

of inscriptions, formed a large and fairly well-defined task which occupied the many pupils of Hermann and Ritschl for the greater part of the century.¹ A large portion of this work could be carried on by those whose main duty was to devote themselves to higher instruction at schools and universities. As such it had a great and elevating influence upon the teaching profession, which no one knew better how to exert, recommend, and

¹ Many striking incidents might be quoted; one will suffice to show the zeal with which these studies were carried on and the dramatic interest which attached to purely philological work such as the restoration of ancient texts. Hermann had, in an open letter addressed to Ritschl in 1837, expressed his doubts as to the principles, differing from those of Bentley, which had been employed in an edition of one of the Plays of Plautus. Ritschl had in the meantime undertaken the examination and collation of the Plautine palimpsest which had been recently discovered by Cardinal Mai in the Ambrosian Library of Milan. These labours had convinced Ritschl of the correctness of Hermann's views, which amounted almost to a divination. "I still remember," says Koehly (*loc. cit.*, p. 46), "the immense impression which Ritschl's celebrated letter to Hermann on the Ambrosian codex produced upon us students. Written in 1837 in Milan, the letter appeared in August in the same periodical ('Zeitschrift für Alterthumswissenschaft'). A few months before this the Professor-elect of Archæology, Adolf Becker, had started his course in the customary manner with a public disputation; . . . the dissertation which he defended . . . was mainly intended to uphold the

traditional Plautine text against the ingenious audacity of Hermann's metrics and its consequences. It was natural that the old teacher—his official opponent—and the new professor should hit each other pretty hard; whereby the contest ultimately resulted in the establishment of a difference in principles. . . . Hermann adhered to the principles and conclusions of his metrical doctrine, Becker appealed to the traditional text of Plautus in the Palatine manuscripts which, on the whole, appeared to him to be correct. We had followed the contest with the greatest attention, with eagerness we expected the decision of Ritschl, who at that moment was occupied in Milan with the thorough deciphering of the Ambrosian text. And the decision arrived; it was that letter which did honour as much to the writer as to the receiver, that letter in which Ritschl, from the correcter tradition of the Ambrosian text, proved that Hermann's ingenious divination, in spite of apparent arbitrariness and audacity, had nevertheless hit upon the right thing,—that it had, in short, in spite of all rational and methodical calculation, celebrated a splendid triumph. What joy on our side, what embarrassed silence on the other!"