

HOMER.

By Andrew Lang.



THE Homeric Question," says a French author, "we shall have with us always, while letters endure." Seneca, in his time, declared that life was not long enough for the Homeric Question as the ancients knew it, and an eminent English scholar (in the freedom of private conversation) has wished that we could let it drop. But we cannot let it drop.

Every year, in the soil of Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt, the spade makes new discoveries of the old world, and each discovery has its bearing on Homer, on his date, on his method of composition, on the life he knew.

The object of this paper is to set forth, as clearly as possible, the development of the Homeric Question, to show where Homer stands, now that critics and commentators have done their best and worst for him. By the nature of our emotions we approach the question with a prejudice. Here are the two most beautiful poems, and the two oldest poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Our very gratitude for these makes us desire to give the author a personality: we want to think of Homer as we do of Shakespeare, to regard him as a man, the poems as his own, not as the work of time, chance, many minstrels, many interpolators, many editors. So we must be on our guard against the "personal bias," and state the theories of opponents as fairly as we may.

Ancient Greece, in the great age of Athens (say 420 B.C.), had no doubt that one man, Homer, was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. These poems were at once the Bible and the Doomsday Book of Greece. In the sixth century B.C., Xenophanes said that "everybody learned them." In the seventh century B.C., Archilochus parodied a passage in the *Iliad*, and Callinus is known to have thought Homer the author of other poems as well as of the two famous ones. Indeed

this was a general opinion in early historical Greece, though Greek criticism gradually denied to Homer the authorship of several epics which are lost. All this merely proves that the poems were known, and were ascribed to Homer as early as history tells us anything of Greece. Probably people in those days never asked themselves whether Homer *wrote* his poems or not. They appealed to them as evidence for religion, morality, history, and in cases of disputes about lands and frontiers. Thus the poems, as early as Solon's day (560 B.C.), formed a kind of sacred canon, and any alterations made in them (Solon was accused of making one) would be rigidly watched. So much for the history of the poems when first we get any light on them. They were clearly not matters to be tampered with; all Greece was interested in preserving every jot and tittle.

Nevertheless there floats, in out-of-the-way corners of Greek literature, a tradition that the poems had, in some way, been "scattered," either in fragments of written texts, or in memory, and that by someone they were gathered up and put together. Who this "someone" was, and when all this happened, was a question very obscure. About 400-300 B.C., certain writers find the someone who collected the poems in Lysurgus of Sparta, himself almost a myth. About 65 B.C., Cicero assigns the honors to Pisistratus (550 B.C.), but other traditions give it to his sons. Now Cicero, the first extant writer who mentions the matter, lived five centuries after the supposed event. Still later authors tell a similar tale, and all seem to base their statements on a few verses of an epigram, itself late and anonymous. Clearly, all this testimony amounts to no more than evidence of a certain uneasiness about Homer in the Greek mind. Then, about 90 A.D., Josephus, that learned Jew, mentions, as a common belief, the idea that Homer *could not write*, and that his poems were long

handed down by memory, "hence the discrepancies in them."

After the revival of learning in Europe these vague legends were noticed, at different dates, by several scholars. In 1769, Robert Wood wrote his "Essay" on Homer, deciding that the poet could not write. If this be once admitted, several questions arise; for example, could such long poems, one of 16,000, one of 13,000 lines, be *composed* without writing? That they could be remembered when once composed is perfectly certain, the feat has been actually performed. But to compose two long, closely connected narratives, one of them with perhaps the best constructed plot in the whole range of fiction, is a different thing. Again, if these could not be created without writing, how did they come into existence, for verily here they are?

These are the problems which the famous Wolf set himself to solve, in his "Prolegomena" to the *Iliad* (1795). This celebrated work has been more talked of than read, even now it is only in its second edition. Wolf had enormous learning, great conscientiousness and fairness; moreover, unlike most Homeric critics, he had literary taste. But he was dealing with a new and complex theme; he had worked long and laboriously; but he wrote in a hurry, and, between his taste as a man of letters and his microscopic studies as a critic, he failed quite to make up his mind. Compared with many living critics of the cocksure school, Wolf may almost be said to have no constructive theory at all. He admitted that when he read Homer for pleasure, he was angry with his own doubts. Now Homer made his poems merely to be heard, or read, for pleasure, and to peer into his work as if we were examining a clause in a new bill, or a new treaty, or cross-examining a witness before a jury, is to prove our own incompetence. We must keep his object in view, he sang for human enjoyment; and we must keep his audience in view, he sang to warriors and to ladies. Many things would pass with them, nay, would delight them, which a practised barrister could cause to appear very dubious in the eyes of a jury. Wolf knew and felt all this when he

