Am Hof
Dienst Platzi
Oct. 15 1922

Dear Mr. Bullen,

It gives me sincere pleasure to hear that you are satisfied with the few lines I wrote by way of testimonial.

I am anxious to see you thought I desire to give a literal version into English of all Melanges. What really
the act was that I hoped Mr.
Blechling would write a complete
Greek text whatever he did about
translations.

I feel so good a book might be
made of Melanges that I am most
desirous to have it well considered
by Mr. Blechling. Personally, I
should welcome a complete Greek
text as one part of the work.
But of course in these degenerate times a Curate may need too
familiar contact with so
half an actory as Melanges.
Mr. Cheekings name has already
reached me through my nephew
St. Joc Starchey, who has spoken
to me of him as a writer of
good verse.

If I could be of any assistance to
Mr. Cheekings in the matter of
inducing translations of Melanges,
I would gladly put my knowledge
at his disposal. But I fear that
I do not know more than is
to be gathered from Jacoby
Wellesleys Anthologia Lyticipa
(a very valuable book) at Dubois.
I wonder whether he has happened to read two imitations of Melanges (the one a close paraphrase, the other a variation on a theme) printed by me in my volume of verse "New v. Old," pp. 67-68. I have generally shrunk from the task of translating Melanges (though I have done some half page, perhaps of the epigrams), I have felt it most possible to render some thing of his manner in a paraphrastic imitation. Here is, I think a fair scope in modern literature for such handling of ancient themes, witness Byron's use of Philoctetes in "Don Juan."
However, I wish to write to you a letter to Mr. Blechman under pretence of one to you.

Thank you for your encouragement in the topic of Oratory than Studies, and for the valuable suggestions about men like Macbeth, &c. On that point I think am at one with you. If I engage in this work, I shall certainly aim at bringing their merits into relief. The advantage I shall have gained by helping the studies I prepared so far back as 1864-6, is that I can now come with
in turn a most independent judgment to the task. To the student Lamb's influence is overwhelming. We pass our first initiation into that great mystery of Eliza Dr. literature under Lamb's guidance. He would be a rare ambition of youth who should stand up against so much sympathy (in the critical essay) and get mourning as there was in Lamb. But calmer years and wider studies, with all that has been done (contributed by men like Saintsbury, Ward, and the...

antiquarian societies, by critics like yourself & Collin's the younger & Allen, enable a critic to stand above his subject in serene mood. Ward's History readers, of course, a systematic treatment now superseded. For aesthetic criticism, some of the painters of Ely, Ford, More, are hot, pretty well exhausted. My doubt is whether there is really room left for me to do any thing worth doing. I had, however, the same doubt when I took up (very casually) the Greek Art.
The appreciation of these studies both in England and America showed me that my mode of treatment met a certain want. We perhaps ought to have faith curiously enough, I never heard before of Sandbach's Goss's project. That makes considerable difference. I think of their scheme were in progress, I should have my own again in this time finally for ever. In such a work the collaboration of two such men would be none to produce a work of unapproachable perfection. Very truly yours, [Signature]
Dear Mr. Bullen

It gives me sincere pleasure to hear that you are satisfied with the few lines I wrote by way of testimonial.

I am amused to see you thought I desiderate a literal version into English of all Meleager. What I really meant was that I hoped Mr. Beeching would edit a complete Greek text, whatever he did about translations.

I feel so good a book might be made of Meleager that I am most desirous to have it well considered by Mr. Beeching. Personally, I should welcome a complete Greek text as one part of the work, [p. 2] & as a second part Mr. Beeching’s own translations with perhaps in addition a selection from earlier versions both in Latin perhaps also in Ita. & French & English. My belief is that a very choice volume could be got up in this way. And if Mr. Beeching feels capable of furnishing critical notes, the whole might make an addition to classical scholarship for polite readers which in the good old days of church preferment would soon have advanced him from a curacy to a deanship at least—if not a Bishopric!

