Beowulf by W. J. Sedgefield

Review by: P. G. Thomas

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Mr Grendon writes very pleasantly, though insular prejudice must protest that 'growsome' (p. 177) is a wanton disfigurement of 'gruesome,' and that even the liberal-minded authors of *The King's English* would hardly defend the vicious split infinitive on p. 157. In considering the volume as a whole, criticism is merged in acknowledgment; for if Mr Grendon does not utter a final word on any aspect of the subject, he offers very much that is suggestive, and presents this fascinating and rather neglected material in a most convenient and attractive form.

A. R. SKEMP.

SHEFFIELD.

Beowulf. Edited by W. J. SEDGEFIELD. Manchester: University Press. 1910. 8vo. viii + 300 pp.

In England we have had no edition of *Beowulf* since the appearance of Wyatt's text and glossary (1894, 1898), though the elaborate work of Holthausen (1905-9) has appeared meanwhile in Germany. To this latter edition all later editors are necessarily under great obligations, and its influence is apparent in the work of Dr Sedgefield. The text, for example, is much less conservative than that of Wyatt, and on the lines of the modern reconstructed editions.

The Introduction is, perhaps, the most important part of the book, and sums up in a useful way the results of the investigation of the past few years. Following upon the account of the MS. and of the methods in accordance with which the text has been constructed, we have sections dealing concisely with the dialect, grammatical forms, syntax, metre, style and vocabulary. The evidence for the date of the poem is supplemented by the important criteria of Morsbach, which have been adopted as the basis of Richter's recent work, *Chronologische Studien zur angels. Literatur*. The remarks on metre are supplemented by a concise discussion in an appendix of the theories of Sievers and of Kaluza.

In his treatment of subject-matter, Dr Sedgefield follows the lines laid down by Olrik and Panzer, the mythological interpretations of the Müllenhof school being relegated to the background. The inclusion of this material distinguishes the present edition from all its predecessors, and suggests a new point of departure for later investigation. In this connexion, reference might have been made in the bibliography to the article by W. W. Lawrence, 'Some disputed questions in *Beowulf* Criticism¹.' The bibliography also omits Chadwick's *Origin of the English Nation*, which should have been included on other grounds. Dr Sedgefield's conclusion 'that the case for translation or adaptation of a Scandinavian poem is not proved, as the tone of the *Beowulf* is essentially English' seems more probable than that set forward by Panzer in his epoch-making book.

The text has been printed without any indications of vowel length,

¹ *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 1909.

but as this matter has been attended to in the glossary, no injustice has been done to students. In the glossary it would have been more correct to print 'þyhtig' and 'yppe' with long stressed vowels. Other false quantities are probably misprints.

The Notes contain much useful material, and among other things the case for certain emendations introduced by the editor: these have appeared separately in the *Modern Language Review*. With regard to the suggested reading 'wette' for 'wehte,' l. 2854, it may be worth noting that *Genesis*, l. 1922, has 'wætrum weaht.'

To discuss the whole of the material in the Notes is impossible here, but attention may be directed to a few points.

- l. 24. 'leode' is more likely to be nom. plur. = 'people.' Cf. l. 2500 where 'gelæste' is followed by the accus. The glossary gives no hint of the accus. construction after 'gelæstan' = 'to help' (p. 236).
- l. 204. 'sceawedon' would seem to mean 'examined,' 'gazed into.'
- ll. 207—9. A note might have been added here, seeing that the references in 'secg' and 'land-gemyrcu' are by no means obvious.
- l. 459. This note is misleading, since 'gesloh þin fæder' is the MS. reading. The deviation from the MS. in the text should have been indicated in a foot-note on p. 54.
- l. 749. I imagine that 'wið earm gesæt' means 'rested on his arm' rather than 'clung to the arm,' cf. *Christ and Satan* (Grein-Wülker, II, 2, p. 545).
- l. 870. Rieger's suggestion that these words might fall into a parenthesis was worth consideration.
- l. 1072. Möller's identification of the 'Eotenas' with the followers of Hnæf and Hengest should have been noted. So also, in the list of proper names.
- l. 1363. Miss Wright's discovery of the M.E. 'rind' = frost makes it possible to retain the MS. reading here.
- l. 1512. 'aglæcan' is gen. rather than acc. sing.
- ll. 1537 and 1541 demand some discussion. In the latter, 'andlean' is, on metrical grounds, the more likely reading.
The same remark applies to l. 1728, where, according to Klaeber, 'hweorfan' has merely the force of the verb 'to be.'
- l. 1781. 'ofer' is treated differently in the note and in the glossary.
- l. 1797. The argument seems insufficient to establish a collective force for 'pegnes.' Beowulf would naturally have a special attendant assigned to him.
- l. 1936. 'handgrip' is more likely to mean 'arrest' than 'strangling.'
- l. 2029. For 'ending with *leodhryre*' read 'ending with *duge*.'
- l. 2035. It is difficult to see how 'dryhtbearn,' explained in the glossary as 'noble youth,' can stand in apposition to 'fæmnan.' Klaeber appears to refer 'dryhtbeorn' not to the son of Froda, but to the Danish attendant of Freawaru, and his interpretation suits the text admirably, cf. l. 2053.

In conclusion, we would thank Dr Sedgfield for an edition, the most elaborate that has yet appeared in English, which in its concise introduction and notes marshals much valuable material accessible up to now only in learned periodicals and dissertations.

P. G. THOMAS.

LONDON.

La vie de P. de Ronsard de Claude Binet (1586). By PAUL LAUMONIER. Paris: Hachette. 1910. 8vo. xlviii + 259 pp.

Ronsard poète lyrique. By PAUL LAUMONIER. Paris: Hachette. 1909. 8vo. li + 806 pp.

Tableau chronologique des œuvres de Ronsard, suivi de poésies non recueillies et d'une table alphabétique. By PAUL LAUMONIER. 2me édition. Paris: Hachette. 1911. 8vo. xi + 140 pp.

The above three works, which are the fruit of ten years' continuous study, form at once a noble monument to the memory of Ronsard, and the most important contribution that has yet been made to the study of his poetry. It is with feelings of deep admiration that I offer to their author my most hearty congratulations. It will be convenient to notice first the edition of Binet's *Life*. Binet has long been regarded as an incontestable authority, and writer after writer has tranquilly repeated statements about Ronsard solely on the testimony of *le vieux* Binet. The first to question his credit was M. Henri Chamard, and it was some observations of his, made nearly twelve years ago, which convinced M. Laumonier that a critical examination of the *Life* was necessary. Before however he had realised his project, Miss Evers, an American student, published in 1905 a critical edition, based upon the three texts of 1586, 1587 and 1597¹. M. Laumonier, while doing full justice to her work, rightly claims that it has not made his own superfluous. Certain inexactitudes, inevitable from the conditions under which Miss Evers was working, far from the *Bibliothèque nationale*, required correction, while the historical commentary, which in Miss Evers' edition was of very modest proportions, has become in M. Laumonier's expert hands of first-rate importance.

In the introduction M. Laumonier shows that Binet was only about seventeen when he was introduced to Ronsard, probably by Dorat, and probably in or about the year 1570; that he saw very little of him till the last three years of his life (1582—1585); and that it was not till after his death that he thought of writing his biography. M. Laumonier also discusses in detail the sources, actual and possible, of his information.

Binet's errors have been so constantly reproduced by Ronsard's biographers that it will be well to point out the most conspicuous ones. In 1540 Ronsard accompanied Lazare de Baïf, not to Speier, but to

¹ See *Modern Language Review*, I, p. 260.