studied Homer for enjoyment, as Homer expected to be studied; he forgot it when he came to apply his critical microscope. Moreover, since the death of Wolf many discoveries have been made, a chapter of lost history has been discovered, and were he living now his acute and candid mind would reverse many of his old conclusions. Perhaps we might say that Wolf never was a Wolfian: it is certain that he would be a Wolfian no longer.

Wolf approached his task as an editor of Homer. His business was to produce a text as pure and perfect as possible. But, as he worked on—comparing every quotation from Homer that survives in Greek literature, "grinding at grammar," hewing his way thrice through the mediæval commentary of Bishop Eustathius "the wordiest of men," examining the old notes or scholia on the MS. found by Villoison at Venice (1788)—Wolf recognized that *no* text can be perfect and pure, that none can give us the very words of Homer "as they flowed from his divine lips."

At most we might hope to recover the text as it was read by Cicero and Cæsar.

Now all this does not very much interest ordinary modern readers of Homer. We are quite prepared to admit that barbarisms have crept into ordinary texts, even since the invention of printing. In ancient times a copyist might blunder in ignorance or carelessness; a critic might insert a conjectural alteration of a line in his own copy, and that might be recopied and handed down; nay, Aristarchus, or some other Alexandrian student of the second century before Christ, actually cut out five or six lines which he thought immoral. Wolf restored them as they are quoted by Athenæus. Similar changes have befallen the text not only of Shakespeare but of Scott and Thackeray. Such matters are important to minute scholars, but we mere readers for pleasure look on them as things of mint, anise, and cumin. But Wolf comes to weightier considerations. Suppose that Homeric Greece, and Greece for centuries after Homer, had no written text of the poems at all! Suppose they were first composed

in memory only, and so recited by the poet; then handed down in memory, and declaimed by wandering "rhapsodists." Suppose that the unity, the consistency, the polish which we admire, were given, not by the original *naïf* popular minstrel, but by the critics and editors of a far later and more civilized age. Suppose that the very lays, or ballads, which these later editors worked into a whole, were by different hands, at different dates.

Well, if you suppose all that, you certainly deprive us at once of Homer as a person, and of his poems as two consistent masterpieces of a single heroic age. Instead of these you tell us that Greece once possessed a set of popular lays, almost ballads, which are now dovetailed by men of a later period, into epics, and are lost in a mass of additions, mutilated by omissions, and generally sophisticated and bedevilled.

These would be gloomy conclusions, but Wolf is not consistent in holding them. He objects that Homer knew not writing, or, if he knew it by reputation, could not use it, and consequently could not have composed such long poems as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. But he admits, not in his "Prolegomena" so clearly as in a later essay, that a single bard composed "*the greater part of the lays*." Say there are sixteen thousand lines in the *Iliad*. "The greater part" would be some ten thousand lines. If so many could be composed without writing, why not six thousand more? Where are we to draw the line? Wolf's purely literary sense insisted on revealing to him a great poet at work. He felt the unity and the grandeur of "the grand style," that most convincing argument for one personal Homer. But the external evidence, as he knew it, for the absence of writing, kept contending with his literary sense, and the conflict ended in the inconsistency we have noted. What, then, was the external evidence for the lack of early writing in Greece, and how does it look in the light of discoveries later than the days of Wolf?

Wolf admits that, as the story of Cadmus tells us, and as the form of the Greek letters demonstrates, the Greek was borrowed from the Phœnician al-

phabet. But what was the date of its introduction? "We do not know when the Phœnicians began to use writing, nor to what uses they applied it." Well, Josephus says, in the very passage where he denies writing to Homer, that the Phœnicians used it "in the business of daily life, and for the recording of public acts." Again, we have a Semitic, though not a Phœnician, "record of public acts" in the famous Moabite Stone, now in the Louvre. The Moabites were a remote and pastoral people, far from commerce and the sea. "Mesha, King of Moab, was a sheep-master" (2 Kings ii. 3). The stone on which Mesha praised his god, Chemosh, and boasted of his triumphs, belongs to the ninth century B.C. Now the Moabite Stone shows certain characters later than those of the earliest Greek inscriptions. "If the outlying and uncultivated race of Moab used, in the ninth century, a form of writing which was, in some respects, more modern than the typical alphabet of the Greeks, that fact alone pushes the introduction of letters into Greece back to the tenth century at the earliest." *

Here, then, we have evidence that the Greeks borrowed a Semitic alphabet older than that which a very unliterary race of sheep-masters were using about 850 B.C.

