not checked by the most difficult and subtle passages, might have brought out more clearly the relation of the different schools or orders to one another; of Petrarch to the Provençal authors, of Camoens to Petrarch. The title of the book implies that there is a real community of poets, that they have ideas in common, that thoughts and melodies are translated from one age and one language to another. The history of 'courtly makers' from William of Poitiers to Cowley might be a tedious thing, and much of it would be a record of vanities; but it is not impossible. It requires a fine understanding of poetry such as is displayed throughout this book; it requires also a less enthusiastic style, a more deliberate and more prosaic method; the example of Dante is not to be despised; he did not think it expedient to be poetical in style when he was writing as an analyst of poetry.

W. P. KER.

LONDON.

M. L. R. VII.

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