Review

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are at liberty to assign any early date we please to a text irrespective of that of the manuscript in which it is found.

A protest should, I think, be entered against the expansion 'Xpistuc.'

W. W. GREG.

LONDON.

Douglas's Æneid. By LAUCHLAN MACLEAN WATT. Cambridge: University Press. 1920. 8vo. xii + 252 pp. 14s.

Mr Watt brings to the task of elucidating Douglas's translation unflagging industry and glowing enthusiasm. The comprehensive references to the literature of the subject in the first section of the book (The Man and his Fame) and the scope of the entire study are an attempt to clear Douglas from the unfairness of the casual treatment to which as a minor writer he has been particularly subject, more especially at the hands of the older historians. But most readers of the book will probably feel that Mr Watt in seeking to redress the balance has leant too far the other way. This is not so evident, perhaps, in the comparative estimates made from time to time of the translator's position and worth. Mr Watt admits that his author 'stands far short of the peak of Parnassus' (p. 122) and on several occasions he allows for the mixed tentative character of the work. The want of proportion is rather to be seen in the general tone and treatment, in the comparisons suggested, the quotations from other authors used as illustrations, and, above all, in the metaphors employed. Yet the abundant citations from the text, which allow even the reader who does not know or possess the original to form some judgment of his own, show that there is in the body of Douglas's work an undoubted vigour, at times a certain sense of strong and picturesque phrasing, a certain capacity for first-hand description, which have been perhaps overlooked except in the better known Prologues. These Prologues naturally stimulate Mr Watt's appreciative powers to their uttermost. Metre and meaning of each are analysed in full.

A similar want of proportion or discrimination lies at the root of the criticism which can be brought against the whole of the first and more lyrical portion of the book. The historical importance of Gawain Douglas lies in his transitional character, mediaevalism behind, humanism before. An intimate understanding of what is implied in both these terms is indispensable to the study of such an author. But here the critic and historian find themselves in country none the less difficult because so often traversed. Once more, in a few estimating and qualifying sentences, Mr Watt makes some of the necessary allowances. Of the Renaissance, for example, he says, characteristically: '[it] was a process rather than an explosive event. Men could not set their watches by it, but they could float their spiritual emprise upon it' (p. 26). But constantly elsewhere, the lyrical warmth of his description of this comprehensive re-birth provokes reservations in the judiciously minded reader (cf.

pp. 26—34). More serious is the fact that this ultra-humanist eulogy of the New Learning leads to an unsatisfactory attitude towards mediaevalism. We cannot but feel that Mr Watt's view of the mediaeval period resembles that estimate of the eighteenth century which finds in it little but coming Wordsworthianism casting a few shadows before. In so far as he considers mediaevalism as a thing in itself he apparently limits it to theological scholasticism. He seems to deny it Nature, Reality and Art (p. 26, p. 30, p. 46). Any display of power during the mediaeval period is not a day (to borrow his own method of expression) but a dawn (cf. p. 26 for twelfth century revival; p. 27 for Dante and Langland). He is not explicit as to Chaucer, but the first part of the *Roman de la Rose* belongs to the old and effete; the second to the new and vital. The chronological factor of development within the mediaeval period and the personal factor of individual genius are very largely passed over. Moreover, when looked at in the most concrete fashion possible, the classical, the mediaeval, the Renaissance, will each be found to afford scope for the whole gamut of human variability, and the man with eyes will see 'Nature' at any time.

The most valuable portion of the Book seems to us to be Section IV (and the appendices) dealing with MSS. and readings. Somewhat less valuable but full of material is the preceding section: 'The Translation and its Result.' Considerably less satisfactory is Section V: 'Language and Influences.' A full philological explanation of Douglas's literary language is not, of course, attempted. It would be beyond even the ample scope of this book. It would have been better, therefore, to confine the treatment to illustration of the more literary side of the subject and to the provision of some guidance for the general reader, without touching (as Mr Watt does in some paragraphs) on historical and philological explanations. To the student well-versed in Old and Middle English these explanations will often seem to require correction¹.

