

## SIR RICHARD JEBB

### TRIBUTE BY THE PRESIDENT

#### AT GENERAL MEETING

*December 20, 1905*

LORD REAY, the president, in rising to move that the Academy should offer the expression of their deep sympathy to Lady Jebb, said:—‘At our first re-assembling we paid a tribute to David Binning Monro, and now again a grievous blow has befallen us. Those who are even but slightly acquainted with the first beginnings of the movement which culminated in the foundation of the Academy must know how great a part the late Sir Richard Jebb took in the work at that critical period. He was devoted to the Academy, and he appreciated our friendly feelings towards him. He was firmly convinced that a great future was in store for this Academy. He took a leading part in overcoming the difficulties which beset an institution at the outset of its career. He was never discouraged, and was always ready to grapple with the problems which confronted us. The loss we have sustained cannot be exaggerated. His memory will remain with us as a living force, and stimulate us to strenuous exertions in order to realize the ideal which Jebb had in view. In the Academy he saw the means of concentrating all efforts to maintain a high standard of scholarship, to direct in various channels research, to establish co-operation where, as in the case of the Greek Thesaurus due to his initiative, scholars of all nations had to be enrolled. Foreign academies readily accepted his guidance, and I am sure that they are with us deploring his loss. Jebb was more than a scholar. He was a literary artist. He had the rare gift of giving a clear and simple expression to the beauty of any language in which he conveyed his brilliant ideas. He had a genius for language. With scientific precision he coupled the imaginative gifts which gave a peculiar charm to his speeches and his writings. Literary power was wielded by Jebb as a real

force. One felt that in using Latin or Greek he identified himself with Latin and Greek civilization. In his own life and work he illustrates his conception of *humanitas* as "the refining influence of literature and art." Yet he did not dwell in isolation; he took his place among the active workers of the world, and diffused far and wide the great lessons which, in his own words, "each successive generation must learn from Ancient Greece—that which can be taught by her alone." The permanent claims of humanistic study have been strengthened in our time in a way that few perhaps can fittingly appreciate, by the learning, the genius, and the noble public spirit of the fellow-worker who has left us such an inspiring example. Four hundred years have passed since Erasmus, in 1505, first visited Cambridge. In the long line of the great scholars since those first days of the Renaissance, there is no nobler name than that of Richard Jebb. He once instanced, in illustration of how the deepening influences of scholarship on life, the famous story of how the dying English statesman quoted the words of Sarpedon to Glaucus to one who, seeing his condition, wished to defer the task of the day, repeating the last word of the lines again and again—"ἵμεν"—*let us go forward*. Such a message now comes to us from our departed friend—"ἵμεν"—*let us go forward*. His spirit is with us still.

## SIR RICHARD CLAVERHOUSE JEBB

ENGLAND, Scotland, and Ireland have all a share in the career of the great scholar and man of letters, whose death on December 9, 1905, left a wide gap in the ranks of British learning. He was born in Dundee on August 27, 1841, of Irish parents, Robert Jebb of the Irish Bar, and Emily Harriet, daughter of the Very Rev. Dean Horsley. His first school was S. Columba's College, beautifully situated amid the Dublin hills near Rathfarnham, where he showed such promise that he was early sent to Charterhouse, whence he went to Cambridge. There he gained all the highest distinctions in classics, and graduated in 1862 with exceptionally brilliant answering as senior classic. He was elected a Fellow and soon a Tutor of his College, Trinity, and public Orator in 1869. His first classical work was an edition of the *Electra* of Sophocles in 1867, followed by the *Ajar* in 1868. These were the earliest volumes of an admirable series called the *Catena Classicorum*, edited by Rev. Arthur Holmes, of Clare College, Cambridge, and Rev. Charles Bigg, of Christ Church, Oxford. The series included many excellent editions of Greek and Latin classics, but though all were very scholarly, none had such an influence on classical learning as the two plays contributed by Jebb. They were at once recognized as models of what commentaries for beginners should be, and have undoubtedly raised, and that permanently, the standard of such books. Especially as regards the English renderings in the notes they set a new example. The scholars of the preceding generation despised the art of translation, as Hamlet held it in his early youth 'a baseness to write fair.' Admirable scholars like Paley, who were brilliantly successful in the kindred art of turning English into Greek and Latin poetry, scorned to take like pains in rendering classical poetry into English. The texts were to them mere exercises in grammar, and any rendering was good enough if it clearly indicated the construction. Jebb thought that the most becoming garb he could devise for the poetry of Sophocles was none too good for it. He began it in his *Catena* editions, and now his prose translation of all the extant plays of Sophocles is a model for translators, like Butcher and Lang's prose version of the *Odyssey*, Lang, Leaf, and Myers' of the *Iliad*, Myers' of