Wolf next argues that, even when writing reached Greece from the Phœnicians, with whom they were undeniably in constant contact, centuries would pass before the Greeks would learn the art and apply it to literary purposes. They would incise inscriptions on stones and hard materials before they would write on soft materials. Now the Greeks were uncommonly acute. Why should they be more dilatory in learning writing than the Red Men, who, about 1750, wrote out, on a buffalo-skin, a legend of their migrations for the English, a document of some 1,500 words? The skin was deposited in the Georgia Office, in Westminster; it has been lost, and we know not what kind of characters were used.† A negro race in Africa improvised, af-

* Willamowitz, Mollendorff: *Philol. Untersuchungen*, vii., p. 287.

† Gatschet's *Migration Legend*. Brinton, Philadelphia, 1884.

ter meeting Europeans, a new alphabet suited to its language. Would Greeks be more backward than negroes and Creek Indians? Again, as to writing materials, the Greeks would first meet Phœnician traders on their own coasts. They would not find them "making records of public acts" on stone, but "writing down the business of daily life" on portable materials, perhaps on papyrus. Not only the Phœnicians, but the Greeks themselves, had been in communication with Egypt for uncounted centuries, as Mr. Flinders Petrie has lately proved by his excavations. In Egypt papyrus had long been used. But even if the Greeks had not papyrus, they used skins (as Herodotus tells us), like the Creek Indians and the Aztecs. They also used thin sheets of lead, such as those on which Pausanias saw, at Aschera, a very ancient Hesiod, said to be the original copy. Want of materials never yet made writing impossible. Potsherds, leaves, birch-bark, clay, bone, have all been employed by various peoples. Once more, even very rude races use some forms of writing *for literary purposes*. The Aztecs, who employed a kind of picture-writing, had many volumes, most of which were burned by the Spaniards. The Ojibbeways noted down their short songs and incantations on birch-bark, as Kohl informs us. Grettir in the Saga cut his songs on staves, in Runic characters.

Thus we see that if the Greeks occupied six centuries in learning to write their poems, as Wolf thinks probable, they were more dull and slow than all other races, whereas they were notoriously more keen and "gleg at the up-tak." Again, all their traditions take writing for granted as immemorably old. Homer himself, in the story of Bellerophon, says that the hero carried credentials, that these were asked for by his host, that they contained "sad tokens, many baneful matters, inscribed in a *folded* tablet." The probabilities are, says Mr. Jebb, that "the baneful tokens denote some kind of alphabetical or syllabic writing" (*Iliad*, vi., 168). Clearly, if the tablet had not been folded, Bellerophon could have read the message, and learned that he carried with him his own destruction. Wolf

has another argument. Nobody says that there was a large reading public in Homer's day. Poems were published by recitations. Why, then, should a poet write out a long poem, if few, or none, were likely to read it? The poems, he says, would be like a huge ship, built by a man who had no engines for launching it, "nor even a sea on which to try his craft."

Happily we can illustrate the poet's case by analogy. There exists the last will and testament of a French epic poet of the twelfth or thirteenth century. He bequeaths his MS. poem to his son. He tells him that *he* has lived well by reciting the poem, and has allowed nobody to get a copy of it. He hopes his son will find the poem as profitable as he has done. Now an old Greek tradition says that Homer gave an epic to his daughter, as a dowry on her marriage. This tradition could only have arisen in days when a poet could write, but had no profitable reading public. The manuscript could only be valuable in these circumstances. The poet was paid for reciting what he had composed, and as long as nobody was allowed to take a copy, his copyright was complete.

