



Rev. J. James

EPIGRAMMATISTS AND EPIGRAMS.

The Epigrammatists. A Selection from the Epigrammatic Literature of Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Times. By the REV. H. P. DODD, M.A., Pembroke Coll., Oxon. Bell and Daldy. 1870.

Epigrams, Ancient and Modern. Edited by the REV. JOHN BOOTH, B.A. 2nd thousand. Longman & Co., 1865.

Idylls and Epigrams. Chiefly from the Greek Anthology. By RICHARD GARNETT. Macmillan & Co., 1869.

THERE are signs and tokens that that long-lived but latterly depreciated plant, the epigram, is again coming into fashion and favour. That it is an exotic need not be said; but it may not be amiss to note that it is probably owing to mis-cultivation that it has at any time failed of kindly growth in this country. Brought originally from the Attic clime, where all poesy ripened of old so speedily and splendidly, it suffered rough usage in the process of transplantation: it deteriorated in tone and form when it came amongst the coarser captors of enslaved Hellas; and though a choice band of appreciators did their utmost to restore it to pristine fashion, when the Italo-Latinists took it up (circ. 1453, A.D.) at the revival of Greek literature, it fell again into the spoiler's hands when the Frenchman taught it to grow according to his standard. Its very name, however, ought at all times to define its scope and limits—to be used for purposes of inscription or superscription, as in the case of votive tablets or of memorial epitaphs: and, from such use on brass or stone, to pass to the brief commemoration, in words of bright and brief minstrel-fire, of noble deeds, important decisions, emotions of patriotism, affection, love, gaiety and mirth. If we ransack the Greek Anthology—consisting, in round numbers, of some five thou-

sand epigrams by nearly five hundred writers—the most striking general feature in it is the absence of that which, to modern notions, has always seemed of the essence of an epigram—a sting-like point. Whereas the modern recipe—borrowed from the French, who were indebted for it to the worse manner (for he has many redeeming points), of the Roman Martial—is expressed in the lines:—

“Take a portion of wit,
And fashion it fit,
Like a needle with point and with eye,
A point *that can wound*,
An eye to look round,
And at folly or vice let it fly:—”

that which the Anthologists seem to have thought of most concern was, that the epigram should be brief as well as sparkling, concentrate itself in a distich or two that should impress, but not pain or tire, and leave behind a pleasurable remembrance, through lightly touching some chord of sympathy, whether it were love, or mirth, or occasionally a sense of the ridiculous. No doubt there are just enough Greek epigrams which strike this last chord, to give colour to the view taken by Martial and the wits who in after-days have preferred his type as to what an epigram ought to consist of; and it would be a misstatement of facts to say that the Greek Anthology has no disfigurements in the way of impurity and indecency, such as modern literature would justly bann. But—as a rule—indelicality, scurrility, lampoonery, can be imputed to but few out of the many, whilst there is scarcely one that does not exemplify the fine clear wit, the union of brevity with singleness of drift and brilliancy of execution, which make the *tout ensemble* of a Greek epigram “a thing of beauty and a joy for ever.” Gazing forth from the outlook of the Anthology at the subsequent history of epigrammatic literature, we shall no doubt here and there rest our eye upon epigrams and epigrammatists that have won name and remembrance principally through sharpening the arrow of smart, bitter words: but these have not permanently influenced our own or any other literature; whereas the Greek epigram, and the mediæval Latin epigram, which is moulded on its type—nay, even the better, truer, and finer touches of the Martialian epigram—have borne a part in studding other literature (prose and poetry in different proportions) with gems shining anew in fresh settings, and by undimmed lustre attesting original and enduring worth.

The taste of the present day, it should seem, is setting in the direction of this elder and better type. Mr. Booth, an octogenarian collector and compiler of infinite zeal and industry, found that the “first thousand” of his “Epigrams, Ancient and Modern,” pub-

lished in 1863, had not sufficient samples of ancient epigram to satisfy the demand for it; and also, we suspect, discovered that it was a mistake in these days to give admission to the sort of epigram—much in vogue a century ago—in which personality and scurrility was the chief feature. Two years later he put forth another “thousand,” or rather an entirely remodelled volume, wherein the curtailment of that which was purely personal and sting-fraught allowed much ampler room for cullings from the Greek Anthology and from another rare and till then little-rifled garland, the “*Delitiæ*” of the mediæval epigrammatists. Though this latter treasure had been almost forgotten in our day, until an article in the *Quarterly* (No. 233) sent Mr. Booth to the examination of it, between the publication of his first and his second volumes, it had served as a rich but often unacknowledged mine to our earlier poets and epigrammatists; and it is with interest and satisfaction that we find the latest editor of epigrams, Mr. Dodd,—whose volume “*The Epigrammatists*,” indeed, has suggested our present article,—not only alive to the rich material which the mediæval epigrammatists have to yield, but also quick and acute in tracing the influence of these upon our poets and poetry. He, like the mediævalists, elects the model of the Greek epigram; and in his just remarks (p. xxi. *Introd.*) upon the prejudicial effects of Martial on modern epigram, bears, it may be, a trifle too hardly on an offender who, after all, gave his readers and imitators a choice, and cannot be made answerable for their choosing the bad and leaving the good behind them. There is some reason for supposing that at the present day we are, for the most part, better Greek scholars than Latin: and this may in part account for the sweeping verdict apt to be pronounced on Martial’s palpable faults, without any extenuatory mention of his tenderer touches and his exquisite little bits of landscape and rural picture. We cannot help thinking that, over and above what has been done for Martial by Booth and Dodd by way of specimen extracts in translation, there is a field for some lover of epigrammatic literature to give us a fuller and a fairer taste of his best material; just as there is also a field of Greek and mediæval epigram yet unfurrowed, that would repay with interest an intelligent upturner and cultivator. A modest and a promising worker in this way is Mr. Richard Garnett, who has shown much taste and skill in the little volume of “*Idylls and Epigrams*” which he published last year. A few original epigrams, which he has inserted among his translations, are so clever, bright, and “Greekish,” that it is to be hoped that he will not desert the field which he has so happily entered—a hope in which we are sure our readers will join after perusing the extracts from his volume with which we are able to make them acquainted in passing.