Pindar, Conington's of Virgil, Lang's of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus. Next after the two *Catena* editions Jebb produced *The Characters of Theophrastus* in 1870—a delightful volume now difficult to procure—and a book of translations into Greek and Latin verse of which Mr. Archer-Hind is at present preparing a second edition. In 1875 he succeeded Prof. Lushington as Professor of Greek in Glasgow, a position which he maintained with great success until he was appointed Regius Professor of Greek as successor to Benjamin Hall Kennedy in 1889. His chief works since his appointment in Glasgow have been *Attic Orators* (1876), a *Book of Translations* (1878) in collaboration with Prof. Jackson (now Jebb's successor in the Cambridge Chair of Greek) and Mr. Curry, a Fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, *Modern Greece* (1880), *Bentley* in the Series of English Men of Letters (1882), *Introduction to Homer* (1886), *Lectures on classical Greek poetry* delivered in Baltimore, U.S.A. (1892), the monumental edition of *Sophocles* (1883-96), and *Bacchylides* (1905).

Jebb was known as a master of the art of composing in Greek and Latin before he won his way to the first rank among sound and brilliant editors. His whole career has done much to vindicate a highly artistic and scholarly accomplishment as an invaluable adjunct to the equipment of an editor of classical texts. The same exquisite taste and sense of beauty which gave him his primacy among composers made him also the sanest of emendators. In emending he was, perhaps, too cautious. Some of his conjectures, which in his modesty he relegated to the notes, were worthy of a position in the text in the opinion of many learned and wary critics. All his conjectures show a keen sense of style. His powers in this direction won for him a signal distinction—the dedication to him by Lord Tennyson of his poem, 'Demeter and Persephone,' with a curiously exquisite allusion to Jebb's Pindaric Ode in honour of Bologna and her University:—

Fair things are slow to fade away,  
 Bear witness you, that yesterday  
 From out the ghost of Pindar in you  
 Roll'd an Olympian; and they say  
 That here the torpid mummy wheat  
 Of Egypt bore a grain as sweet  
 As that which gilds the glebe of England,  
 Sunn'd with a summer of milder heat.

So may this legend for awhile,  
 If greeted by your classic smile,  
 Tho' dead in its Trinacrian Enna,  
 Blossom again on a colder isle.

An equally great feat is his rendering in the measures of Pindar's fourth Pythian ode of Browning's *Abt Vogler*, which, at least to the present writer, is certainly far clearer and more intelligible in the Greek than in the English.

It will be interesting to quote Jebb's own views on the use of conjecture from the Introduction to the *Oedipus Rex*, p. lvii:—

The use of conjecture is a question on which an editor must be prepared to meet with large differences of opinion, and must be content if the credit is conceded to him of having steadily acted to the best of his judgement. All students of Sophocles would probably agree at least in this, that his text is one in which conjectural emendation should be admitted only with the utmost caution. His style is not seldom analogous to Virgil in this respect, that when his instinct felt a phrase to be truly and finely expressive he left the logical analysis of it to the discretion of grammarians then unborn. Such a style may easily provoke the heavy hand of prosaic correction; and, if it requires sympathy to interpret and defend it, it also requires, when it has once been marred, a very tender and very temperate touch in any attempt to restore it. Then in the lyric parts of his plays Sophocles is characterized by tones of feeling and passion which change with the most rapid sensibility—by boldness and sometimes confusion of metaphor—and by occasional indistinctness of imagery, as if the figurative notion was suddenly crossed in his mind by the literal.

Another highly important duty of an editor lies in dealing with questions of interpolation. Jebb set his face against the hacking and slashing of the Greek masterpieces which is now so prevalent in Germany. On this subject he wrote judiciously and with a characteristic touch of gentle humour in his Preface to the *Oedipus Colonus*.

