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Homer, The Iliad. Translated by S. O. Andrew. Everyman's Library.
With an introduction by John Warrington. Preface by M. J. Oakley.
London J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., N. Y. E. P. Dutton & Co. 1955

Notes taken from the introduction by John Warrington, pp. v-viii

The Iliad and Odyssey, indeed, have undergone treatment not unlike that of the Scripture text

Homer's date has always been, and must remain, a matter of conjecture. According to Eratosthenes of Cyrene, he was contemporary with the main events which he relates, that is, in the 12th century. But in the light of modern archaeological research this date is too early Herodotus favours the 9th century. This view is adopted by most scholars today.

F. A. Wolf put forward a theory that each of the poems was simply a collection of lays which had been gradually blended and given a semblance of unity in the course of their transmission. His view was favorably received, and has since been developed by a long line of famous scholars. This belief in a multiple origin of the poems rests upon two main arguments: the supposed impossibility for a single person to have composed works of such length without the aid of writing, and the presence of undeniable repetitions and inconsistencies.

Whatever date we assign to Homer we cannot say for certain that he had not the aid of writing The results, moreover, of investigation into the powers of trained memory show the composition of the longest works to be within the limits of possibility. The importance of repetition and inconsistency is lessened when we recall that these poems, like all man's work, are the fruit of fallible intelligence . . . that they were rarely, , , recited in their entirety; and that therefore their hearers would have been as little able to discern such flaws as the author would have been to eliminate them with the unaided function of memory. Repetition and inconsistency demonstrate no more than that the poet used his sources with a degree of critical acumen unworthy of the best modern scholarship. Today, therefore, there is a strong tendency to lay more stress upon those characteristics of the poems which suggest a unity of authorship. In each there is a central figure around whom is formed a closely woven plot and over whom hovers the anger or the favour of a god. In each not only the principal heroes, but even the minor characters, are consistent. In each there is a marked similarity of language throughout, and the recurrent evidence of an individual taste.

The second part of the Homeric problem turns upon the question whether one author was responsible for both epics. Many authorities have held that, even granted the essential unity of each, the poet of the Odyssey was other than the composer of the Iliad. The most serious arguments brought forward in support of this theory are drawn from the notable differences of style and thought; but in spite of these very real difficulties, scholars are returning to the old faith in one author of both works. Pseudo-Longinus may give us a clue to the truth when he remarks that Homer began to fail in the later poem: the objections, indeed, lose force in the light of the bard's advancing years. For altered ideas of life, a new conception of the communion of earth with heaven, are characteristic of Everyman's experience as he draws nearer to the final darkness. . . . Both stories, though so different,