Mr. Dodd's recent volume has this advantage over its precursors, that its arrangement is chronological, and so introduces us to epigram writers as well as epigrams. It is thus rendered easier to take a general view or to deal with a particular portion of the history of epigrams by help of his manual, than by the unsystematic collections of a century ago, or even the far more available and amusing pages of Mr. Booth. We propose, with it for guide, to glance at some few fruits of the tree of epigram, at various periods of its growth,—not binding ourselves to strict acceptance of Mr. Dodd's samples and specimens when it seems to us we can find better; but freely and gratefully availing ourselves of the broad lines which he lays down, and occasionally exhibiting upon these lines translations from other quarters than those to which he has availed himself of access. To Major Macgregor's complete version of the Greek Anthology a word of warm commendation is due at this point. An Indian officer, who at fourteen years of age exchanged the place of an alumnus of Dr. Valpy's famous school at Reading for that of a subaltern in one of our Indian regiments, and who afterwards added to his occupations that of an active and able banker, this accomplished man retained to the end of his days the keenest love for the pages of the Anthology, and found time—in addition to other literary work—to reproduce it in English. His task was too heavy to admit of being achieved with even excellence of execution. In many pieces a critical eye may miss a nice point, that lurks rather than stands out boldly in the original. But as a whole, his translation is a marvel of good taste and labour; and no volume on epigrams can afford to evince an ignorance of it. His pages, however, are more useful for reference and comparison than as a history of epigram: for which reason Mr. Dodd's volume is likely to serve as a useful introduction and handbook, with which English readers may approach the Major's less carefully arranged heap of quarried treasures.

From the threshold, however, of Mr. Dodd's work we should like to clear away a good deal of what is not strictly epigram. From Sappho, for instance, his extracts are manifestly irrelevant; if we except one which is not set down in its chronological order, but occurs in a page of notes upon a kindred epigram by Philip of Thessalonica. The version given by Mr. Dodd is that of Fawkes, a prolific translator, who, like so many of his own age, and of later days also, seems to have ignored the wholesome hint of the old Greek epigram (Jacobs, 201, i. p. 184), that many lines detract from the merit of an epigram. The original, consisting of four lines, is by Fawkes spun out into six; and so there arises a departure from the unadorned simplicity of a tale which the Muse of Greek epigram was

ever fond of telling—of the “Epithalamie,” as Herrick would have put it, being converted into an Epitaph. It is found in Jacobs, i. 50, iii., and Fawkes’s version is in p. 45 of Dodd. We substitute a truer, though less ornate version:—

“This dust was Timas, who, or ere she wed,
For death’s dark couch exchanged the bridal bed.
In keen regret for whom each virgin mate
Her loveliest locks doth shear and consecrate.”

This epigram, however, with one or two others extant, is sufficient to entitle Sappho to rank with the earliest Greek epigrammatists of whom we have any record, Cleobulus of Lindus, a tyrant and sage (B.C. 586), coming betwixt her and Anacreon, whose slender claims to notice, in this walk of poetry, must pale before those of the far more famous epigram writer of the same century, Simonides. This poet’s perfection in this kind of poetry is happily caught up and approximately reproduced in the English versions of Mr. Sterling, of which, perhaps, Mr. Dodd has been a little too chary, giving room, in one instance, to a friend (whose contributions to the translated portion of the volume will be distinguished by the letter C.), with perhaps too easy and confiding an acquiescence. The epigram in question is entitled the “Young Greek Exile’s Grave,” and is to be found in Jacobs, i. 76. lxxxix.

σῶμα μὲν ἀλλοδαπή κεύθει κόνης· ἐν δὲ σε πόντῳ,
Κλείσθενες, Εὐξείνῳ μῦρ’ ἔκειχεν θανάτου
πλαζόμενον. γλυκεροῦ δὲ μελίφρονος οἴκαδε νόστου
ἤμπλακες, οὐδ’ ἴκεν Χίον ἐς ἀμφιρρῦτην.

C.’s version runs:—

“A foreign land enwraps its dust around thee,
And foreign waves by Euxine strand surround thee.
No more for thee thy home, thy native shore!
To Chios’ sea-girt isle thou’lt come no more.”

But it needs not to be a fastidious critic to desiderate here the *ἔκειχεν πλαζόμενον* of the second verse, and the honey-sweet epithets of “home” in the third. We hazard a substitute in what follows:—

“Tis foreign earth that shrouds thee. Destined fate
Caught thee a-roaming in the Euxine strait,
Barred thy return, and robbed thee of the smile
Of home, sweet home, in Chios’ sea-girt isle.”

Of C.’s version of an epigram attributed to Plato, in p. 17, we can speak more warmly; and taking a long chronological leap to Diotimus (B.C. 275 circ.), the same translator’s version of a “Winter-thunder-storm in Greece” (Jacobs, i. 186. x.) is neat, true, and tasteful:—

“The gentle herd returned at evening close,
Untended from the hills and white with snows:
For, ah! Therimachus beneath the oak
Sleeps his long sleep, touched by the lightning stroke.” (P. 26.)

To take another skip over a few pages, we come upon an unfathered translation in Mr. Dodd, of the "Cupid turned Ploughman" of Moschus, (p. 30). It is not amiss, but for neatness and pith we prefer Mr. Garnett's, which is as follows:—

"Cupid, pert urchin, did himself unload
Of bow and torch, and wallet take and goad,
And bulls reluctant 'neath the yoke constrain,
And trace the furrow, and disperse the grain,
And looking up, 'Good weather! Jove, or thou
Shalt be a bull again, and drag this plough.'" (P. 4.)

