

ARTICLE VIII.

ALSCHEFSKI'S LIVY.

Titii Livii Rerum Romanarum ab urbe condita libri ad codicum manu scriptorum fidem emendati ab C. F. S. Alschefski. Vol. I primae decadis partem priorem continens, 1841. Vol. II prim. dec. part. alt. continens,¹ 1843.

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THE publication of the first two volumes of this new critical edition of Livy, has awakened the greatest interest in Germany, and is understood to mark a new era in the history of the text of Livy's works. It is now somewhat more than a hundred years since the first appearance of the well-known edition of Arnold Drakenborch. That great work, bearing upon every page evidences of the learning and industry and mature scholarship of its author, embodying all the results of the labors of preceding editors, and embracing a vast apparatus of critical and exegetical material, has till within a comparatively short period continued to maintain its ascendancy as the standard edition of Livy. Most of the editors who followed Drakenborch, either unacquainted with the imperfections of a work containing so much that is good, or shrinking from the formidable task of working over and producing anew and in a better form such a cumbrous mass of material, have for the most part followed his critical authority, and been content to gather, according to their wants, from the immense stores of annotation which he accumulated. Yet the extreme confusion in which Drakenborch has thrown together the valuable results of his researches, can hardly have failed to perplex even those most familiar with learned commentary; and certainly from many a practical teacher, condemned to grope his way through those piles of annotation in search of a clue to some critical or philological difficulty, has often escaped the very reasonable wish, that some kindly spirit of order had once been present in the midst of the chaotic mass, and fashioned it into some known and recognized proportions of form and symmetry. The text of Drakenborch, though superior to that of earlier editors, and in many important

¹ We learn from recent foreign Journals, that Vol. III. has also appeared. It probably contains the first five books of the third decade.

particulars to that of Gronovius, which he assumed as the basis of his own edition, has yet entirely failed to meet the demands of the better principles of criticism which prevail at the present time. Indeed, that celebrated editor of Livy, though he constantly consulted the best editions, and had at his command a numerous and to some extent valuable collection of manuscripts, yet seems not to have had any clear and certain opinion of the real value of separate Mss., nor to have established for himself any uniform principles of criticism; and hence he frequently followed in silence some older edition, and in many passages adopted or rejected readings, in accordance with the suffrages of inferior manuscripts, simply because they formed a majority in his collection. Many German scholars since the beginning of the present century, and among the first Walch¹ and Büttner,² have drawn attention to the defects of the edition of Drakenborch; and in their satisfactory emendations of numerous passages prepared the way for others, who have undertaken the task of thoroughly revising the text of the entire work of Livy. Of the more recent editors who have preceded Alschefski in attempting to discharge this responsible office, only two here require particular mention, Kreyssig and Immanuel Bekker. Kreyssig, by a careful examination of the Bamberg Ms., introduced many important corrections into the fourth decade, and especially the thirty-third book, and by a new collation of the Vienna Ms. emended many passages in the first half of the fifth decade.

The result of his labors appear in the neat stereotype edition of Tauchnitz, in six volumes duodecimo, 1829; and the new readings adopted are conveniently given along with the readings of Drakenborch, at the end of each volume. In the remaining decades, the first and the third, Bekker first commenced the work of revision on a correct method, by adopting for his guidance in the former the excellent Florentine Ms. and for the latter the no less celebrated Putean Ms. The text of these two portions of Livy, appeared accordingly in a greatly improved form in his edition. Yet, notwithstanding the acknowledged merit of Bekker's edition, it labored under serious imperfections, and left much still to be done in the work of revising the text of Livy. In the judgment of two of his reviewers, well qualified to judge, Oselli³ and Weissenborn,⁴ his labors were only partially successful; the com-

¹ G. C. Walch, *Emendationes Livianae*.

² Fr. Büttner, *Observationes Livianae*, 1819.

³ See Jahn's *Jahrbücher*, 1831, Bd. I. ⁴ See *ib.* Bd. 31, 1841, p. 156.

mon readings were frequently retained without sufficient reason, in opposition to the testimony of the best Mss., and the method which he had proposed to pursue was not followed with the requisite consistency and thoroughness.

