

Am Hof
Davos Platz

Oct: 15 1887

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 desiderated a literal version into English of all Meleager. What really meant was that I hoped Mr. Bleeking 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. Bleeking. Personally, I should welcome a complete Greek text as one part of the work,

As a second part Mr. Fiechings
own translations with perhaps
in addition a selection from
earlier versions both in Latin
perhaps also in Italian & French
& English. My belief is that a
very choice volume could be
got up in this way. And if
Mr. Fieching 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
preference would soon have
advanced him from a curacy
to a deanery at least - if
not a Bishopric!

But of course in these degenerate
times a Curate may find too
familiar contact with so
neat an author as Meleager.

Mr. Fieching's name has already
reached me through my nephew
St. Loë Stacey, who has spoken
to me of him as a writer of
good verses.

If I could be of any assistance to
Mr. Fieching 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 there is
to be gathered from Jacobs,
Wellesley's Anthologia Polyglotta
(a very valuable book), & Diibaer.

I wonder whether he has happened
to read two imitations of Meleager
(the one a close paraphrase, the
other a variation on a ^{theme})
printed by me in my volume of
verse "New & Old" pp: 67 & 60?

I have generally shrank from the
task of translating Meleager
(though I have done some half
dozen perhaps of the epigrams)
& have felt it most possible
to render something of his manner
in a paraphrastic imitation.
There is, I think, a fair scope
in modern literature for
such rehandling of ancient
themes - witness Byron's use
of Philostratus in "Dion the Acolyte".

However, I will pull up: for I find
myself writing a letter to Mr.
Gleeching 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
lagged in this work, I shall
certainly die 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 now come with

measurer & most independent
judgment to the task. To the
student Lamb's influence
is overwhelming. We pass our
first initiation into that
great mystery of Ely's Dr.
Literature under Lamb's guidance.
He would be a rare advertisement
yearn 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
been since contributed by men
like Scribner, Ward & the

antiquarian societies, by editors
like yourself & Collins &
the younger Haylett enable
a critic to stand above
his subject in serene mood.
Ward's History renders, of course,
a systematic treatment now
superfluous. For aesthetic
criticism some of the plays, *esp.*
esp. 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 took up (very
casually) the Greek Poets.

The appreciation of those studies
both in England & America
should be that my mode
of treatment met a certain
want. And perhaps I ought
to have faith.

Certainly enough, I never heard
before of Sabine'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 ^{management} work of
unapproachable perfection. Very
truly yours J. D. S. M. D.

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS, A. L. S., 15 October
1882, to A. H. Bullen.

Am Hof
Davos Platz
Oct: 15 1882

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 Itⁿ. & 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 deanery 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^b. 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, espy 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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Unpublished.

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.

3. The works referred to in the fifth paragraph are Jacobo de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea* (London, 1878); Henry Wellesley, *Anthologia Polyglotta* (London, 1849); Friedrich Dübner, *Epigrammatum Anthologia* . . . (3 vols.; Paris, 1864-1890); Symonds's *Verse New & Old* (London, 1880).

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 *Shakspeare'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.