The same writer imports more ease, too, than C., into his translation from Meleager (Jac. i. 31, cviii.) anent "The Bee that settled on his Mistress's Neck" (Dodd, p. 38; Garnett, Ep. xxx.), and gives us, to our thinking, happier specimens than Mr. Dodd of this delightful epigrammatist. In his 36th epigram he catches Meleager in his most sportive vein, and hits off to a nicety the playfulness of the Greek (Meleager, xvi.):—

"Friends, when I breathe no more (and 'tis well known
That I am principally skin and bone;)
See that my urn this epitaph presents,
'Cupid to Pluto with his compliments.'"

In the only couplet of Meleager's "Murmur of Love" (Jac. i. 17, liii.) which he translates, Mr. Garnett, too, is more successful than Shepherd, whose entire version is given in p. 36 of Dodd. In the Greek the last lines are—

[ὦ πτανοί, μὴ καὶ ποτ' ἐφίπτασθαι μιν, Ἐρωτες,
οἶδατ', ἀποπτήναι δ' οὐδ' ὅσον ἰσχύετε.
"Oh Love! that flew so lightly to my heart,
Why are thy wings so feeble to depart?"

A leap from Meleager over half a century will bring us to Leonidas of Alexandria and Philip of Thessalonica; and of the epigrams by the former Mr. Dodd could not have chosen a better sample than "The Mother and Child," which gave Rogers the idea for his well-known lines. C.'s version does not quite compass the second and fourth lines of the Greek, but we cannot withhold what is in itself so pretty a picture:—

"Lysippe's infant neared the steep cliff's brow,
And instant would have passed to depths below,
But the fond, love-taught mother bared her breast,
And back he sprung to that safe home of rest." (P. 43.)

That by the same hand on "Xerxes and the dead Leonidas," is so laxly translated that we substitute another, which will be found nearer to the Greek:—

"When Xerxes saw his patriot foeman slain,
Straight in his cloak to shroud him he was fain

Of regal dye. Then found the corpse a voice.
 'A traitor's fee was never Spartan's choice.
 With shield for shroud thy Persian gauds I hate;
 And, Spartan-like, would knock at Hades' gate.'"

Of Lucian and Lucilius—epigrammatists with more of a comic vein than most who wrote in Greek—Mr. Dodd scarcely gives the most characteristic specimens. That of the latter, "A Miser's Dream"—

"Flint dream'd he gave a feast: 'twas regal fare:
 And hanged himself in 's sleep in sheer despair," (P. 48.)

is an exception, to which C. has done full justice; and his "Miser and the Mouse" is well known in Dr. Jortin's version and others. Mr. Garnett's version may be a novelty:—

"A miser in his chamber saw a mouse,
 And cried, dismay'd, 'What dost thou in my house?'
 She, with a laugh, 'Good landlord, have no fear,
 'Tis not for board, but lodging I came here.'" (P. 55.)

A characteristic epigram of Lucian on a Garden Priapus, rendered into English by Mr. Garnett, may also be given, as supplementary to Mr. Dodd's specimens:—

"Priapus by devout Actemon placed,
 Protector of his garden's wintry waste,
 Warns all disposed to search its bounds for pelf,
 That there is nought to steal except himself." (P. 46, Garnett.)

In one of the two epigrams translated by C., with which Mr. Dodd represents the Samian, Nicarchus, of the second century, A.D.,—

"Phido nor hand nor touch to me applied;
 Fever'd I thought but of his name—and died," (P. 52.)

one finds the germ of Martial's epigram (vi. 53) and an evidence, one out of many, that he did not scorn to borrow from the Greek. Mr. Dodd has nothing to tell about the biography of that graceful epigrammatist, Rufinus, of whom readers will conceive a favourable estimate from the translation of an epigram "On the Transitoriness of Youth and Beauty," p. 52, though to the version there given we prefer, as more equal-lengthed and compact, Mr. Garnett's version in "Idylls and Epigrams," p. 11:—

"A various wreath these hands have woven for thee,
 Dark violet and moist anemone;
 Pliant narcissus, bloom of rosy bowers,
 And lily, Rhodoclea. May the flowers
 Thy lofty pride to lowlier thoughts persuade;
 Like thee they bloom, and thou like them must fade."

No name is attached to the happy version (p. 57) of Palladas' epigram "On Human Life," which may have in it the germ of Jacques' famous "All the world's a stage," &c.; but one of the best

translations of this section, "Cupid in the Cup," an epigram of Julius Ægyptus, is translated by Bishop Blomfield. A glance at it will serve to show the bright idea of the Greek poet, and justify the Italo-Latinist, Naugerius, who got a wrinkle from it for his pretty epigram to Hiella, translated in p. 58:—

"While for my fair a wreath I twined,
Love in the roses lay reclined.
I seized the boy: the mantling cup
Received him, and I drank him up.
And now, confined, the feathered guest
Beats, storms, and flutters in my breast."

A number of other pretty, graceful, witty, and humorous epigrams might be instanced that do not find translation in either of the books which head our article. But this is only natural. "Chacun à son goût." The accidents of taste, fancy, or a translation at hand have of course a great deal to do with this or that selection. One would like to have seen Agathias, and Paul the Silentiary, of the Christian era, and Theocritus and Callimachus of the Alexandrian period more fully represented. A livelier impression of the Theocritean epigram would have resulted from citation of this from Calverley—

"Friend, Ortho of Syracuse gives thee this charge,
Never venture out drunk on a wild winter night;
I did so and died. My possessions were large,
Yet the turf that I'm clad in is strange to me quite."