These two editions of Kreyssig and Bekker, at once by their merits and their faults, by the real good which they effected as well as by that which they failed to effect, opened the way for the labors of Alschefski, with whose work we are now more particularly concerned. To correct what they had done imperfectly, and to do what they had left undone, and by a new and careful study of the oldest and the best Mss. to restore so far as possible the text of Livy's works, and place it at length upon a secure and permanent basis, was the task proposed to himself by this editor. Dr. Alschefski, whose name seems destined to be for a long time associated in the learned world with the works of Livy, was born in Berlin, and educated in the Joachimsthal gymnasium and the university in that city; and soon after leaving the university, commenced his career as a classical teacher in the *Gray Cloister* gymnasium, one of the oldest institutions of learning in Berlin, and indeed in Germany. With this gymnasium he still continues to be connected. By his experience as a teacher, and especially by a long course of critical studies and investigations, he had well prepared himself for the business of editing the writings of Livy; and had proved himself well qualified for his task in two minor works, which exhibited most satisfactory results of his preparatory labors. The first of these was a Gymnasium Program, published in 1839—entitled, *Ueber die kritische Behandlung der Geschichtsbücher des Titus Livius*—in which the author displayed a familiar acquaintance with the literature of Livy, gave a clear historical view of the fate which the text of his works underwent during the middle ages, and pointed out the true method to be observed in consulting and using the various Mss. together with an estimate of their respective value. This was followed by a critical edition of the thirtieth book of Livy, which at once gained him an enviable distinction in Germany, and awakened the most eager expectations for the appearance of his edition of the entire work. The first two volumes of this work, mentioned at the head of this notice, embrace as their title indicates, the books of the first decade. In the preface to the first volume, the author states the principles of criticism by which he has been guided, and classifies according to their age and worth, the manuscripts which he has consulted in preparing his edition. First of all, the Floren-

time or *Medicean Ms.* preserved in the Laurentian library at Florence, which had been already used by Bekker with so much advantage, was subjected to a new and thorough examination. Yet mindful of the fact that this excellent book, ancient as it is, belongs to the eleventh century, a period when the transcribers already began to take liberties with the text, and determined, in conformity with the principle observed by Phenanus to lay at the basis of his revision two ancient and trustworthy manuscripts, he next sought for a second one worthy of taking rank with the *Medicean*. In this search the editor was successful, far beyond his expectations.¹ In the royal library at Paris, he found in the Colbertine collection a manuscript of the first decade, which on examination, was found to belong to the tenth century, and on a close comparison with the *Medicean*, not only coincided with it in all essential points, but was even superior to it in some respects. These two books, the *Medicean* and the *Paris*, with the *Worms Ms.* used by Phenanus, which does not extend beyond the sixth book, form in the judgment of Alschefski the first class of *Mss.* of the first decade, and contain the text of Livy in its purest form. The readings of the first two he has given in foot-notes in his edition with the utmost faithfulness, extending even to every orthographical peculiarity, and has thus put every one in possession of the means of judging of their worth. In a second class, the author ranks the *Harleian Mss.* 1, which extends only to the end of the eighth book, and the *Leyden* 1, both of which show traces of arbitrary alterations by the transcribers. Among the remaining *Mss.* Alschefski regards as the best the *Klockian*, the *Palatine* 1 and 3, the *Portugal* and the *Vossian* 2. From this account of the method on which Dr. Alschefski has proceeded in the preparation of his work, it will be at once manifest to every one at all acquainted with the subject, what invaluable service he has done to the text of this portion of Livy's writings. He has carried out this method with such fidelity and consistency, that we may regard the text now printed in his edition, as restored to the same form, certainly in everything that is essential, in which it existed as early as the fifth century, in the original copy of Nicomachus Dexter, from which the *Paris* and the *Medicean Mss.*, and as Niebuhr thinks, all the manuscripts of the first decade were prepared.

