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BEOWULF.


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On the similarity of diction between Beowulf and the Homeric poems, and the importance of this similarity in placing the date of the composition of the poem, Arnold remarks (pp. 10-11):

'In a poem of known late date, such as Beowulf, written about the end of the tenth century, the definite style is employed much more frequently. Again, the boastings of the Homeric heroes is curiously paralleled in Beowulf, especially in the passages where he sets himself right up to the punishing match which he had with Grendel. There is also a Homeric flavour about the descriptions of arms, houses, clothes, etc., in Beowulf, proceeding not, of course, from direct imitation, but from many of the social circumstances and rules of ideas. That piquant and fresh delight with which the Homeric poems mention is made of everything made or used by men, as if the sense of the Homeric poems were a recent and delicate perception, and the mind were only beginning to become conscious, and to take pride in the consciousness, of the invention of the race, is largely found also in Beowulf, and that to a degree not equalled by any other Anglo-Saxon poem. The sisterhood of Beowulf, the elder becomes his acquisitions with the poem, the more and more firmly convinced that it represents a very early stage of Anglo-Saxon culture.'
It is further suggested (p. 49) that Leire could not have existed in the time of Hroger, otherwise it would have been mentioned along with Heorot in Beowulf or in Wulfstan, the most ancient sources we possess. In another place (p. 86) Arnold says: “the view of Sarazin and Danish scholars that the site of Hroger’s mansion must be placed in close proximity to that of Leire, near the head of the Erlaسود on Zealand, is now generally accepted.” He also rejects in toto (p. 85 et seq.) the opposite theory of Beggay that Gauðland is identical with Jutland, and that, therefore, the Geats and Jutes are one and the same people.

From meager references in the poem itself, the author concludes (p. 111) “Beowulf, as we know it, was composed within the period 558-727. From this interval the first hundred years may be deducted, partly to allow for the lapses of time since the hero’s birth, partly because Anglo-Saxon culture, before the advent of Christianity, and without a written literary tradition, could not have been so equal to such a task.” A deduction made, the upper limit of time within which Beowulf was probably composed, becomes 610, and the lower limit 710.

As to the interloper theories of Milnehoff and others, “in years 750-720,” he says (p. 85), “a moral discourse put into the mouth of Hroger in continuation of his remarks comparing Beowulf with Herodot, are generally allowed to be a later insertion.” Compare 297-114 and 298-5-19, passages both of which are original and of he as the prophet of the Christian faith, and of His mother, the prophetess of the Christian church. Then the author concludes: “the substance of the study, like that of the original text, lies in the interpretation of a stupidly corrupt text, filled with the sophisms and contradictions of that epoch, which are the foundation of all modern criticism, and therefore beyond the reach of any who would have a just appreciation of the poet’s merit.”

Arnov further expresses the opinion (p. 85) “that the compiler of Beowulf was an independent man of some ableness, and that his work is not a mere imitation of anything, but an original creation, and that the author of Beowulf is also the author of the later part of the Eneid.”

The author admits (p. 85) “that the compiler of Beowulf may have been a poet who was not equal to the task of creating a whole as nearly as it has come down to us.”

The author holds still partially (cf. pp. 124-125) the theory advanced in the edition of his Beowulf (1906), “that both the choice of subject and the grade of style which are met with in Beowulf, might be connected with the missionary efforts of the English Church at the close of those days to extend Christianity to Friesland and farther east...”

It is true that one improbable that it was in... 4. Col. 4. 41.

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clauses and lines that are about as difficult to
interpret as the original, for which even the
brief vocabulary of "some words not com-
monly used now" does not always give suffi-
cient help. On the whole, however, the trans-
lation of Morris gives the beauties of the origi-
al, and spirits the reader away to the romantic
days of Hroðgar in Heorot and Hygelac in
Geatland as no other modern version, now in
existence, will do. The critic in the Athenaeum
says:
"We can well imagine that this translation of
'Beowulf' into rhymeless alliterative lines will
seem uncouth to the general reader whose ear
is familiar only with the quantitative scansion
of classical movements and the accentual prosody
of modern rhyme and Blank verse. But if the
business of the translator of an ancient poem is
to pour the old wine into the new bottles
with as little loss as possible of the original
aroma, Mr. Morris's efforts have been crowned
with entire success. . . . So powerful is the
vision at work in this glorious poem, that it
seems the product not of a poetical artificer,
but of Nature herself. . . . The last crowning
excellence in all poetry is that it shall seem to
be inspired, and one of the greatest aids to
this is that the struggle between matter and
form shall be so little apparent that the move-
ment seems the inevitable outcome of him who
tells the tale or sings the song."

Ragozin's Beowulf, the Hero of the Anglo-
Saxons, is contained in the last one hundred
and odd pages of the book. The story is in no
sense a literal translation of the original, al-
though the narrative is frequently interspersed
with passages translated into simple, easy
prose. These "Tales of the Heroic Ages"
are avowedly written for the entertainment
and instruction of the young, between the ages
of ten and fifteen, but the Beowulf might be
read with great interest and profit by "grown
up" people; or even by students and critics of
the Old English epic. The main outline and
facts of the poem are given in such easy-flow-
ing, vivacious prose, that the reader experi-
ences in its perusal all the pleasure of a novel
or fairy tale.

The interest of the story is very much in-
creased by four splendid illustrations from the
adventures of the hero, Beowulf; namely, The
Death of Beowulf (Frontispiece); The Landing
of Beowulf; Queen Wealththeow Pledges Beo-
wulf; Beowulf and the Old Wife of the Mere.

Wm. H. Hulme.

Western Reserve University.
13 August 20, 1895.

FRENCH GRAMMAR.
Grammaire historique de la langue française.
Par Kr. Nyrop, Professeur à l'Université
de Copenhague. Tome premier. Copen-
hague: det Nordiske Forlag. Leipzig: Har-
rassowitz. Paris: A. Picard & Fils. 1899. 8vo,
pp. xi, 488.
We are at last to have a measurably complete
French historical grammar written, not by a
Frenchman it is true, but at least in French.
If we must again postpone the realization of
our hopes for Mr. Gaston Paris' Grammaire
de l'ancien Français, which is to solve for us
so many questions reserved from time to time
in Romania for a more convenient season, we
take great satisfaction in having before us the
work of one of that large band of scholars who
have received from him their inspiration for
Romance studies.
Prof. Nyrop's grammar is a striking evidence
of the constantly increasing importance which
the scientific study of the Romance languages
is attaining. It will be when completed by far
the most compendious historical grammar of a
single Romance language, this first volume
containing four hundred and eighty-eight pages
as against two hundred and seventy-one in the
Schwan-Behrens grammar, although the latter
treats phonology and morphology, while the
former does not include the morphology. A
comparison of Part II., 'Phonétique,' in Nyrop's
work with Part I., 'Lautlehre,' of the Schwan-
Behrens, which is a fairer test, shows two hun-
dred and ninety-four and one hundred and
twelve pages respectively.

The contemporaneous form of the language is
chosen as the standpoint for considering the
alteration of Latin into French. The plan may
well be defended, since Modern French is for
us the most important stage, and, in large
measure, the cause of our interest in those
which preceded; yet it may be questioned
whether Old French is not the true vantage
position, from which, as middle ground, we
can best look back to the Latin and forward to
the Modern French. No such hesitation, how-
ever, need be felt in commending the author's
use, wherever practicable, of the Classic form
of Latin words when citing etyma. It is true
that prominence should be given to the fact
that such form is frequently not the basis of the
French word, and, it may here be remarked,
Prof. Nyrop might to decided advantage have
laid more stress on the difference between