

**FORSCHUNGEN ZUR ENGLISCHEN
SPRACHE UND LITTERATUR; HEFT I;
THE STAGE-QUARREL BETWEEN
BEN JONSON AND THE SO-
CALLED POETASTERS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649110056

Forschungen zur englischen sprache und litteratur; Heft I; The stage-quarrel between Ben Jonson and the so-called poetasters by Roscoe Addison Small

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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ROSCOE ADDISON SMALL

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Forschungen

zur englischen sprache und litteratur,

herausgegeben

von

Eugen Kölbing.

Die „Forschungen zur englischen sprache und litteratur“ sollen grammatische und litterargeschichtliche abhandlungen, sowie beiträge zur kenntniss der realien, eventuell auch text-publicationen aus älterer und neuerer zeit bringen, und zwar wurde bei der gründung dieser sammlung namentlich an solche untersuchungen gedacht, die, ihrem grösseren umfang zufolge, sich für den abdruck in den „Englischen studien“ weniger eignen. Ausser arbeiten erprobter fachmänner sollen auch werthvolle erstlings-schriften, u. a. hervorragendere doctordissertationen, zunächst unserer universität, hier aufnahme finden. Es ist gewiss zu hoffen, dass auch neben den bereits bestehenden sammlungen mit verwandter tendenz es den „Forschungen“ gelingen wird, in unserer wissenschaft boden zu gewinnen und zu dem ausbau derselben beizutragen.

Ueber den werth des vorliegenden ersten heftes spricht herr professor Kittredge, der die güte hatte, nach des autors unerwartet frühem tode mich bei der correctur zu unterstützen, sich auf den folgenden seiten so anerkennend aus, dass ich diesem lobe kaum etwas hinzuzufügen wüsste. Die abhandlung fördert reiche ergebnisse auf einem viel umstrittenen gebiete der englischen litteraturgeschichte zu tage.

In einem zweiten hefte, welches im laufe des nächsten jahres erscheinen soll, gedenkt der unterzeichnete zu handeln über Lord Byron's Don Juan, seine kritiker und seine fortsetzer.

Ein drittes soll eine untersuchung über das leben und die werke von John Wolcot (Peter Pindar) bringen.

Weitere manuscripte wolle man an den herausgeber der sammlung senden, der dieselben mit rücksicht auf ihre geeignetheit für die aufnahme prüfen wird.

E. Kölbing,

Breslau, Rosenthalerstrasse 14.

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Eugen Kölbing

Heft I

Breslau
Verlag von M. & H. Marcus
1899

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BY

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Preface.

The author of this monograph did not live to see the whole of his book in type. At the time of his death he had read the proof-sheets of the first sixty-four pages. The complete work was, however, in the hands of the printer; the „copy“ had been prepared with great care, and there is no reason to believe that the author, in revising the proofs of pp. 65—200, would have made any changes of moment.

In substance the work is identical with the dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University by Mr. Small in May, 1897, in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and now deposited in the Library of the University. The form, however, in which the monograph appears, is the result of a careful revision carried out in 1897—98, and presents the author's final views on the subject of the great Elizabethan stage-quarrel between Ben Jonson and the „poetasters.“ The revision, however, was largely a matter of re-arrangement; for the author had so mastered his subject that he found little occasion to modify the opinions and arguments advanced in his original paper. The investigation grew, in the first instance, out of Dr. Small's studies with Professor Baker, who suggested the subject to him, and to whom he would certainly have wished to express his indebtedness for guidance and inspiration.

The brief biographical sketch which follows this Preface, was prepared at the request of Professor Kölbng.

G. L. K.

Cambridge, February 3d., 1899.

Roscoe Addison Small.

Roscoe Addison Small, the son of Addison and Florence S. Small, was born at Portland, Maine, January 10, 1871. After the usual preparatory course of study, he was matriculated, in 1888, at Bates College, Lewiston, where he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1892. In these undergraduate years Dr. Small gave clear evidence of the intellectual ability which was to distinguish his subsequent university career. From the outset, he took the lead among his fellow-students, and at graduation he was appointed the valedictorian of his class. From 1892 to 1894 he taught school, first in his native state, afterwards in Massachusetts. His tastes and aptitudes, however, were so distinctly in the direction of the advanced study of English that he decided to make this subject the occupation of his life. Accordingly, in September, 1893, he entered Harvard University, where he remained for four years, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1894, that of Master of Arts in 1895, and that of Doctor of Philosophy in 1897.

Dr. Small's career at the University was one of great distinction. He interpreted the meaning of his specialty, English Philology, in a scholarly and catholic sense. Already well grounded in the Greek and Latin classics, he gave himself with enthusiastic devotion not only to the linguistic and literary study of English, but to such ancillary subjects in Germanic and Romance philology as were requisite to a complete and well-rounded training. His methods were enlightened, his ideals were high, and his habit of mind was singularly accurate and alert. He worked rapidly, but surely, and this happy gift of nature more than compensated, to all appearances, for his uncertain health.

