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The Library of Literary Criticism of English and American Authors, Vol III 1730-1784, edited by Charles Wells Moulton (Glouchester Mass.: Peter Smith) 1959. Copyright 1902 by The Moulton Pub. Co. Reprinted 1959 by Peter Smith.

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has been exhausted. In the just arrangement of the matter, in the logical precision of the arguments, and in the readiness and skill with which the most extensive and refined erudition is brought to bear upon the points contested, it is perhaps unrivalled by any single work. Enriched with incidental disquisitions on many different topics of classical learning, it will ever be prized by the student as a storehouse of important information.—DYCE, ALEXANDER, 1836-38, *ed. Bentley's Works.*

The Cambridge giant of criticism replied in an answer which goes by the name of Bentley against Boyle. It was the first great literary war that had been waged in England; and, like that of Troy, it has still the prerogative of being remembered, after the "Epistles of Phalaris" are almost as much buried as the walls of Troy itself. Both combatants were skilful in wielding the sword: the arms of Boyle, in Swift's language, were given him by all the gods; but his antagonist stood forward in no such figurative strength, master of a learning to which nothing parallel had been known in England, and that directed by an understanding prompt, discriminating, not idly sceptical, but still farther removed from trust in authority, sagacious in perceiving corruptions of language, and ingenious, at the least, in removing them; with a style rapid, concise, amusing, and superior to Boyle in that which he had chiefly to boast, a sarcastic wit.—HALLAM, HENRY, 1837-39, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, pt. iv, ch. i, par.* 17.

How much do I regret that I have neither learning nor eyesight thoroughly to enjoy Bentley's masterley "Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris!" Many years ago I read the work with infinite pleasure. As far as I know, or rather am able to judge, it is without a rival in that department of literature; a work of which the English nation may be proud as long as acute intellect, and vigorous powers, and profound scholarship shall be esteemed in the world.—WORDSWORTH, WILLIAM, 1837, *Letters, Memoirs by C. Wordsworth, ed. Reed, vol.* II, *p.* 353.

The finest piece of erudite criticism that has ever proceeded from an English pen.—ARNOLD, THOMAS, 1862-87, *A Manual of English Literature, p.* 248.

To any one who has looked into this dead controversy, it is curious to note how the great scholar outrages pure idiomatic English in the criticisms that established his mastership over the Greek.—BURTON, JOHN HILL, 1880, *A History of the Reign of Queen Anne, vol.* III, *p.* 296.

A curious fatality attended on Bentley's adversaries in this controversy. While they dealt thrusts at points where he was invulnerable, they missed all the chinks in his armour except a statement limiting too narrowly the use of two Greek verbs, and his identification of "Alba Graeca" with Buda instead of Belgrade. Small and few, indeed, these chinks were. It would have been a petty, but fair, triumph for his opponents, if they had perceived that, in correcting a passage of Aristophanes, he had left a false quantity. They might have shown that a passage in Diodorus had led him into an error regarding Attic chronology during the reign of the Thirty Tyrants. They might have exulted in the fact that an emendation which he proposed in Isæus rested on a confusion between two different classes of choruses; that he had certainly misconstrued a passage in the life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus; that the "Minos," on which he relies as Plato's work, was spurious; that, in one of the "Letters of Phalaris," he had defended a false reading by false grammar. They could have shown that Bentley was demonstrably wrong in asserting that no writings, bearing the name of Æsop, were extant in the time of Aristophanes; also in stating that the Fable of "The Two Boys" had not come down to the modern world: it was, in fact, very near them—safe in a manuscript at the Bodleian Library. Even the discussion on Zaleucus escaped: its weak points were first brought out by later critics—Warburton, Salter, Gibbon. Had such blemishes been ten times more numerous, they would not have affected the worth of the book; but, such as they were, they were just of the kind which small detractors delight to magnify. In one place Bentley accuses Boyle of having adopted a wrong reading in one of the Letters, and thereby made nonsense of the passage. Now, Boyle's reading, though not the best, happens to be capable of yielding the very sense which Bentley required. Yet even this Boyle and his friends did

not discover.—JEBB, RICHARD CLAVERHOUSE, 1882, *Bentley (English Men of Letters), p.* 73.

Bentley replied by publishing, early in 1699, an enlarged Dissertation, which has justly been regarded as marking an epoch not only in the life of the author but also in the history of literature. His victory was really complete, but its effect was not immediately felt in all its fulness. Not one, however, of the Boylean confederacy ever again appeared before the world as a critic, though many years had to elapse before Tyrwhitt could describe the opponents of Bentley as "laid low by the thunderbolt," or Porson pronounce it an "immortal dissertation." Even apart from the merits of the purely controversial portions, it has a permanent value owing to the vast amount of interesting and accurate information which it embodies on points of history and chronology, antiquities; philology, and criticism—such as the age of Pythagoras, the origins of Greek tragedy, the anapæstic metre, and the coinage of Sicily. It is not solely "a masterpiece of controversy" and a "store-house of erudition." It is also an example of critical method, marking the beginning of the *critical* school of classical scholarship, which henceforth prevailed among the leading representatives of learning in England and Holland, until it was succeeded by the *systematic* or *encyclopædic* school of scholarship, which begins in Germany about 1783 with the great name of Friedrich Augustus Wolf.—SANDYS, J. E., 1896, *Social England, ed. Traill, vol.* V, *p.* 64.

HORACE

1711

I am indebted to you, Sir, for the great pleasure and instruction I have received from that excellent performance; though at ye same time I cannot but own to you the uneasyness I felt when I found how many things in Horace there were, which, after thirty years' acquaintance with him, I did not understand.—ATTERBURY, FRANCIS, 1712, *Letter to Bentley, April* 19.

Take Bentley's and Jason de Nores' Comments upon Horace, you will admire Bentley more when wrong, than Jason when right.—JOHNSON, SAMUEL, 1776, *Life by Boswell.*

This publication had been long and anxiously expected, and its appearance excited much sensation and surprise. There were found between seven and eight hundred alterations of the common readings of Horace; all of which, contrary to the general practice of classical editors, were introduced into the text. Scholars, having been familiar from their childhood with the works of this poet, were unwilling to believe that they had been all their lives mistaken in those passages which had afforded them unceasing gratification. Many indeed of Bentley's readings are those of old editions and manuscripts; but the greater part are the fruit of his own conjecture, supported by arguments always plausible and ingenious, and not unfrequently convincing. A person, who at first rejects his correction and declares a preference for the old reading, will sometimes be surprised to find his opinion changed on perusing the note, and be compelled to acknowledge the justice of the emendation: and this is a result of his labours which the Doctor anticipated, not without exultation. But while some of his new readings are fairly established, a larger proportion must be confessed to be dubious. Many of his changes are unnecessary, others harsh and improbable. He shows a propensity to confine the limits of poetical licence too closely, and thus to reduce the language of Horace into prose.—MONK, JAMES HENRY, 1830-33, *Life of Richard Bentley, vol.* I, *p.* 313.

On the merits and defects of Bentley's Horace, none but the accomplished scholar can expatiate, and none but professional scholars could feel much interest in the discussion. The intrusion of the conjectural readings into the text has been censured as altogether unwarrantable. Many of them go to crop the most delicate flowers of Horatian fancy, and sheer away the love-locks which the world has doated on. The value of the work consists in the extraordinary display of learning and ingenuity which the defence of these innovations called forth, in the skilful allegation of parallel passages; in the wonderful adroitness with which every line and every letter that supports the proposed change is hunted out from the obscurest corners of Roman literature, and made to bear on the case in point, and in the logical dexterity with which apparent objections are turned into confirmations. Vast