If we want other evidence of early Greek writing, we have the inscriptions which Greek mercenaries cut on the leg of the colossal statue of Rameses II., at Abu Simbel, on the frontier of Nubia. These show that, about 600 B.C., Greek *condottieri*, not the most educated of men, could and did write very well, in an alphabet much later than many which are found on earlier Greek inscriptions. The earliest of all are written, like Hebrew, from right to left; the next, alternately from right to left and left to right. The Greek soldiers of 600 B.C. write from left to right in an alphabet which shows a great advance on earlier examples. To make these advances much time for evolution is required. All this was unknown to Wolf, like the Moabite Stone and other inscriptions: like the very ancient connection of Greece with a writing people in Egypt. Modern discoveries, then, tend to show that "it cannot be proved that the Homeric poems were not committed to writing, either when origin-

ally composed or soon after" (Jebb, "Introduction to Homer," p. 114). This is also the opinion of Bergk and many others, though by no means of all scholars.

If, then, Homer could and did write, we can understand both how his poems were composed and how they might be preserved, though subject to minor accidents. Now, to account for their preservation, Wolf has to imagine the energies of reciters, of "Homeridæ" and rhapsodists. It is well known that the ancient hymns of the Maoris in New Zealand and the Vedas of India were preserved and transmitted by organized guilds and colleges, with teachers and pupils. If any colleges like these existed in Greece, then the Homeric poems, once composed, might have been handed down by the organized system of teacher and pupil. But there is really "no trace of such organizations" (Jebb). The Homeridæ are a mere name: scholars discuss, at enormous length, the few and mutilated texts which mention them. Moreover, the Homeridæ are assumed to have freely added to, interpolated, and altered the poems which they received from tradition. If they did, their conduct was the reverse of that which characterizes the Vedic and Maori reciters. Their business was to maintain the traditional versions of the sacred hymns, not to improve them at pleasure. The Homerids are supposed to have been, in many cases, poets on a level in style and genius and "the grand manner," with their great ancestor Homer. This is the point which was incredible to Mr. Matthew Arnold and to us. Moreover, it is plain that as soon as Homer became the sacred and recognized source of religion and early history, tampering with and adding to his work would be made very difficult. There existed a recognized Homer, to whom statesmen appealed as early as the sixth century B.C. How did the scattered lays of the Homeridæ, which might vary in every quarter of Greece, attain this recognized position? Here Wolf explains matters by alleging that the Athenian tyrant, Pisistratus, collected the fragments scattered in memory, had them written out for the first time, imposed

on them their unity, and "imparted artistic merit" in the way of polish. This is the cardinal point in Wolf's theory: Early minstrels provided the materials, Pisistratus, or his friends, were the architects who constructed out of those materials the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Even later, much was interpolated into those poems.

We have examined the evidence for this legend about Pisistratus, and shown that there is, practically, none at all. "The story is both doubtful and vague" (Jebb). Nothing proves that Pisistratus and his friends were "architectonic" epic poets, and that in an age when epic poetry was dead. Nothing explains why the rhapsodists should yield their "art and mystery" to Pisistratus. Nothing explains how a state then so distrusted and comparatively unimportant as Athens was, could impose her private version of the Greek Doomsday Book and Bible on all Hellas. Wolf argued under a prepossession. He thought that an early age must be incapable, and that the Pisistratean age must be capable, of constructing large and harmonious works in poetry. His Pisistratean hypothesis is very generally abandoned. Even Ritschl, who believes in it, supposes that Pisistratus "did not create a new unity," as Wolf held, "but sought to preserve an old unity, which had disappeared."

If the Pisistratean legend be abandoned, as it is abandoned by many modern impugnors of Homeric unity, a new difficulty arises. Here are the poems, recognized as a whole and accepted by Greece. How did they come here, how did they win their position? The vast army of German commentators, with Mr. Leaf and others in England, dissect every book, exhibiting here a fragment of an older lay, there the work of a rhapsode; here the additions of a later poet, there the intrusions of a diaskeuast, or interpolator. They fight like fiends among themselves as to what portion is old, what new, what genuine, what false. There is little consistency, there are hundreds of flat contradictions among the exponents of the Higher Criticism. Their ideas are sometimes even ludicrous. Thus, because the opening of the *Iliad* says that many bodies of

