

itself open to criticism on the very points with respect to which it has been so much assailed.

The actual "battle of the books" which Swift has so ludicrously travestied, or so wittily described, originated in an allusion of Sir Wm. Temple's, in one of his works, to the "Epistles of Phalaris," as if they were genuine, and not the production of a writer in the declining age of Greek literature. Published in consequence of Sir Wm. Temple's notice, under the literary Editorship of Charles Boyle, afterwards Earl of Orrery, who in his preface expressed himself somewhat bitterly against Bentley, the celebrated scholar and critic, the latter attacked the said Epistles, and proved them in the most triumphant manner, to be a forgery, repaying the complimentary language respecting himself, with language equally complimentary, or the reverse, respecting Sir Wm. Temple. Atterbury and Swift and Pope and Garth and Middleton rallied to the rescue of Sir Wm., and Swift's "Battle of the Books" was the result.

The controversy regarding the said Epistles, however, is, after all, but a side issue in the larger question as to the comparative merits of ancient and modern writers, so keenly waged at that time. Perrault in France, and Wotton in England, maintained the claims of the moderns, proceeding, it would seem upon the opinion of Bacon, that the moderns are truly the ancients, as living at an older date of the world's history, and having all the additional experience, and the accumulated wisdom, of that more advanced epoch. Sir Wm. Temple replies to Wotton in his "Essay on ancient and modern learning," and it is, when doing so, as we have noticed, that the Epistles of Phalaris are quoted as an instance in point, and in favour of the ancients. It is in editing the Epistles again, that Boyle offers those offensive strictures which provoked Bentley's criticism on the genuineness of the work alluded to. Such was the state of the controversy when Swift strikes in with his effective irony—making the main battle to be between the ancients and the moderns—as to which of them must be accorded the higher claim to distinction—and Bentley's attack on Phalaris is but an episode in the general *melée*. St. James' Library, of which Bentley was the Keeper, is the field of bloody conflict. The contest is described with all the accompaniments—not omitting the "*Deus ex machinâ*"—of ancient warfare. It is almost superfluous to say that the ironical production is characterized by all Swift's cleverness, his irresistible humour, and genuine wit, and by a touch of poetry. Caught, we have no doubt, from the proximity into which the author's mind is brought with Homer and his fictions, which gives a grace to this book of Swift's, not recognized in any of his other productions. The way in which the ancients gain the victory—Homer and Pindar and Plato and Aristotle and Euclid and Herodotus and Livy and Hippocrates, heading respectively the heavy cavalry, the light horse, the bowmen, the engineering company, the footmen, the dragoons—and the easy manner in which they put '*hors de combat*' their opponents—is given with great spirit and is irresistibly ludicrous. Bentley and Wotton, after the manner of Homer's heroes, range the field in quest