The many unsolved problems of Elizabethan literary history were an irresistible attraction to a young scholar of Dr. Small's acumen, and he resolved to give his attention particularly to this period. His study of John Marston, begun under the guidance of Professor Baker, tempted him to attack the vexed question of the famous stage-quarrel between Ben Jonson and the Poetasters. The idea was a welcome one to his instructors, who felt that the young critic's keenness and independence might well bring something to pass that should, it was not too much to hope, settle the long-debated problem. Dr. Small went at his task without prejudice. He had no thesis to maintain, nor was he committed to an attempt to overthrow any of his

VII

predecessors. He saw clearly, however, that in the works of these predecessors a very slender basis of ascertained fact had been made to support an imposing structure of theory. Two problems, as he conceived the question, immediately confronted him: to ascertain the precise nature and extent of the definite evidence by submitting every document to a close scrutiny, and to subject the theories to the „dry light“ of this testimony. For both problems Dr. Small was fitted by both nature and training. Remarkably well versed in the Elizabethan drama and widely read in all periods of English literature, he was better able than many older scholars to judge of the validity of stylistic and metrical arguments. Trivial resemblances and commonplaces had for him no demonstrative power. But, along with this indispensable power of destructive criticism, he had a keen eye for the positive significance of details apparently trifling. And, finally, he had a high degree of constructive ability. Here and there in the pages that follow, the dispassionate and indifferent critic will detect, it may be, a slight saltus from the very highly probable to the completely demonstrated; but never, I think, will this be found to imply more than the emphatic form of statement with which an enthusiastic investigator who has really mastered his subject may be reasonably indulged. Never is there any doubt upon what evidence the conclusion rests. To involve the details of the subject in a Druidic mist in order to escape from an untenable position was a device equally abhorrent to this clear-sighted young scholar's intellectual and moral standards. I do not believe that there is a page in this monograph in which the reader does not know precisely where the author stands, and why. But it is needless to dwell on a merit which all who knew Dr. Small will take for granted and which he who runs may read.

Of the results of Dr. Small's investigation the learned world must judge. To the present writer they seem very considerable indeed. If they merely enabled us to draw our pens through several fantastic chapters of what has hitherto passed, with many, for literary history, they would be thoroughly worth while. But they do much more than this. They present, on the basis of all the extant evidence, a full and consistent history of a famous literary episode—a history which, except as here and there a detail may be added or subtracted by subsequent searchers, can hardly be much modified unless new documents shall come to light. Further, they show, for the first time, the Poetaster quarrel in its true proportions—not as a stage-war involving most of the poets of the time and profoundly affecting our dramatic literature, but as a limited affair, effecting but few men, intense enough while it lasted, but by no means far-reaching or very significant in its final outcome. How reasonable such a result is, everyone can see. All students of the drama know how different it is from the previous state of the question.

Dr. Small finished his dissertation in April, 1897, and received his degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the end of the ensuing June. At almost the same moment he was called to an English Instructorship at Brown University, Providence. His duties began in the September following, and

VIII

continued throughout the academic year. Though arduous, like most positions in American universities, they were thoroughly congenial. His success as a teacher was immediate and striking, and, at the end of his first year's term, in June, 1898, the University esteemed itself fortunate in securing his services for another year. Meantime Dr. Small had re-arranged and revised his dissertation, and printing had begun. Late in June, he returned to his home in Lewiston, apparently but little exhausted by the work of the year, in better health than usual, and with the pleasantest anticipations for the future.

On the night of July 4th, however, without warning, Dr. Small was attacked by what proved to be rheumatic fever. This affected the brain and the nerve centres and, on the 18th of the same month, he died, at the age of twenty-seven.

Of the intellectual qualities of this brilliant young scholar enough has already been said to show how great a loss American scholarship has suffered by his untimely death. The present monograph, and an article on "The Authorship and Date of *The Insatiate Countess*" published in volume V. of *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature*, constitute his literary legacy to the learned world. He projected a monograph on Dekker, which would have been of great value, but this he had not begun. Few men of his age have done so much and have done it so well.

It is impossible to close even this brief sketch without adverting, in a word, to the personal qualities which endeared Dr. Small alike to his instructors and to his fellows. He was a man of uncompromising integrity and uprightness, abhorring "whatsoever loveth or maketh a lie"; his religious convictions were deep, but unobtrusive; his devotion to duty was absolute. His abilities and his amiable and kindly enthusiasm won him many friends, and his goodness of nature ensured him against their loss. His life was undisturbed by sorrow and was filled with profitable occupation. It was short, but it was complete.

G. L. Kittredge.