heroes were eaten by dogs and birds, Fick announces that the passage in which the slain were burned and buried cannot be authentic. Thus Christ is sure that the poet who makes Aias challenge Hector, in Book xiii., cannot have known the passage in which those heroes fought a kind of courteous duel, in Book vii. The commentators are full of wisdom like this. But one thing the commentators rarely do, they seldom tell us where, when, and how the "interpolations" were made, they seldom tell us from what motive they were made. For example, the gods fight and interfere a great deal in Book vi. These doings of theirs must have been interpolated by a later poet. But why on earth did he interpolate them? Why did he not make a poem of his own, and get the glory and rewards? "Potter hates potter, and poet hates poet," says Hesiod. Is it likely that members of the *genus irritabile* would sink their own reputation in that of a rival or a predecessor? It is insisted that one poet wrote "the fightingest parts" and that another introduced Helen the fairest, and Andromache the most faithful of women. Is it probable that one great poet was incapable of, or neglected "the female interest," that another poet, equally great, excelled in it, and that the latter, instead of making a poem of his own, generously collaborated with his posthumous rival? These ideas are contradicted by the doctrine of chances and the nature of things and of men. But suppose this generosity and self-forgetfulness, and this equality of greatness to be possible, how was the thing managed? How did one poet take an earlier epic and introduce the women? how did another work in the machinery, the intrigues of the gods? how did a third, for mysterious reasons of his own, keep foisting in speeches by Nestor? and a fourth, fifth, and sixth add passages of transition from one scene to another? These things, if done at all, must have been done in different corners of the Greek-speaking world. If we abandon the doctrine of an Homeric guild, or college, as destitute of evidence, how, and where, and when were the fragments combined? How were they offered, with

perfect acceptance, to the credulity of Greece, as one whole poem by one author? Why did Megarians, Athenians, Chians, Thebans, Syracusans, Milesians admit and receive the mass *en bloc*? How did it all manage to get *en bloc* at all?

The commentators supply no answer to these inevitable questions. They go on talking of "ancient lays" concerning which we know nothing whatever. They are learned about diaskeuasts and rhapsodists, of whose labors (except that they are appealed to in minutiae by the critics of Alexandria, say 200 B.C.) we have no knowledge at all. Like the Rabelaisian chimæra, the Higher Criticism is *bombinans in vacuo*, "buzzing in the void."

Now Wolf, at least, answered the question, how did the innumerable poetic passages of many dates coalesce into orderly wholes, how did they win acceptance, as orderly wholes, from Greece? He said that Pisistratus and his friends made the order and unity, and that Greece accepted from their hands the earliest written text. But the moderns, who abandon the Pisistratean hypothesis as a legend or fable, have no answer to give. They cannot and do not tell us how interpolations and additions, made here and made there, by divers hands and in places divers, were collected, were moulded into unity, such as it is nor, above all, do they tell us how the poems, so fashioned, came to be universally accepted and recognized.

If we admit an original written text, those unsolved problems vanish. The poems exist as wholes because they were composed as wholes. Since the time of Grote the critics, on the whole, and with many exceptions, have believed in an original epic poem, composed by one poet, with or without the aid of writing. But they have held that the poem was comparatively short, and dealt strictly with the wrath of Achilles and the fulfilment of the promise made by Zeus to Thetis, the promise to honor Achilles by aiding the Trojans. As to the extent of this original poem (to which all the rest of the Iliad is a later addition by various hands), they differ among themselves. Wolf thought it

impossible to discover where, and at what points, the new materials come in and are attached to the original work. The new critics are more confident. Fick has printed the *Iliad* "as she was wrote." Among other pleasing circumstances Fick's *Iliad* makes Agamemnon, unarmed, in cloak and slippers, rush into the fray, where we presently find him fighting with a spear and protected by complete armor. This is by way of restoring the original consistency. As Mr. Leaf says, Fick's method "begins to bear an unfortunate family resemblance to that of Mr. Ignatius Donnelly." It is needless to discuss here the many varying theories as to what part of the *Iliad* is original, what was added later. The hypotheses mainly rest on inconsistencies in the narrative. Where the poet makes a slip, visible to the microscopic eyes of a poring commentator, it is assumed that his work must here have been modified. Now, first, the inconsistencies, with rare exceptions, could never be visible to Homer's original audience, nor to anyone who now reads for pleasure. Next, all writers fall into such errors. Thackeray makes Master Francis Clavering grow, in six years, from the age of five to that of thirteen. He says, in the first number of "Pendennis," that Arthur's mother is still alive; he kills her in his seventeenth number. He gives Mrs. Bungay two different Christian names in two consecutive pages. In the "Antiquary" Scott makes the sun set in the east. All these, and a thousand similar slips, the Germans, if they found them in Homer, would account for as "interpolations." Now, Homer, whether he could or could not write, had no proof-sheets, no revises, and no James Ballantyne to mark his proofs with minute comments and inquiries. He was but human; *aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus*. More frequently, as Pope says,

"It is not Homer nods, but we who dream."

