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Erasmianum (Vid. P. 72 et 128)

J. Vürtheim

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Proofs 'eternally impossible!' An impressive phrase! I wonder, in my turn. What would Carl Robert say if he were told, not only that he has not established his case against the *Iliad*, but that it is eternally ridiculous of him to think such a case *could* be established? What would Bethe the *bombensicher* say, or the chorizont who tells us certain evidence of his *must* be accepted, or the multitudes who have swallowed incontinently as genuine gospel the conclusions of Lachmann and Kirchhoff and Spohn and all the rest? With all respect for Mr. Thomson, I must express the opinion that this particular dictum has no sense in it.

'The truth must be sought at all costs,' and we cannot dispense with proofs. The question is not settled. We must carry on the struggle for existence, not displaying temper when things go badly, and not thinking to restrict discussion and hamper the opposition and anticipate its knocks by resorting to ambitious but hollow phrases, with nothing but *κῆρος ἔφα* to back them. 'The Homeric Question is a question of scholarship.' Again, a sounding sentence, but containing only a truism that is half the truth, and incapable of interpretation till all concerned are agreed what 'scholarship' is to include. I think the word has been discussed before now in connection with the Homeric problem. And 'I do know that all this legal language is entirely beside the point.' The interdict is futile. I for one do not know that the language objected to is the exclusive property of the legal profession. It is the expression of principles which are of universal application to the discovery of truth, including the Homeric dispute as it is carried on by controversialists of the saner sort. Mr. Thomson may have forgotten, but it is not so long since Disruptionists were very insistent on a certain obligation which they said lay on Unitarians, and funnily enough they called it the *onus probandi*. And that, too, was at a time when they claimed a monopoly of 'scientific' method in a mood as bold and peremptory as Mr. Thomson's is now.

The present outburst, superlatively positive in tone, is an unfortunate reversion to the arrogant attitude towards the Unitarian belief that used to prevail in advanced circles. There is no reason in it and no reason for it. The *amari aliquid* is no doubt partly due to soreness at having to take a turn as under dog. *Haud ignarus mali*, the Unitarian can sympathise sincerely. But there is the further reason that I have made what Mr. Thomson describes as 'frequent and somewhat pointed references' to him in the *Classical Review*. These are confined, excepting the brief mention noted above, to a notice of his *Studies* (there was another in the *Classical Weekly*), and a paper on his Waterfowl Penelopé. The reviews were of course written in compliance with requests, and much more (God wot!) as a matter of duty than of pleasure, and the Penelopé theory was surely a legitimate subject for examination. The point is, was there any-

thing unfair in my dealing? There is no ground for any such suggestion. One is entitled when one sees a head to hit it, if it be uttering fancies for ascertained truth. The more discussion the better. But an unprejudiced witness may speak. The reporter on *Greek Literature* in the current *Year's Work* calls attention to these very three papers, and seems to be far indeed from finding anything objectionable in the treatment. I have, as many can testify, always expressed high admiration for the *Studies*, and few Homeric treatises have occupied me longer or to my greater eventual profit. That its author had hitched his waggon to the star—to me as to many others the *ὄλιος ἀστήρ*—of the *R. G. E.* of course put us on opposite sides in the Homeric struggle. But, though I abhorred the thesis and objected to the method, I could and did admire the fine setting which Mr. Thomson gave his theory. On the general question of the functions of Homeric criticism he and I will never agree, but I do wonder what exactly he means by reviewing a book from the author's standpoint. The handy expression might be made to connote so much or so little. It would be rash to assume that he means to exclude the exposure of unbalanced speculation and positive error, but after his predication about the eternal impossibility of proof I fear one must be prepared for any *bizarrerie*.—I am, yours, etc.,

A. SHEWAN.

June 16, 1916.

ERASMIANUM (*Vid. P. 72 ET 128*).

O ERASME venerande, quem tandem aliquando ex Orco surrexisse gaudeo, quid tibi accidit? Si tacuisses philologus fuisses! Ridiculo enim vitio sanare conabar lepidum tuum dialogum, quoniam haud credere poteram *te* unquam perhibuisse in tenebris de se ipso collucere aurum. *Te* dico, qui ut hominum vanitatem auri ignisque naturam optime perspexisti. An fugit te *ignem in tenebris, aurum vero in sole* fulgere? Attamen asseveras te verbis tuis e Problemate allatis spectasse non odam Nem. IV., sed odam Ol. I. Itanevero? Tunc autem confitendum tibi erit graviolem esse rem, quam hucusque putarem: verba Pindarica te male vertisse, sani poetae sententiam ad insaniam te detorsisse. Legimus enim initio odae primae haec: *ὁ δὲ χρυσὸς αἰθέμενον πῦρ ἄρε διαπρέπει νυκτί*. Quae verba quid sunt vertenda? Audi rationem tuam, audi editores *omnes*, audi antiquum scholiastam, qui rectissime construxit *αἰθέμενον πῦρ διαπρέπει νυκτί* et optime est interpretatus: *τὸ πῦρ ἐν νυκτί καίμενον διαλάμπει*. Vocabulum *νυκτί* cum '*αἰθέμενον πῦρ*' non cum '*χρυσός*,' ut brevissime dicamus, est coniungendum. Quae tu vero scripsisti: '*aurum videtur habere plus igneae naturae, quia noctu, velut ignis, lucet*,' nullo modo stare possunt. Redi igitur, o bone, ad inferos, nam stultitiam quam cecinisti ne tu quidem prorsus effugere potuisti.

J. VÜRTHEIM.

Lugd. Bat. m. Jun. 18, 1916.