Another on "Caicus's Bank," commonly given to Theocritus, though referable perhaps rather to Artemidorus, the grammarian, should have been translated by D. or C. We give it as Chapman translates (Ep. 23):—

"With stranger and with citizen the same
I deal: your own deposit take away,
Paying the charge: excuse let others frame,
His debts Caicus e'en at night will pay."

Turning to the Latin epigrammatists, what strikes us most is their poverty, with at most two exceptions, in quality and in quantity. The section allotted to them by Mr. Dodd has to be eked out with ode and elegy, with Tibullus and Propertius. Catullus, no doubt, set the fashion to Martial, and has a few pretty epigrams, and the Latin Anthology will supply here and there a happy specimen; but of Roman epigram Martial has the lion's share, and he is liable to the charge of turning the clear Greek stream into a less wholesome current. Still, after regret for these, we are bound to give him credit for a residuum of neat little *jeux d'esprit*, perfect in kind, and in high favour with even the correcter mediævalists. To Mr. Dodd's samples of Martial's vein, in their chronological place or in illustrative notes, might have been added not a few, which exist in clever

and happy English versions. His latest editor, Mr. Paley, does Martial no more than justice when he says that—

“His wit is of that peculiarly pointed and brilliant kind which must be felt to be appreciated. It is wit in the very highest and most perfect definition of it. A single word at the end of an epigram perhaps contains the point of the whole thing, or a ‘double entendre,’ or a turn (*παρά προσδοκίαν*) different from what you thought was to come, gives the colour to the epigram. . . . Although fun is his liking, pathos is his forte. Many of his epigrams breathe the most exquisite tones of sentiment and affection.”*

This side, however, of Martial can only be fairly looked at by one who can read him in the original. While such epigrams as i. 75 :—

“Dimidium donare Lino quam credere totum
Qui mavolt, mavolt perdere dimidium.”

“Lend Sponge a guinea! Ned, you’d best refuse,
And give him half. Sure, that’s enough to lose!” (Booth);

or vi. 12 :—

“Jurat capillos esse, quos emit, suos
Fabulla: numquid, Paule, pejerat?”

“The golden hair that Galla wears
Is hers, who would have thought it?
She swears ’tis hers, and true she swears,
For I know where she bought it.” (Harington)—

have tempted *bels esprits* to translate them, it is a more serious cost of pains and skill that is required for turning into English verse those tenderer and more sentimental pieces of this Roman epigrammatist, to which perhaps Mr. Amos,† in his prose samples has done more justice than the verse translators. Mr. Garnett, in Ep. 157 of his little book, gives token of an aptitude for the representation of this pleasing aspect of Martial; but he has limited his drafts on Martial to three or four epigrams, and we look in vain for a translator, who reproduces worthily such of this poet’s remains as lament the premature death of the young, evince an appreciation of steadfast conjugal love, rejoice over a friend’s safety, or commemorate fraternal love with a just admiration. Bits of description, like “Faustinus’s Farm” (iii. 68), running over fifty lines, can only be called “epigrams” by courtesy; and, though not a few of these vindicate Mr. Paley’s estimate of Martial “as a perfect master of Latinity,” he is best known, and likely to remain best known, to moderns by those short and sparkling, but too often scurrilous, or adulatory squibs and trifles, which his patrons paid for, and by which he lived. By these it was that he placed epigram on the narrow basis which it came afterwards to occupy, and set a rule of “sharp point,” which became a *sine qua non* in the eyes of French

* Paley and Stone’s “Martial,” Pref. p. viii.

† “Martial and the Moderns,” by Andrew Amos, Esq.

and English. We must leave to others the representation of what we must esteem Martial's higher and better vein, and pass on—for there is little else to linger upon in classical Latin epigrams—to the mediæval epigrammatists, who drank deep at the Greek sources reopened by the labours of John Lascaris and the patronage of Lorenzo de Medicis, and who repaid the price of their draughts in libations of very pure and refined Latin versification. These affect for the most part the Greek model, though now and then they give a taste of Martial's humour and satire. Their chaplets are generally woven of Attic flowers. Although the influence of these mediævalists on modern English poetry has been not inconsiderable, it has been so little acknowledged, that till recently it was well-nigh forgotten. Mr. Booth first, and now again Mr. Dodd, have taken a hint from the article, above referred to, in the *Quarterly Review*, and multiplied largely the few specimens of translation from mediæval Latin epigram which its writer included in his survey. More is yet to be done. The pieces brought to light are mainly taken from Abraham Wright's "Delitiæ Delitiarum," a small 18mo, which is itself a selection from selections. The fertility of the writers of whom he gives specimens, defies the friendly and zealous efforts of their English champion, and the reader who cares to attack the squat, bulky, close-printed tomes which enclose these writers in their fulness, will find amidst much repetition of frivolous conceits not a few gems hitherto unseen of common eyes, one writer praising his Phillis, another complimenting his Hiella, and all exhibiting infinite skill in imparting variety to the old, old story. Mr. Dodd's work, by means of its copious annotations, enables us to trace the loans contracted by those that came after upon Greek, Latin, and mediæval Latin epigram in their turns; and it is impossible to evade the conclusion that the last-named model was in highest favour with many English poets. "They were well known," he remarks in his preface, p. xxiv., "to Pope and a few of our greater poets, and have exercised an important influence over those who were acquainted with them, by displaying a style of epigram-writing, pure as the Greek, but more humorous; and lively as Martial, but generally free from his coarseness;" and he goes on to note that in epigram-collections of the last century are to be found frequent imitations of their worse specimens, *i.e.*, those most in conformity with Martial's type. What is passed off as an original English epigram in the "Poetical Farrago":—

"How fitly joined the lawyer and his wife!
He moves at bar, and she at home, the strife,"

is a translation, in reality, "from the Latin of Petrus Ægidius, Peter Giles, of Antwerp." (P. xxv.)

