

rate and unconnected songs, they were for the first time written down and composed into a whole by the plastic taste of Peisistratus and his literary friends. The foundation of the Wolfian Theory rests on the assumption of the non-existence of *writing* at the time the Homeric poems were composed. In favour of this, among other arguments, he alleges the late introduction of papyrus into Greece, the only material suitable in those days to a long composition; and also the fact, that the *first written* laws we hear of are those of Zaleucus, B.C. 664. His most telling evidence is drawn from the poems themselves. In Iliad vi., 168, the *σήματα λυγρά* are fairly considered by Wolf to be a kind of arbitrary symbolical marks, not conventional characters of language. Again, in Iliad, bk. vii., 175, we find Ajax is able to recognise the mark he had made on his own lot. Now, had the mark been a written alphabetical symbol, how does it come to pass that it could not be read by the other chiefs and the herald, to whom it was a riddle until it reached Ajax? Further evidence is adduced from the universal silence that pervades both poems respecting coins, epitaphs, and inscriptions. Yet the dialect of the poet affords the most convincing internal evidence on this point.* Whether writing existed in Homer's time or not (and that it did then exist, we think Nitzsch † has clearly shown against Wolf, though he has failed to bring it home to the Homeric poems), we find in the language an incontrovertible proof that it was not originally applied to the composition of these poems, which possess a pliability and softness best suited for versification, a co-existent variety of larger and shorter forms, a licentious freedom in contracting vowels

* See Bueumlein, *Commentatio de Homero ejusque Carminibus*, sect. 4.

† *De Historia Homeri meletemata*, Fas. i. et. ii., 1837.