It is a circumstance justly regarded by Dr. Alschefski himself,

¹ Compare with the preface, an article by Alschefski, in Jahn's Jahrbücher, Bd. 40, 1844, p. 287.

as a singular good fortune, that his critical labors have been reviewed by one abundantly qualified to do him the fullest justice, Prof. Weissenborn of Eisenach; who, in two articles in Jahn's *Jahrbücher*, Nos. 35 and 39, has discussed them with the ability of a master and the candor and impartiality of a true scholar; and while he has borne the most unequivocal testimony to their excellence, has suggested to the author numerous changes and improvements for a future edition. These articles from their extent and great value, deserve from all who are professionally interested in the subject, and especially from all future editors of Livy, a scarcely less attentive perusal and study than the work itself, which they review. It seems to us, indeed, that in many passages, which from the disagreement of the best Mss. require for their settlement a nice balancing of considerations, and in which the author seems to have been guided by a certain personal preference for the one or the other Ms., the sound and mature judgment of his reviewer has suggested the better reading, and maintained it upon the most satisfactory grounds. There is much reason too for believing that Weissenborn is correct in ascribing some of the readings adopted by Alschefski upon the authority sometimes of the Paris Ms. and sometimes of the Medicean, to the mistakes of transcribers, and rejecting them for other and more probable readings. But it would lead us too far from our present design to mention more particularly the points on which Prof. Weissenborn has enlarged; and we must content ourselves with these allusions to his very valuable observations.

Although it was the chief purpose of Dr. Alschefski to furnish a critical edition, yet he has not entirely neglected the work of interpretation; in both these volumes, and particularly in the second, he has devoted considerable attention to the explanation of difficult passages, and has discussed at some length various grammatical points. Yet as Weissenborn has well remarked, some of the notes of this character are not of the greatest importance, and the space which they occupy, might with more advantage have been given to passages of greater difficulty, which have never been satisfactorily explained. Some of the translations, too, which are given of certain passages, seem quite too free; and the sense which they convey, cannot by any just principles of interpretation, be legitimately deduced from the words in the text. This remark is particularly applicable to the translations which the author gives of two passages, which have occasioned much discussion, viz. B. 2. 5, of *eminente animo patrio*, and B. 1.

17, of *patrum—a singulis—pervenerat : factionibus*, etc. Though Alschefski's reading of the latter of these passages must be received upon the authority of the best *Mss.*, yet the translation which is given, is too wide of the text, and after all, fails to clear up the singular difficulties of the passage.¹ At the same time, it is readily conceded, that in this portion of his labors, Dr. Alschefski has handled the points in question with clearness and skill, and has furnished many valuable contributions to the exegetical commentary of Livy. In respect to orthography, the author has also closely followed his manuscripts, and while in pursuing this course, he has presented numberless words in a form that will seem quite strange to most readers, has well executed an important purpose of a critical edition of an ancient work. In the punctuation, he has been singularly sparing, and in this respect, indeed, has in comparison with Drakenborch, gone to the very opposite extreme, giving sometimes whole sentences of very considerable length, scarcely broken by a single point. In concluding this notice of Dr. Alschefski's work, we must not omit to mention, that in its mechanical execution, it is far superior to most German editions of the classics, and will bear honorable comparison with the productions of the press of any country.

It is proper also here to mention that Dr. Alschefski has already published two volumes of a smaller edition of his work, in a form adapted to the use of schools, and of general readers. We have not yet received these volumes; but from the favorable manner in which they have been noticed in the German journals, we may confidently expect to find in them a valuable book for the practical purposes of instruction. The author has endeavored to attain the object proposed in this edition, by omitting the critical apparatus, by furnishing only notes of an explanatory character, and by adopting, with some modifications, the usual orthography. The text is represented as even superior to that of the larger edition, as the author has carefully reviewed his former labors, and introduced many improvements. At the end of each volume is attached an *adnotatio critica*, embracing the particular passages, in regard to which the author has abandoned his earlier critical opinions.

¹ See the remarks of Weissenborn, in the second of the articles above referred to, p. 280. Compare the discussion of Schadelaer, *Archiv für Phil. u. Päd. Bd. 1. p. 439.*