We cannot pass in review as much as even a tithe of the specimens from this class of epigrammatists which the pages of Booth and Dodd exhibit or suggest, although, as has been said, these pages do but give a limited supply. Perhaps it will be better, while noticing any that particularly strike us in them, to supplement these, where we have the means, with our own versions of others from the same hands. Thus, at any rate, something will have been added to the store, which is still small, something which may serve till better samples are provided.

Mr. Dodd has been sparing of specimens from a very good and early epigrammatist, Janus Pannonius (A.D. 1434—1472). These we take leave to supplement with two others, of true epigrammatic flavour in the original, and we trust not unintelligible in our copy. They need no heading, for they tell their own story :—

“ Pirating Virgil, thou art apt to use
His loans on Homer as a fair excuse.
Quit shalt thou be : nay, placed on poet-roll,
If only thou wilt steal as Virgil stole.”

“ The verses, Paul, you sent me to correct,
Return, by pencil-marks at faults unspecked :
Yet boast not, nor delusive hope prolong,
'Tis idle to mark faults, where all is wrong.”

From an early French poet, Martialis Monerius, Mr. Dodd translates a humorous epigram on one who lost a wooden leg at Calès, which comes out happily in English :—

“ When 'gainst Calès the Gallie forces drove,
Machon, a soldier, raw, but smart, by Jove,
To the tall rampart's height most boldly dashed,
When thro' his wooden leg a bullet crashed :
' All right ! ' he cried, ' I am not hurt a peg,
At home I've got in store another leg.” (P. 103.)

From Sannazaro (1458 A.D.) he has some half-dozen by various hands, of various excellence, but none more characteristic in the original, or better translated than the lines “ *De amore fugitivo* ” (“ *Delit. Delitiarum*,” p. 112) beginning “ *Quæritat huc illuc raptum*,” and translated in Mr. Garnett's “ *Idylls and Epigrams* ” by his father, the Rev. R. Garnett. It runs :—

“ Fair Venus seeks her son with anxious eyes,
Who close concealed within my bosom lies ;
What can I do, who with like reverence own
The empire of the mother and the son ?
If he remains, my breast no peace will know ;
If I betray him, he becomes my foe !
Then, Cupid, stay, but ah ! be not unkind !
For ne'er wilt thou a safer shelter find.”

We cannot congratulate Mr. Dodd on his sole specimen of Car-

dinal Bembo, an elegy rather than epigram on the death of Politian. He had better given two little couplets; one on a lapdog's death, the other on that of Raphael. The first may be Englished:—

“What is there, whelp Bembino, that thy lord denies to thee?
From whom thou hast thy name, thy tomb, and tearful elegy;”

the second:—

“Here Raphael lies. While he lived, Nature's dread
Was base defeat; but death, since he is dead!”

Not a bad epigram from Euricius Cordus, a German poet and physician of the fifteenth century, is given by Dodd from the *Gentleman's Magazine* (xciv.):—

“Three faces wears the doctor: when first sought,
An angel's; and a god's, the cure half wrought;
But when, that cure complete, he seeks his fee,
The devil looks then less terrible than he.” (P. 110.)

And it would be the more interesting if we could trace it home to him. Unfortunately the Latin of it is not given in the larger and more copious “*Delitiæ*,” to which one refers for what does not appear in Wright; so that we are not in a position to know whether this epigram was based on professional experience. We have had a like ineffectual hunt after the Latin original of the “*Lover's Wreath*,” translated, it is said, from Hiero Angerianus, in the 119th page of Dodd; and this although *Cælia* is celebrated almost *ad nauseam* through at least sixty pages of that amatory epigrammatist. We confess, however, that it may have been overlooked. These Italo-Latinists go the round of possible compliments to their mistresses in most amusing assiduity, and, when this is exhausted, often resort to paradox. Thus one of them, of whom Mr. Dodd has three specimens, two from the *Quarterly Review*, in pp. 157-8, Balthazar Bonifacius, after divers conceits anent his fair Phillis, has one (“*Delitiæ Delitiarum*,” p. 91) “in Phillida luscæ;” “*Ad pictorem*.” We will vouch for the exactness, though not so sanguine as to the elegance, of our own English version:—

“Painter, my Phillis' features do not doubt
To paint with their sole blemish—one eye out!
Love closed her left eye, not to spoil or maim,
But that her right might take more certain aim.”

One has heard of it being said of a pretty girl, similarly circumstanced, that if she had only one eye, *that was a piercer!* This Bonifacius must have had a penchant for “*luscæ*,” unless “*Chariclita*,” whom he celebrates in an epigram, quoted by Dodd in p. 157, was only Phillis under another name. But these Latinists did not always stick to the sentimental. Two samples of the epigrams of Andrew Alciati of Milan, A.D. 1492—1550, are to be found in

p. 122 of Mr. Dodd, and may be said to represent the classicosentimental style; but another, not given by Mr. Dodd, has arrested our attention by its similarity to a fable of Babrius and of Æsop in its chief features, though, oddly enough, in the fabulists a *boy*, and in the epigrammatist a *kite*, plays the chief part, contrariwise to what might have been expected. It is on the text of "Malè parta malè dilabuntur," and we give English and Latin:—

"Milvus edax, nimia quem nausea torserat esca,
'Hei mihi, mater' ait, 'viscera ab ore fluunt.'
Illa autem: 'quid fles? cur hæc tua viscera credas?
Qui raptò vivens sola aliena vomis.'" ("Delit." p. 58.)

"A greedy kite, by sickness overta'en,
Unto its mother sadly did complain;
'Alas! good mother, all is ill with me!
This nausea turns my inside out, d'ye see?'
'Weep not,' said she, 'nor others' losses moan,
Who lives on others' bowels, spares his own!'"