The critics, in fact, are on the wrong road. They do not read Homer as a poet addressing his audience of warriors; they cross-examine him as if he were a prevaricating witness.

Turning to a much more sympathetic subject, we may ask, When and where did Homer sing? what was the life that was lived in his day? with what art and institutions was he familiar? On all these topics recent discoveries have thrown a light for which we would never have hoped. The grave has given up her dead and their awful treasures. A chapter of lost history is restored.

In the dim traditions of Greece one fact is luminous. A whole civilization, once firm in the Achæan lands, and especially in the Peloponnesus, was swept away by a wave of invaders from the north, the Dorians, or children of Heracles. Of their invasion, with its destruction of an orderly society, Homer says nothing. It was believed till recently that he was a poet of the expelled Achæans, descendants of the heroes who colonized the coasts of Asia Minor after the Dorian invasion, roughly dated about 1000 B.C. On this theory he dealt with old traditions, he purposely ignored the Dorian conquest, and he described a society and arts which were ideal, or survived only in tradition. A different complexion is given to these beliefs by Dr. Schliemann's discoveries at Orchomenos and Mycenæ, and by the contents of the more recently discovered "Vaphæo tomb," near Amyclæ, in Sparta. It has become clear that Homer described a real but hitherto unknown civilization, of which true relics were found at Mycenæ, Tiryns, Orchomenos, and Amyclæ. The objects unearthened correspond to and verify the pictures of life and art in the Homeric poems.

We all remember what a confusion of tongues arose when Dr. Schliemann announced his discoveries. The doctor had "salted" the graves; the treasures had been buried by Celts, or by Attila, or Alaric, or anyone but Clytemnestra. They were the Mycenæans's share of the Persian loot, after Plataeæ, and so on. Now the treasures are acknowledged to be Homeric or pre-Homeric, Achæan or purchased by Achæans, and of a date between 1500-1200 B.C. They illustrate Homer most and best in his descriptions of art. These had been thought fanciful or ideal. The art of Greece, about 850 B.C., his presumed date, was

very stiff and barbaric, either a following of Phœnician works, while the Phœnicians imitated Egyptian and Assyrian designs, or frankly crude and childish. Homer, then, must have invented the art which he described. The treasures prove, on the other hand, that there had existed, before the barbarous eruption of Dorians, an art very free, vivid, and picturesque. The gold-work is of especial excellence. Homer more than once speaks of designs inlaid on metal in gold of various colors. Here we find such designs, in the graves of Mycenæ. There are several daggers, whose blades, when first unearthed, were of dull, dim bronze. On being carefully cleaned the daggers were found to be inlaid with designs in gold of various hues. The scenes represented are groups of men and animals. We see armed men, in the huge shields which Homer's heroes wear, reaching from neck to heels, attacking lions. One man has fallen, a lion stands at bay over him, his friends press on, a lion flees, another has just started in flight. It is like an illustration of an Homeric simile. The art is far more free, far less conventional than it is on the vases and gems made when Greece was reviving after the Dorian conquest. On another dagger large, cat-like animals, bounding through a marsh of papyrus reeds, chase wild ducks which are worthy of Landseer. The date of this kind of work is not later than the sixteenth century B.C.; a dirk like those of Mycenæ was found in the grave of an Egyptian prince of that period. More wonderful still is the gold cup found in a grave near Amyclæ. The artist has represented, in *repoussé* work, wild cattle in one compartment, in the other tame kine. The almost over-energetic action of the wild bull is in Homeric contrast with the idyllic and rural quiet of the other piece. Better art in its kind has not come to us from the Italian Renaissance. The fine head of an elk, in silver, and the great bull's head are equally notable. The gold cup, like the cup of Nestor, with doves perched on the handles, is of coarser modelling.

