# HESIOD, THE POEMS AND FRAGMENTS, DONE INTO ENGLISH PROSE. [1908]

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# HESIOD

## THE POEMS AND FRAGMENTS

DONE INTO ENGLISH PROSE
WITH INTRODUCTION AND APPENDICES

BY

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# PREFACE

No apology seems needed for a new English translation of Hesiod. I shall be glad if the present rendering lead to a more general study of an author who, if only for his antiquity, must always possess a particular interest.

In some few cases of great doubt and difficulty I have consciously given a merely provisional version. These need not be specified here, and I hope to have an opportunity elsewhere of a full discussion.

The Introduction aims at no more than supplying a certain amount of information, within definite limits, about the Hesiodic epos and the traditional Hesiod. A critical introduction was clearly beyond the scope of this book. In the Addenda I have given a preliminary and necessarily slight discussion of a few selected topics from the *Works and Days*.

The vexed question of the spelling of Greek proper names is particularly troublesome in Hesiod, since, as Quintilian says, 'magna pars eius in nominibus est occupata.' I have preferred some approximation to the Greek spelling rather than the Romanized forms, but I have not troubled about a too laborious consistency.

I have had the privilege of consulting my colleague the Astronomer Royal for Scotland (Professor Dyson) on some astronomical matters, and several of my brothers have given me the benefit of their criticism on various points of scholarship. But neither he nor they have any responsibility for errors into which I may have fallen.

My best thanks are due to the careful scholarship of the staff of the Clarendon Press.

THE UNIVERSITY, EDINBURGH
*October* 13, 1908.

# INTRODUCTION

## I. THE HESIODIC EPOS

1. 'POETRY is earlier than Prose' is a familiar dictum of historical literary criticism, and the dictum is a true one when rightly understood. It has been a difficulty with some that prose—*prosa oratio*, or direct speech—the speech which, like Mark Antony, 'only speaks right on,' should be later in literature than verse. But all that is meant is merely this: that before the invention of some form of writing, of a mechanical means in some shape or other of recording the spoken word, the only kind of literature that can exist is a memorial literature. And a memorial literature can only be developed with the help of metre.

Aristotle finds the origin of poetry in two deep-seated human instincts: 'the instinct for Imitation and the instinct for Harmony and Rhythm, metres being clearly sections of rhythm. Persons, therefore, starting with this natural gift developed by degrees their special aptitudes, till their rude improvisations gave birth to Poetry' (*Poet.* iv). What Aristotle says of Tragedy (*Poet.*, l. c.) is true of poetry in general, that 'it advanced by slow degrees; each new element that showed itself was in turn developed', and every-

where 'Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure'.

Poetry, then, for primitive man, was the only vehicle of literature, the only means by which the greatest experiences, the deepest feelings and aspirations of humanity could find an enduring record. 'In one way only,' says Pindar, *Nem.* vii. 14 *sq.*, 'know we a mirror for glorious deeds—if by grace of bright-crowned Mnemosyne a recompense of toils is found in glorious folds of verse.' What in Pindar is a claim and a vaunt is for the primitive man literally true. Not for nothing was Mnemosyne or Memory the mother of the Muses: and not for nothing was Number, 'by which all things are defined,' the handmaiden of Memory. Number and Memory are significantly coupled by Aeschylus in the *Prometheus Vinctus*, 459 sqq., where Prometheus, among other benefits he conferred on men, boasts, 'I found for them Number, most excellent of arts, and the putting together of letters, and Memory (Mneme), the muse-mother, artificer of all things.'

Poetry, accordingly, in the earliest times counted nothing common or unclean, but embraced the whole range of experience. Yet the poet was from the first regarded with a peculiar reverence. He stood apart from his fellow men, in a closer relation to the gods from whom he derived his inspiration. Generally he was not merely the singer of things past—

> 'of old unhappy far off things
> And battles long ago'—

but also he was the prophet of things to come, and the wise man in whom was enshrined the wisdom of the ages, the highest adviser in things present, whether material or spiritual. With the development of a prose literature which was adequate to record the more ordinary things of life, the poet more and more confined himself to the higher levels of experience, or he dealt with common things in an uncommon way. Hence, as it were by an accident, there was developed the quality which, however hard to define, we each of us think ourselves able to recognize as poetic. But it still remains true that the one distinctive essential of poetry as compared with prose is that it is marked by 'metres, which are sections (*τμήματα*) of rhythm'.

2. Before the invention of writing, then, there existed a vast body of popular poetry, handed down memorially. For the most part doubtless it consisted of comparatively short poems. But, even without the aid of writing, memory of itself was adequate to the composition and tradition of poems of considerable length. The old argument against the antiquity of the Homeric poems which was founded on the alleged impossibility of composing or preserving poems of such length by means of memory alone, has long since, on other grounds, become obsolete. It is difficult to understand how it could ever have been seriously advanced. So far as mere length goes I should not think that a good Greek scholar would find much difficulty in composing a poem as long as the *Iliad*, and certainly in committing it to memory he should

find none. But in any case poetry in earlier days occupied a much more intimate part in the popular life than it does now or is ever likely to do again. In camp and in bower, in the labour of the field, in the shepherd's hut on the hill, in the farmer's hall on the long winter evenings at the season when 'the Boneless One gnaweth his own foot within his fireless home and cheerless dwelling', poetry and song formed the delight and solace of life, enshrining as they alone did the traditions and the wisdom of the race. Pennicuick's picture of a farmer's hall in old Scotland would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to a farmer's hall in ancient Greece:

'On a winter's night my granny spinnin'
To mak a web of guid Scots linen;
Her stool being placed next to the chimley
(For she was auld and saw right dimly):
My lucky dad, an honest Whig,
Was telling tales of Bothwell-brig;
He could not miss to mind the attempt,
For he was sitting puing hemp;
My aunt whom nane dare say has no grace,
Was reading in the *Pilgrim's Progress*;
The meikle tasker, Davie Dallas,
Was telling blads of William Wallace;
My mither bade her second son say
What he'd by heart of Davie Lindsay:
. . . . . .
The bairns and oyes were all within doors;
The youngest of us chewing cinders,
And all the auld anes telling wonders.'

3. All the great types of later poetry are found in