

PREFACE

THE purpose of this dissertation is two-fold: to give a biography of Theobald, and to establish a thesis. With the exception of one or two written before 1728, none of the eighteenth century accounts of the scholar is in any way reliable, especially in matters touching *The Dunciad*. They all present the same picture of Theobald as is found in the variorum edition of Pope's satire, from which, indeed, the bulk of their information was derived. Early in the nineteenth century John Nichols, in the second volume of *Illustrations of Literature*, produced a much longer and more accurate sketch of Theobald than had yet appeared, together with the major part of his voluminous correspondence with Warburton. Though Nichols showed signs of appreciating the critic's learning and scholarship, he continued to accept as true many of the baseless charges advanced by Pope. The last century witnessed an amazing contrast in the estimates placed upon Theobald; Shakespearean scholars, almost unanimously, asserted that he was one of Shakespeare's greatest editors, while the biographers and critics of Pope, still continuing to echo the latter's slanders, proclaimed the unfortunate man a dunce. Finally, John Churton Collins, first in an essay called *The Porson of Shakespearean Criticism* — which might better have been called *The Bentley of Shakespearean Criticism* — and later in the *Dictionary of National Biography* clearly established his greatness as a scholar. Yet even Mr. Collins did not attempt to refute many of Pope's accusations. This worthy task was accomplished by the late Professor Lounsbury in *The Text of Shakespeare*, an admirable work

to which I am heavily indebted. By minutely investigating *The Dunciad* and its surroundings, Professor Lounsbury has given us a true and comprehensive account of its hero, laying to rest, once and for all, the evil spirits loosed by Pope. To his biography I could have added little, had I not discovered a number of unpublished letters, written to Warburton, which throw some light on the period following the great satire, and make clearer the later relations of the two men.

The thesis that I attempt to uphold asserts that the basic principles of critical editing in English were derived directly from the method employed by Bentley in the classics. In his work on Shakespeare Theobald adapted this method to a new field, and in turn was followed by scholars who did not confine their labors to the great dramatist. I have not carried my discussion beyond that remarkable period of critical activity, the sixth decade of the eighteenth century, because by 1760 the method had become so prevalent that its connection with Theobald is no longer apparent. This fact explains why I have not mentioned some of the best known scholars of the latter half of the century such as Tyrwhitt and Ritson, both of whom admired Theobald and followed his lead. I think that it is necessary only to show that the method which Theobald derived from Bentley and handed on to succeeding scholars is the same in essential details as that employed now.

This dissertation owes its being to Professor W. P. Trent. He first suggested the possibility of Bentley's influence on Theobald, and his abiding confidence in the thesis later sustained me through many discouragements. He also read both manuscript and proof, and made many criticisms compliance with which has added materially to the value of the book. I am also indebted to Professors A. H. Thorndike and E. H. Wright for reading the manuscript and making a number of helpful suggestions. Professor O. F. Emerson and Doctor D. H. Miles kindly read part of the manuscript

with results beneficial to the work, while my colleague, Mr. R. F. Dibble, went through the whole of the page proof. To the officials of the libraries of Columbia, Harvard, Yale, and Western Reserve universities, and also to the officials of the British Museum, I wish to acknowledge the obligation of many courtesies.

I wish publicly to express to my wife my heartfelt gratitude for her dear assistance. Besides performing the tedious and mechanical tasks necessary to publication, she was ever ready with affectionate sympathy and intelligent criticism, allowing neither my efforts to lag nor my perseverance to fail. To my brother, Doctor E. H. Jones, I am happy to return thanks for most substantial aid in publishing this book. Finally, Mr. John J. Lynch of the Columbia University Press has been of no small assistance to me in matters with which I was not familiar.

R. F. J.

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