The engraved rings are very curious. Pliny noted that Homer never men-

tions ring-seals, any more than he speaks distinctly of writing. But here are signets, some of them obviously of Eastern origin, others displaying, with much freedom, warriors engaged in combat. Seal rings and cylinders, in Egypt and the East, were used in affixing signatures to documents. Of what use could they be to men who, not knowing how to write, had no documents to sign? They might, indeed, be employed to seal up boxes and drawers, but their original Eastern use was for signatures. One of the most marked characteristics of Mycenæan art is its freedom from exotic influence. The reeds of the Nile are shown on one of the daggers, but there is nothing Egyptian in the drawing of the figures. Some of the rings may have come, in course of commerce, from Babylon, but none of the native designs show the stiff hieratic Babylonian manner. The figures of men, chariots, and horses on the *stelæ*, or gravestones, are extremely rude. Either the art of sculpturing on stone had not been mastered, or the stones were entrusted to very inferior craftsmen.

The *stelæ* bear no inscriptions, but it does not follow that writing was unknown. On Innishail, the green isle of Loch Awe, are many Celtic tombstones of the fifteenth or sixteenth century, marking sepulchres of Campbells or Camerons. They are decorated with rude figures of warriors and of combats, but are uninscribed, though writing, of course, was perfectly familiar to the chiefs and clergy. The most common ornamental designs of Mycenæ are arrangements of spirals, something like what is usually called Celtic work, though it probably came from Byzantium, through the Norsemen, to Scotland and Ireland. There are especially charming patterns on the blade of one of the Mycenæan dirks, and on a ceiling at Orchomenos. Of wall-paintings, or frescos, there is one example at Tiryns: a man is vaulting onto a bull's back, somewhat in the style of the Vaphæo cups.

It is natural to wish to think that these Mycenæan treasures were buried in the deep-shaft graves, with the mur-

dered Agamemnon and his company. Dr. Schuchardt, however, argues, from an analysis of the contents of the graves, that all the dead there were not buried simultaneously and hurriedly. The appearance of hurry and confusion was given by the heavy beams, which rotted and fell in upon the corpses. The mode of burial was not precisely Homeric. The bodies had been mummified, to some extent, not burned to ashes. Manners may have changed between the date of the poet and that of his heroes; but even in Homer there are traces of burial without burning, in the case, as Mr. Leaf remarks, of Sarpedon (*Iliad*, xvi., 674). Death and Sleep bear the dead man out of the war, home to peaceful Lycia, where the body, it seems, is to be embalmed before burial. (See, also, *Iliad*, vii., 85. It is thought that honey was used as a preservative.) In other respects, except in certain details of dress, Homeric life and art closely conform to what is revealed in the tombs of Mycenæ. But it is not supposed that the poet was contemporary with the dead of the tombs. He always speaks as if he were looking back to a distant past. Many remains, especially those of the great bee-hive-like later tombs, prove that centuries of civilization intervened between the age of the treasure-graves and the fall of Mycenæ, and of all the old Achæan civilization, beneath the Dorian invaders. In these centuries, and late in them, just before 1000 B.C., our poet may have lived. His verses would be carried by the exiled Achæans to their new homes on the other side of the Ægean. Thence they would be borne back to Greece, as Greece awoke again to a new and more glorious civilization.

Thus we may reconstruct the story of the most precious possession which Greece has left to us. The poems are voices out of a world so old that Greece knew nothing of it, except through the poems themselves. Now the spade has revealed what Mother Earth kept secret in her bosom. We once again admire to see how "all ends in song." The heroes perished, the sons and daughters of the gods; the gods, too, have gone, the song alone remains.

Thus we have reason to believe in a Poet, not in a Society of Men of Letters; in a real and beautiful age of human life, not in a set of fanciful pictures. True, the former part of our creed is still rejected by most scholars. They leave it to the poets—to Shelley, to Schiller, to Goethe, to Matthew Arnold. I confess that I think poets better judges than professors, of poetical matters. But we probably have the people (so far as it reads Homer) as well as the poets, except Coleridge, on our side. We see the forest; the critics cannot see the forest for the trees. However, even the critics are becoming more conservative. Some of them admit, with Mr. Jebb, that there really was a great original poet, "who executed the most essential parts" of the *Iliad*; which was enlarged and generally "doctored" later by various people at various dates. How they kept up the unity of the characters, the consistency of the manners, the grandeur of the style, we do not learn. Mr. Jebb seems to think that by "grandeur of style" Mr. Matthew Arnold meant epic formulæ and commonplaces. It is needless to combat so strange an opinion.