We shall be excused for toning down in English the outspoken plainness of the Latin; and, in token that we do not reckon this the more congenial vein of epigram, will return to the better tone, more in accordance with the present taste.

To fulfil this promise we must not tarry with George Buchanan, whose epigrams affect Martial and his sarcasm, longer than to draw attention to a capital translation of one of his best by Mr. J. O. W. Haweis, which is reprinted from *Notes and Queries*, by Mr. Dodd, in p. 125. Buchanan treated his Leonoras with less deep homage than his Italian brethren of the epigram poured at the feet of a Phillis or a Cælia. Perhaps climate had something to do with this. To turn from him to his contemporary, Jerome Amalthei, is to taste honey after gall. Amalthei's verses to Hiella beginning "In me oculos quoties," &c., are a pretty conceit, for which Mr. Booth gives the *Quarterly* reviewer's version as an equivalent, and Mr. Dodd the following anonymous lines:—

"On me my love, Hiella, casts her eyes,
And then so oft my love, Hiella, sighs;
Hence the flames, brightened by her breath, which dart
From those deep orbs, to ashes burn my heart."

The same Italian's conceit, "On an Hour-glass as the Lover's Tomb" (Dodd, p. 129), is almost worthy to rank beside his far-famed epigram, "On two beautiful monoculi" [Lumine Acon dextro, &c.]; in the selection of a version of which we cannot but think Mr. Dodd unfortunate. Of Joannes Secundus—the author of the "Basia," and sometime Latin Secretary to Charles V., a prettier and briefer sample may be taken from James Wright's "Sales Epigrammatum" than the epigram on Charinus, of which Mr. Dodd gives Whaley's version

(p. 131). Here is Wright's specimen, *à propos* of Hercules bearing a Cupid:—

“Ante quibus cœlum fuerat leve pondus, eisdem
Nunc gravis est humeris sarcina parvus Amor.”
“Once the vast heavens were light to thee: now Love,
A little boy, doth far too heavy prove.”

And of Theodore Beza—whose “three wives” may be a myth constructed on the basis of Paschasius's witty epigram (Dodd, p. 133 *ad fin.*), but whose Greek learning and share in the Reformation abroad are matters of history, it is more interesting to note the modesty shown in his distich,—

“Brevem, Zoile, dicis hunc libellum,
O si possit idem omnibus videri.”
“My book to you, O Zoilus, seems too small,
I only wish it would seem so to all!”

than his laboured common-places on the fame of Erasmus and Luther (Dodd, pp. 135-6). *A propos* of Muretus's graceful epigram on “Venus Anadyomene,” of which a translation is given by Mr. Dodd in p. 137, a paradoxical epigram is introduced from Petronius Afranius, the subject of which is a lady inflaming her lover by well-plied snow-balls! The conceit is an odd one, but not unprecedented in the mediævalists. Jerom Angerianus, if we are not mistaken, has resorted to it in one of his amatory epigrams; and it occurs in others of his school. Of Paschasius, or Pasquier, a genial French epigrammatist, A.D. 1615, Mr. Dodd gives five or six specimens, longer and shorter. The versions of two of these, to a Physician and to Harpalus, may be compared with James Wright's versions, which are as follows:—

- (1) “Your pains are free to me. The gift is brave,
But yet not worth the hazard of a grave.”
- (2) “The poor his heir makes Harpalus, that he
Who should be so might weep unfeignedly.”

A version, by the same hand, of Joseph J. Scaliger's distich, “On the Fear of Death,”—

“The fear of death is worse than death: we may
Contemn, we cannot shun, the fatal day,”

is worthy to supplement the sole specimen of this epigrammatist in Dodd. Another, and that a curious one, of Joseph Scaliger, is to be found in Booth, p. 161. The subject is “Lexicography,” and Lord Neaves, the translator:—

“Is there a wretch whose crimes a sentence crave
Of toil and torture, till he reach the grave?
Let not the *mill* his wasted body wear!
Let not the *mine* immerse him in despair.
'Make dictionaries'—be the doom assigned;
All other punishments are there combined.”

The point of this epigram, it must be allowed, was sufficient for its day; but now that co-operation is successfully applied, it is no longer a penal servitude for life to embark in lexicography.

The Welshman, Owen or Audoenus, who wrote so many good Latin epigrams, deserves to be better known of his countrymen than he is in the present day. He is often witty; and not seldom points a moral with classical brevity. Here is a distich from Hayman's "Quodlibets," a nearly contemporary collection of original and translated epigrams:—

"Sweet, let thy soul be smooth as is thy skin!
As thou art fair without, be so within."

An epigram of Owen's, which we have never seen translated,

"*Stultorum Bedlem, nebulonum regia Bridewell,*
Utrum harum mavis, ingrediare licet,"

hits off a dilemma as puzzling in other days, it would seem, as in our own. The space which we can spare for the mediævalists is well-nigh exhausted; but we must just notice two more of them, Bauhusius the Jesuit, and the Scotch minister, Ninian Paterson. To the former we draw attention chiefly to show that he is not to be judged by the ten lines on Fortune, wherein Mr. Dodd reproduces a pithy Latin epigram of six. The Latin runs:—

"*Siccine in humanis ludis, sors perfida, rebus,*
Et sanctâ bellum cum ratione geris?
Dives prolis eget Proclus dux; pignora Lauso
Ter tria sunt: prolis non eget, æris eget.
Vertito cœca Tyche: da cui rapis, et rape cui das!
Lauso aliquid Proculi, Lausi aliquid Proculo."