[p. 3] But of course in these regenerate times a curate may dread too familiar contact with so naif an author as Meleager. Mr. Beeching’s name has already reached me through my nephew St. Loe Strachey, who has spoken to me of him as a writer of good verses.

If I could be of any assistance to Mr. Beeching in the matter of indicating translations of Meleager, I would gladly put my knowledge at his disposal. But I fear that I do not know more than is to be gathered from Jacobo, Wellesley’s Anthologia Polyglotta (a very valuable book), & Dübner. [p. 4] I wonder whether he has happened to read two imitations of Meleager (the one a close paraphrase, the
other a variation on a tema) printed by me in my volume of verse "New & Old" pp: 67 & 60? I have generally shrunk from the task of translating Meleager (though I have done some half dozen perhaps of the epigrams) & have felt it more possible to render some thing of his manner in a paraphrastic imitation. There is, I think, a fair scope in modern literature for such rehandling of ancient themes—witness B Jonson's use of Philostratus in "Drink to me only." [p. 5] However, I will pull up: for I find myself writing a letter to Mr. Beeching under pretence of one to you!

Thank you for your encouragement on the topic of Elizabethan Studies & for the valuable suggestion about men like Massinger & Shirley. On that point I wholly am at one with you. If I engage in this work, I shall certainly drive at bringing their merits into relief. One advantage I shall have gained by shelving the studies I prepared so far back as 1864-6, is that I can come now with [p. 6] maturer & more independent judgment to the task. To the student Lamb's influence is [illegible scrawl]. We pass our first initiation into that great mystery of Eliz. Dr. literature under Lamb's guidance. He would be a rare adventurous youth who should stand up against so much sympathy fine critical insight & erudition mingled as there was in Lamb. But calmer years & wider studies, with all that has since been contributed by men like Swinburne, Ward & the [p. 7] antiquarian societies, by editors like yourself & Collins & the younger Hazlitt, enable a critic to stand above his subject in serener mood. Ward's History renders, of course, a systematic treatment now superfluous. For aesthetic criticism some of the playwrights, esp'y Ford & Marlowe, are pretty well exhausted. My doubt is whether there is really room left for me to do any thing worth doing. I had, however, the same doubt when I look up (very casually) the Greek Poets. [p. 8] The appreciation of those studies both in England & America showed me that my mode of treatment met a certain want. And perhaps I ought to have faith

Curiously enough, I never heard before of Swinburne's & Gosse's project. That makes considerable difference. I think if their scheme were in progress, I should shelve my own again & this time finally for ever. In such a work the collaboration of two such men would be sure to produce a wall [canceled] monument of unapproachable perfection. Very

truly yours J A Symonds.

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Notes: 1. The "testimonial" to which Symonds refers in the first paragraph must have been for Bullen's collection of old English plays, the first volume being issued privately in 1882.

2. When this letter was written, Henry Charles Beeching, later Dean of Norwich, was curate of St. Matthew's, Mossley Hill, Liverpool. A classmate of St. Loe Strachey's at Balliol College, Oxford, Beeching with J. W. Mackail and J. B. B. Nichols produced a volume of poems, Mensae Secundae, 1879.


4. By this time Swinburne had published studies of Congreve, Marlowe, Webster, Chapman, and Shakespeare; John Collins and W. Carew Hazlitt had edited the works of a number of early playwrights; Adolphus Ward had published, in two volumes, his History of English Dramatic Literature to the Death of Queen Anne (London, 1875). The "Greek Poets" of paragraph six is Symonds's Studies of the Greek Poets (2 ser.; London, 1873 and 1876). Despite the "project" of Gosse and Swinburne (resulting, for example, in The Age of Shakespeare, London, 1908), Symonds published Shakspere's Predecessors in 1884 and lives of Ben Jonson and Sir Philip Sidney in 1886.

5. Here published by permission of Dame Janet Vaughan, Principal of Somerville College, Oxford; and Herbert M. Schueller and Robert L. Peters, editors of The Letters of John Addington Symonds (Detroit, 1967—). This letter would follow L1300.