

MR. LANG appears in this substantial volume as an ardent and vigorous defender of the practical unity of the Homeric poems. Although his volume does not by any means take rank as a final judicial treatise on the Homeric question—a place still open for occupation—it is a vigorous and telling argument for the defense. This is put with Mr. Lang's usual happiness of expression, and there is more than the common amount of substance in the pages. Mr. Lang sometimes beats out a moderate amount of thought thin so as to cover a considerable field of print; but his studies of early usages and beliefs embodied in his *Custom and Myth* give him here the advantage over many students of Homer, especially when he treats the questions of the origin of the alphabet and the probable time of the appearance of writing among the Greeks.

The opening chapter on "Homer's Place in Literature," as it is the most general, is the most pleasing of all. Mr. Lang naturally begins with declaring the importance of his subject:

To forget Homer, to cease to be concerned and even curious about Homer, is to make a fatal step towards a new barbarism. Mankind exists, or should exist, not to live only, but, as Aristotle defines it, to live nobly. A noble and enjoyable life demands an imaginative participation in all that the human race has done or said or thought which is excellent. The outcasts of Poker Flat, in Mr. Bret Harte's tale, consoling their last hours with the story of Asheels in Pope's *Iliad*, were living a nobler life than the comfortable citizen who reads newspapers and nothing but newspapers all day, and wakens with a fresh appetite for his morning journal. To keep up, to diffuse, as far as we may, interest in

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the best literature, is the duty of all who have been educated and called to this task.

Mr. Lang begins business with a statement and criticism of the theory of Wolf in his noted *Prolegomena*. He then examines in order the books of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, making his arguments against Mr. Walter Leaf and such recent German critics as Niese on the *Odyssey* and Möllendorf on the *Iliad*. His argumentation is always acute and lively, if not always convincing. As he found in criticising Wolf that many of his "opinions about writing and the time required for its development and application to literary purposes" were probably mistaken, so he holds in general to a "highly conservative" position, as he himself styles it, and endeavors to "disprove many of the arguments in favor of frequent interpolations by many hands and at many various dates. It is admitted, however, that the poems, exactly as they were fashioned by the original author—without loss or addition of jot or tittle—cannot possibly be restored."

Mr. Lang practically surrenders Books X and XXIV of the *Iliad*, and allows occasionally an insertion of episodes by later editors; but he rejects the whole notion of a school of the "Homeridæ" and the editing of a number of related compositions into the magnificent unity of the *Iliad*. He holds "that the matter of the *Odyssey* is a number of separate Märchen woven into a matchless tissue of romance." He compares with the *Odyssey* the *Nibelungen Lied*, the *Song of Roland*, and the *Kalewala* to find that there is no essential likeness. He often points out what appear to him to be the arbitrary processes of the school of critics who reject the one author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, pointing out the purely subjective nature of many of their criticisms and emphasizing for one point "the economy which employs textual repetition wherever it can be used." Mr. Lang's parody of the higher criticism of Homer, based on *Ivanhoe*, reminds us of the similar feat of Professor Mead on the Epistle of Romans.

Mr. Lang's book, it is probable, will receive fully as warm a welcome from the opponents of the higher criticism of the Old Testament as from Homeric scholars, among whom he must be ranked as an amateur. The higher criticism of the Old Testament has doubtless been greatly stimulated by the results at which many Homeric scholars have arrived of a more destructive character than Mr. Lang is willing to concede. For our own part we incline strongly to believe that Mr. Lang has given his conservative instincts too full play in this volume, and that the concessions which he makes to the advocates of distinct authors of the *Iliad* are too few and unimportant to stand as final. His conclusion, practically a summary of the words of Signor Comparetti, "that

the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are neither collections of short lays nor expansions of an original brief epic, but that, on the whole, they are the composition of a poet" will, we think, need considerable modification in the direction of the higher criticism which points out varieties of authorship before it will represent all the facts of the case.