It could hardly be that expansion of such an epigram should result in aught but failure; and Mr. Dodd here is both prolix and rugged. We are constrained to offer an alternative version, of corresponding length to the Latin:—

"Is't thus, Jade Chance, that thou with men dost play,
And wage keen war with reason's better way?
Proclus is rich but childless; children nine
Has Lausus, who for brass, not bairns, doth pine.
Blind Fortune, turn thy wheel! By 'give and take,'
Richer make Proclus, richer Lausus make!"

Paterson came fifty years later in date, and that for which we linger awhile upon his name and verses, is his exceptional praise of conjugal affection. This is not noticed by Mr. Dodd; but one who has waded through the larger "Delitiæ" cannot be unaware that the complimentary epigrams are more often addressed *ad amicam* than *ad uxorem*. This is not so in Paterson, who herein does not follow Buchanan. Paterson has a tribute to his wife in a six-line

epigram, entitled "Conjugium Felix." It is a trifle commonplace, and we prefer to cite his criticism on "Woman" generally, with our translation of it:—

"Quæ levis Elysio miseros prius expulit horto,
Rettulit amissi fœmina regna poli;
Ultima naturæ sapientis machina: sed quâ
Si mala, nil pejus, si bona, nil melius."

"To men, from Eden erst thro' woman driven,
Woman restores the forfeit realm of heaven;
An all-wise Maker's latest work is she,
His best, if good, His worst, if bad she be."

And now to part with these pleasant companions, some of whom, and not the least pleasant, we have felt unable so much as to name, and to glance at the large field of modern English epigram, most of the cultivators of which have got their cue from one or other of the three sets of models we have been discussing. The elder Wyatt, for example, in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Mary, Sir John Harington in that of Elizabeth, and Sir John Davies, the lawyer and poet, savour strongly of Martial's spirit. The second of this trio, indeed, when not a direct translator, is a manifest imitator of the Latin epigrammatist. The old Eton grammar's first example of a dative after "verba dandi" is the gist of Harington's distich "On Fortune," and his epigram "On Galla's Hair" is only a lengthier paraphrase of Martial. Davies reminds us of the Latin poet in tone rather than form or phrase, and his epigram upon a mushroom nobleman and his airs and graces is worth referring to, apart from the copious and happy parallels with which Mr. Dodd bestuds it:—

"When Priscus, raised from low to high estate,
Rode through the streets in pompous jollity;
Caius, his poor familiar friend of late,
Espake him thus, 'Sir, now you know not me.'
'Tis likely, friend (quoth Priscus) to be so,
For at this time myself I do not know!" (P. 182.)

Hayman, Parrot, and others of the same date, strike us as a cross between Martial and the Cambro-Briton, Owen, while—to skip over a century—such epigrams as "A Reasonable Affliction" (p. 283) show that Prior went chiefly to the former for pattern and matter:—

"In a dark corner of the house
Poor Helen sits, and sobs, and cries:
She will not see her loving spouse,
Nor her more dear picquet allies:
Unless *she find her eyebrows,*
She'll e'en weep out her eyes."

To return to Elizabethan days, we cannot doubt that Ben Jonson had a smack both of the Greek and Latin; the Greek in such pieces as "Life and Death" (Dodd, p. 191), and the epitaph on Sir John

Roe, a line of which is seemingly borrowed from Antiphanes, the Greek comic poet, and is one form of our phrase, "Not lost, but gone before;" the Latin—ay, and Martial's best Latin—in those beautiful epitaphs to his children and young choristers, which will be read with admiration so long as the English language lasts. Mr. Dodd traces Jonson's influence in an epitaph by Aaron Hill, a prime epigram-writer of the eighteenth century; and the resemblance is as much to the credit of Hill's taste as of Jonson's ideal. Drummond of Hawthornden, Browne of Britannia's Pastorals, Herrick, and their lesser contemporaries, clung more to the Greek; whilst in Carew, and one or two others, we fancy there are traces of the mediævalists. The evidence for Browne's authorship of the famous epitaph on "Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother" (Dodd, 218—19), upsetting as it does the ascription of it to Ben Jonson, is a rare curiosity of literature, on which we must not dilate; but rather pass on to an epigram of a somewhat later date, and of a less-known author, Dr. John Strode, a Canon of Christ Church, which probably owes its existence to the original of Strato (Jacobs, iii. 75; xxx. of Dodd, p. 240). Strode's archly-expressed conceit is as follows:—

"My love and I for kisses played;
 She would keep stakes; I was content;
 But when I won, she would be paid.
 This made me ask her what she meant.
 'Pray, since I see (quoth she) your wrangling vain,
 Take your own kisses; give me mine again.'"

With this exception the English names cited hitherto are not unknown to poetic fame; but the English epigram thrived on less splendid soil. We know little of John Heath who published epigrams (A.D. 1610); but his lines "On the Death of Beatrice"—

"In Beatrice did all perfections grow,
 That she could wish, or Nature could bestow;
 When Death, enamoured of that excellence,
 Straight grew in love with her, and took her hence," (P. 209.)

are an early and beautiful expression of a fancy of which, in our day, Longfellow has availed himself in his lines "There is a Reaper whose name is Death." Another little-known epigrammatist of the same date is Thomas Freeman, in one of whose epigrams we note the early use of an old English proverb:—

"Virtue we praise, but practise not her good;
 Athenian-like, we act not what we know.
 So many men do talk of Robin Hood,
 Who never yet shot arrow from his bow."

According to Mr. W. C. Hazlitt, the earliest occurrence of this proverb in our literature is about A.D. 1600.