It is allowed on all hands that our traditional texts of the Attic dramatists have been interpolated here and there with some alien verses or parts of verses. But there has been a tendency in much of recent criticism to suspect, to bracket, or to expel verses as spurious, on grounds which are often wholly inadequate, and are sometimes even absurd. In this play upwards of ninety verses have been thus suspected or condemned by different critics, without counting that part of the last kommos (1689–1747) in which it is certain that the text has been disturbed. [Jebb here gives a list of the supposed interpolations in the *Oed. Col.*, and adds]: I know not whether it is too much to hope that some reader of these pages will take the trouble to go through the above list of rejections or suspicions, and to consider them in the light of such aid as this edition seeks to offer towards the interpretation of the play. If any one will do that, he will form a fair idea of the manner in which a certain school of criticism (chiefly German, but not without imitators elsewhere) is disposed to deal with the texts of the Greek dramatists. When an interpolation is surmised or assumed, it is usually for one (or more) of the following reasons:—(1) because something in the language appears strange; (2) because the verse seems inconsistent with the immediate context, or with the character of the speaker; (3) because the verse seems inconsistent with something in another part of the play; (4) because it seems weak or superfluous. In dealing with the first class of objections—those from language—the grammarian is on his own ground. But the second, third, and fourth classes of objections demand the exercise of

other faculties—literary taste, poetic feeling, accurate perception of the author's meaning, insight into his style, sympathy with his spirit. Consider, for instance, why Nauck suspects two of the finest verses in a beautiful passage of this play (610 f.) :—

Earth's strength decays, the body's strength decays,  
Faith dies, distrust is born.

He ascribes them to an interpolator because only the second is pertinent; the decay of faith is in point; but what have we to do with the decay of earth or of the body? This is not a whit worse than very many of the examples in the above list. Could Sophocles come back and see his text after all these expurgators had wreaked their will, he might echo the phrase of the worthy Acharnian, as he held up his ragged garment to the light—*ὦ Ζεῦ δίορτα*.

This happy allusion to a scene in Aristophanes is an example of that gentle and refined view of humour which in his conversation often charmed his intimate friends, but which he was chary of bringing into the light of public life. He did not call on this faculty in his fine and beautifully polished speeches in the House of Commons, which he entered as member for his University in 1901, the year after he received the honour of Knighthood. But it sometimes appears in his writings. Here is a characteristic passage from *Bentley*, a model biography :—

The bull may be seen, portrayed by the fancy of a modern artist, in the frontispiece of Charles Boyle's edition of the Letters. The head of the brazen animal is uplifted, as if it was bellowing; one of the tyrant's apparitors is holding up the lid of a large oblong aperture in the bull's left flank; two others are hustling in a wretched man, who has already disappeared all but his legs. The two servants wear the peculiar expression of countenance which may be seen on the faces of persons engaged in packing. . . Phalaris is seated on his throne just behind the bull, in a sort of undress uniform, with a long round ruler for sceptre in his right hand; firmness and mildness are so blended in his aspect that it is impossible not to feel in the presence of a great and good man. On the left side of the throne a Polonius is standing a little in the background with a look of lively edification subdued by deference; and in the distance there is a view of hills and snug farmhouses suggesting fair rents and fixity of tenure.

The works of Jebb are very widely known and highly appreciated on the continent. His introduction to Homer has been translated into German. His last work, *Bacchylides*, is by some regarded as his masterpiece. It was happily completed before his death, due to an ailment contracted in South Africa when he visited that country in company with the British Association in the autumn of 1905. It is indeed a worthy coping-stone to the stately edifice of his life-work, and shows that combination of sanity of judgment and brilliancy of execution which characterizes all his writings.

Jebb was an honorary graduate of Oxford, Dublin, and the Scottish Universities, and enjoyed similar honours conferred by foreign insti-

tutes. He was one of the original fifty members of the British Academy, and sat on its Council. He was honorary Professor of Ancient History in the Royal Academy, and held the recently instituted Order of Merit. He became a Fellow of London in 1897, and in the same year President of the London Hellenic Society; and Trustee to the British Museum in 1903. He contributed to various classical and literary magazines, and wrote several articles on classical subjects for the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1875-88). He was married in 1874 to the widow of General Slemmer of the United States Army. It is understood that Lady Jebb is engaged on a Memoir of her late husband.

R. Y. TYRRELL.