We have left until last the feature which will be the first to strike the reader—the style. There are some slips in grammar—possibly no more than slips²—some paragraphs the construction or drift of which is not clear³, some Scotticisms, some technical or semi-technical terms⁴ which might be left to a more purely technical context, a great number of adverbs like 'awakingly,' 'creatingly,' and perhaps an overdose of terms like 'throb,' 'plangent,' 'vibrant,' and their kind.⁵ But these are comparatively minor points. They are dwarfed by the imagery. A metaphor is to Mr Watt what Dr Johnson said a pun was to Shakespeare. The metaphors are usually poetical⁶. But a man must use the best of

¹ E.g. p. 172, the comment on 'his fadder brudir': 'Of course, in Old English, this very word *father* had formed the genitive with *-es*, etc.'

² Cf. p. 28, '...though in him are found, also, some of the older framework of mediaeval conventions.'

³ Cf. the beginning of § 2, p. 163.

⁴ E.g. the very ugly 'Anglic.'

⁵ P. 75. 'Douglas's *Aeneid* is...an open door through which the spirit of Northern poetry walked into the wide fields of the South. *The Kingis Quair* was a window ajar, letting in the melody of the world's music, northward blown.'

these warily. We confess that there are some at which our visualising faculty jibs. Some renaissance of the Colossus seems to be suggested in the following: 'Erasmus the Humanist—who raised his foot and let the tide of the Reformation run away from under, unuplifting—...' The same faculty finds itself also somewhat strained in reading the passage (p. 85) where Douglas, having in one sentence gone down an untrodden track with a candle, proves himself in the next a master mariner on the classic seas (keeping the same candle). We are thus bold to comment on these metaphors because, in our opinion, they do a disservice to the industry, the painstaking research, the genuine appreciation, of which the book is witness. They diminish in frequency as Mr Watt gets to the more detailed portions of his study. A less vivid style in the earlier part would be less provocative of criticism other than stylistic.

GLADYS D. WILLCOCK.

ENGLEFIELD GREEN.

The Problem of 'Hamlet.' By the Rt Hon. J. M. ROBERTSON. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd. 1919. 90 pp. 5s.

Hamlet: An Historical and Comparative Study. By ELMER EDGAR STOLL. (Research Publ. of the University of Minnesota. Vol. VIII, No. 5.) 76 pp. \$ 1.00.

Studier over Hamlet-Teksterne. I. Af V. ØSTERBERG. Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel. 1920. 74 pp.

In the introduction to *The Works of Thomas Kyd* Dr F. S. Boas concludes his section on the old *Hamlet* with the words: '*Hamlet* in its final form holds its unique position less as a play, in the strict sense, than as a marvellous literary creation thrown into dramatic form. Generations of critics have sought to find a completely satisfying interpretation of the work. They have failed to do so—even the greatest of them—and failed inevitably. For the *Hamlet* that we know is not a homogeneous product of genius. It is—unless evidences external and internal combine to mislead us—a fusion, with the intermediate stages in the process still partly recognisable, of the inventive dramatic craftsmanship of Thomas Kyd, and the majestic imagination, penetrating psychology, and rich verbal music of William Shakespeare.' As will appear later, I do not believe this to be the true conclusion to the whole matter; but it is well that the passage should be placed on record at the beginning of this review, since Dr Boas' thesis is precisely that of the first two of the books before us, and, though both Mr Robertson and Dr Stoll make use of Dr Boas' edition of Kyd, neither appears to be aware that their main contention has been anticipated.

After a century of fruitless theorising about the contents of *Hamlet's* soul, it was inevitable that a reaction should set in. Professor Stoll pronounces 'the history of *Hamlet*-criticism a blot on the intellectual record of the race'; while Mr Robertson asks whether 'this whole business of understanding *Hamlet* is not a following of a will-o'-the-