Among English critics the most sympathetic to the true believers is Mr. Monro, the Provost of Oriel College. Like Colonel More, whose gallant defence of Homeric unity is systematically ignored by German and modern English critics, Mr. Monro is a Scot, and loyal to a cause by no means lost, by no means forlorn. For one, as a reader of poetry, I can believe in almost anything more readily than in the contradictory, the inappropriate, the fantastic, and pedantic set of notions which make up much of the Higher Criticism. Where Shelley said that Homer truly began to be himself, in the glorious final book of the *Iliad*, notably in the last, Peppmüller discovers "the work of a mere imitator, who could hardly write a single line, unless he had a passage of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey* from which to copy it."

Are we to hesitate between Shelley and Peppmüller? On the Homeric Question, as far as the *Odyssey* is concerned, I have said nothing. Even the Germans seldom break their teeth on the *Odyssey*. Kirchoff, however, tries

to show that one poet composed the adventures of the hero before he got to Ithaca, while another narrated what befell after he landed. A third poet, about 660 B.C., foisted in Telemachus, and anything else which struck him as suitable, and worked the whole mass up together. As is notorious, this is the way in which masterpieces of constructive art are usually achieved.

To a mere "belletristic trifle" the chief of the modern Homeric controversy seems at once sad and ludicrous. The owl-like gravity of men who pick to pieces the great webs of Homer's weaving; their honest but misapplied industry; their total misconception of what poetry is, of what art is, of what heroic human nature is; their innocent conceit in deciding, all differently, on questions which Wolf knew were incapable of solution—these things are enough to make one despair of the

Higher Criticism. But Homer, could he hear them, would only smile, as of old with Lucian he smiled at his ancient critics in the Islands of the Blessed.

"Which of the pieces considered unauthentic did you write?" asked Lucian in this interview.

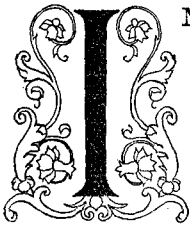
"*All of them!*" answered the happy spirit of Homer.*

*To an English reader, acquainted with Greek, the most useful modern books are Mr. Leaf's excellent edition of the *Iliad*, and Mr. Jebb's Introduction to Homer (Macmillans), with Mr. Monro's *Iliad* (The Clarendon Press). Readers of German will find all the throng of competing Teutonic theories in Dr. Hentze's *Anhang to Ameis's Iliad* (Trübner, Leipzig). A conservative French study of the *Iliad*, mainly literary, is M. Bougot's *Étude sur l'Iliade d'Homère* (Hachette, Paris, 1888). On the other side, mainly following Christ, is, in French, M. Croiset's *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque*, vol. I. Dr. Schliemann's discoveries are discoursed on in Dr. Schunhardt's work, translated by Miss Sellers (Macmillans), with an interesting introduction by Mr. Leaf. The best remaining authorities are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.

Since this article was in print the writer has read in Jevons's *History of Greek Literature* (Griffin, London), where the chapters on Homer are consecutive. The Appendix to the Second Edition contains an ingenious theory of the "Rhapsodizing" of the *Iliad*.

THOMAS JEFFERSON IN UNDRESS.

By Paul Leicester Ford.



IN every country boasting a history there may be observed a tendency to make its early leaders or great men superhuman. Whether we turn to the legends of the East, the folk-lore of Europe, or the traditions of the native races of America, we find a mythology based upon the acts of human man, gifted with supernatural powers. In the unscientific, primeval periods in which these beliefs were born and elaborated into oral and written form, their origin is not surprising. But to all who have studied the creation of a mythology no phase is a more curious one than to see the keen, practical American of to-day engaged in the same process of hero-building which has given us Jupiter, Wotan, King Arthur, and others of the same ilk. By a slow evolution we have well-nigh discarded from the lives of our greatest men of

the past all human faults and feelings, and have enclosed their greatness in glass of the clearest crystal, and hung up a sign, "Do not touch." Indeed, with such characters as Washington, Franklin, and Lincoln we have practically adopted the English maxim that the king "can do no wrong." In place of human man, limited by human limits, and influenced by human passions, we have demi-gods, so stripped of human characteristics as to make us question even whether they deserve much credit for their sacrifices and deeds.

But with this process of canonization have we not lost more than we have gained, both in example and in interest? Many, no doubt, with the greatest veneration for our first citizen, have sympathized with the view expressed by Mark Twain, when he said that he was a greater man than Washington, for the latter "couldn't tell a lie, while he could, but wouldn't." We have endless biographies of Franklin, picturing him in all the public stations of