That which will constitute the great value of Mr. Dodd's volume

is its chronological and biographical arrangement, and it would be only too pleasant to the writer to run on through the later pages of the epigrammatists, and tarry, at will, where there seemed good entertainment. We dread, however, lest it should be said that the virtue of an epigrammatist has not extended to him that criticizes. We shall, therefore, just glance at one or two lower types of modern epigram, note two or three of the moderns who have really enriched epigram literature, and then make an end. One of the resorts of modern epigram—affected by Dean Swift and others who might have disdained it—is “bathos.” In p. 292 Mr. Dodd gives us an instance of this in Swift’s “Power of Time,” an epigram, the first two couplets of which are grand and general, while the third concentrates itself in the particular application of the whole to a Welsh divine’s old cassock. It is true that the trick is traceable to the Greek Lucilius, but it was unworthy of him; and it could only have been in caricature of such catchpenny devices of the Muse that Dr. Johnson extemporized the stanzas anent the “hermit hoar, in solemn cell.” It crops out, however, in the days of Prior and his successors: and is a trifle less creditable headwork than those “plays on words” and “surprises” (*παρὰ προσδοκίαν*) which have from time to time been the vogue in epigram-writing. Of the former, one of the best is Francis Fuller’s distich “On a Left-handed Writing Master,” p. 297,—

“Though Nature thee of thy right hand bereft,
Right well thou writest with the hand that’s left;”

and, in this kind, the reward of merit is just so much *κῶδος* as attaches to a pun. The latter is of Greek ancestry; but the best example of it is in Leigh Hunt’s version of a French epigram “On Hanging as a Cure for Disappointment.”

“’Tis done; I yield; adieu, thou cruel fair,
Adieu, th’ averted face, th’ ungracious check!
I go, to die, to finish all my care,
To hang.—To hang?—Yes, round another’s neck.” (Dodd, p. 18, note.)

But Lord Erskine’s epigram “On French Taste” is, as Rogers remarked, “not bad” for a play on words:—

“The French have taste in all they do,
Which we are quite without;
For Nature, that to them gave *gout*,
To us gave only gout.” (P. 463.)

And Thomas Campbell’s resort to a “surprise”—in compliance with the importunities of a young lady that he write something original in her album—

“An original something, fair maid, you would win me
To write—but how shall I begin?
For I fear I have nothing original in me—
Excepting ‘Original Sin,’” (P. 496.)

was justifiable and even commendable under the circumstances. But, as a matter of taste, fame, or ambition—who would covet to be remembered by such ephemeral trifles, and who would not rather have written such an enduring memorial of genius as Dr. Young's "Wit" [As in smooth oil, &c., p. 312], Aaron Hill's "Modesty" [As lamps burn silent, &c., p. 313], or that beautiful but unfathered epitaph "On Two Twin-sisters" (p. 314), to which it is curious that, amidst many cases of appropriation, no one has hitherto advanced a claim? or the perfect epitaph "On an Infant" (Dodd, p. 342) which is traceable to Samuel Wesley, the orthodox brother of the better-known John and Charles? or Samuel Taylor Coleridge's epitaphs "On an Infant" (p. 489), and Hartley Coleridge's "On a Mother and Three Infants" (p. 511)?

"From God they came, to God they went again;
No sin they knew, and knew but little pain:
And here they lie, by their fond mother's side,
Who lived to love and lose them—then she died."

These concentrations of poetic genius add a precious page to our literary history: these will outlive the endless sparkles of a less-estimable cleverness, of which the highest effort is a pun, a retort, or a repartee. There is as much scurrility as wit in Dr. Wolcot's epigram to Dr. Geach about "Asses' milk" (Dodd, 453); and simple spite might have produced Rogers' distich—

"Ward has no heart, they say, but I deny it:
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it." (P. 481.)

We could almost wish that in such works as those of Mr. Booth and Mr. Dodd those epigrams which have the merit of grace, finish, and Greek refinement could be distinguished from those which go in for wit and point of a biting kind by separate sections. Another division or subdivision would be between genuine and spurious or shallow wit, *jeux d'esprit* and personalities. The Fellow of Trinity, who pronounced the "a" in Euphrates short, was fair game for Porson's Latin distich (472); but a distich worthier to live is Schiller's on the "Best governed State," which has a universal not a personal point. In Lord Lytton's version it runs—

"How the best state to know? It is found out;
Like the best woman—that least talked about."

We advocate a sifting and sorting, nay more, a weeding of epigrams, in the persuasion that, under censorship, the epigram is a branch of poesy which it were impolitic to let drop into desuetude. Not only is it, as Mr. Dodd urges in p. xxxviii. of his Introduction, a field in which those may exhibit talent whose powers would have been ill-adapted for a more sustained effort; not only does it, as an

exercise, tend to promote terseness, conciseness, elegance in a writer's prose, as well as poetry; not only does it serve as a brief record of history, and a photographic glimpse at manners and customs—but it is in itself a standing engine of commemoration for whatever is good, gallant, bright, gracious, and beautiful, in that shape and fashion most adapted for everlasting remembrance. The valour of a Leonidas, the devotion of a fond mother, the special charm of some peerless beauty, may thus live and flourish through the lapse of ages. And it is not the less a virtue of the epigram, that, if it has a fling at the abstract and not the concrete, vices and follies rather than the vicious and foolish, it does good service prospectively as well as at the time being. But it is apt to run riot, without censorship, and to wander from its scope and limits, through misapprehension and misappreciation. "Non omnia possumus omnes." He that sits down to turn out an *epigram* and indites a *squib*, has never properly understood his task. Of course there is a still graver disqualification—dulness. A college of wits should exist to stifle dull epigrams. And such there are, written by the sort of men, whose old jokes call up

"A laughter grown
Most weary, since so often laughed, that men
Look almost sad upon the jest outworn;"

and whose puns fall dead upon the ears of those who have to endure them. Of a supposed writer of such, Mr. Garnett, whom we have already quoted more than once, has the following original epigram:—

"Fired with the thirst of Fame, thus honest Sam :
'I will arise and write an epigram.'
An epic, Sam, would still more glorious be,
And much more easily achieved by thee."

JAMES DAVIES.