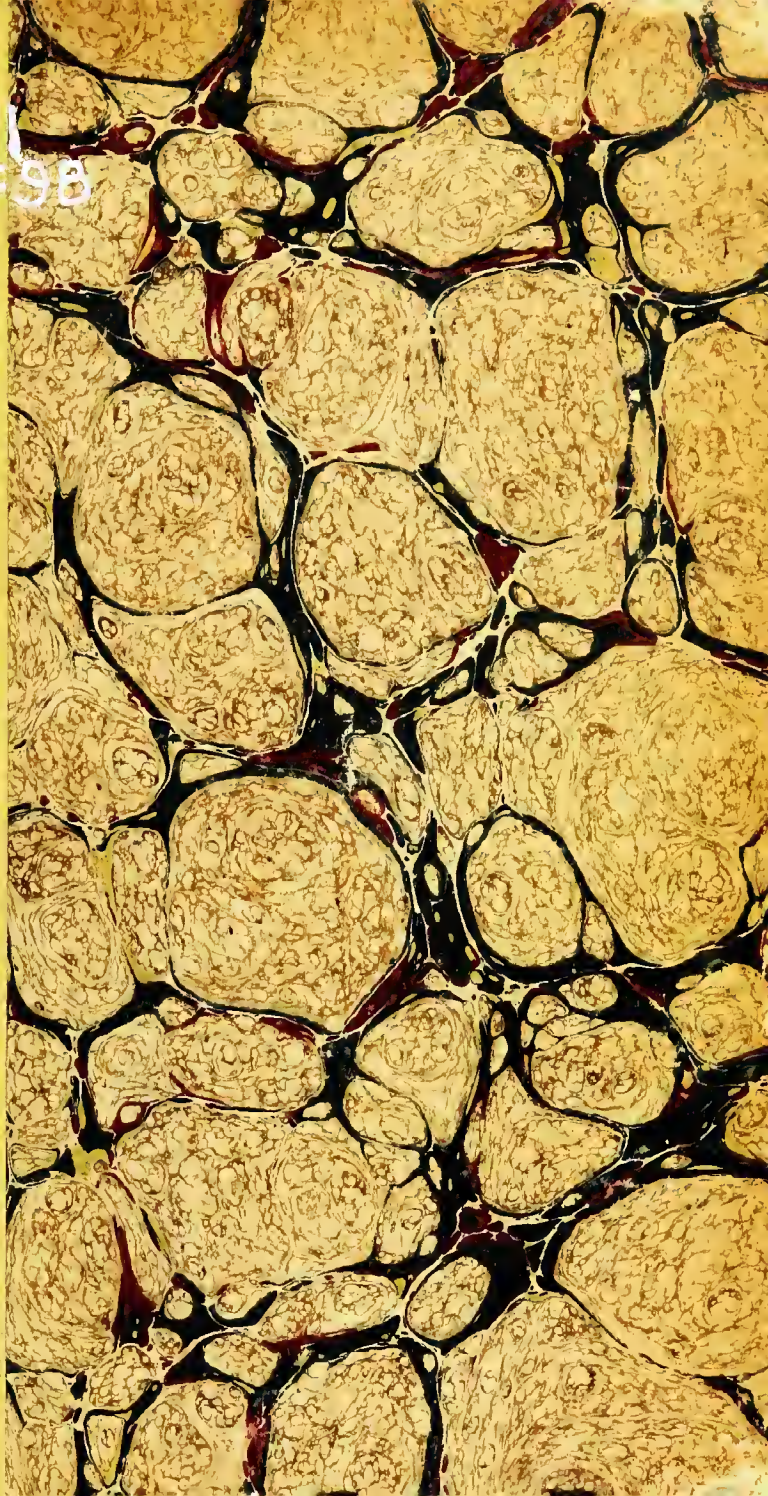


1881.

FURNIVALL—The "Co." of Pigsbrook & Co.



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The "Co." of Pigsbrook & Co.

By ~~Furnivall~~, Frederick James

3, ST. GEORGE'S SQUARE,

LONDON, N.W.,

February 8, 1881.

MY DEAR——

Many thanks to you for sending me the printed letter about this Pigsbrook & Co. business that the junior partner of the firm had posted you. You suggest that the proper place for the letter is the waste-paper basket, and so it is; but, before putting it there, I feel bound to answer a gross mis-statement in it, repeated more than once.

This mis-statement is, that my criticism of Mr. J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps—whom, for shortness sake, I call Hell-P., was "not induced by any action of his own," was "entirely unprovoked" by him, that "there has been no provocation on his side."

Now, he knows as well as I do, that this is not the case; and this is why he knows it.

You are aware that the "person" whom I call Pigsbrook, from the meaning of his name—Ang.-Sax. *swin*, a swine or pig; *burne*, a bourne or brook—printed in a newspaper and a review, some articles insulting grossly the New Shakspeare Society, its writers and myself. This person being one of damaged character, I resolved to adopt O'Connell's plan with him, and find a phrase equivalent to the famous "isosceles triangle" to silence him with. In this I happily succeeded, after refuting every one of his mistakes about Shakspeare. Mr. Hell-P. had a hearty laugh over my "Pigsbrook," when the name first struck me, and I told him of it.

I then heard that the Pigsbrook's grossly insolent articles

against us were to be reprinted in a volume, with some new matter, and that Mr. Hell-P. had gladly consented to let the Reprints, &c., be dedicated to him. The latter fact I could hardly believe, as I had had talks over these insults with Mr. Hell-P., and told him my opinion of the "drunken clown,"* their author.

So I at once wrote to Mr. Hell-P., saying with what astonishment I had heard that he, affecting then to be my friend, had agreed to let these insolent Reprints, &c. be dedicated to him. I pointed out to him that, as the character of the Pigsbrook articles was known to him, and all of the Shakspeare set, his acceptance of the dedication of them would be a deliberate adoption by him of the insults in the articles; and I told him that if his name appeared before the book, it would stop all relations between him and me; I would cut him dead; and that if he thus adopted and offered insults to my friends and me, he would find it a game which two could play at. He answered, admitting his acceptance of the dedication, but shirkt the point I had put to him, saying only that he had never heard of anyone making a dedicatee responsible for the opinions in the book dedicated to him. In return, I asked him not to put forward such a subterfuge as this, because the character of Pigsbrook's insulting articles was quite well known to him; and his acceptance of their dedication was therefore an adoption of them and their insults, and I should so take it. † "*Let there be no mistake between us, for the second*

* This epithet having been applied by that author to me, a thirty years' teetotaller, in the pages of *The Athenæum*, I felt, and still feel, justified in using it of him, to whom it was, in literal truth, once applicable, as everyone knows.

† I put a political parallel to him, to this effect—I am not sure of the names now:—Suppose, three years ago, Mr. T. P. O'Connor had written some rasping, insolent articles against Lord Beaconsfield, his cabinet, and the Tory party; suppose he had then reprinted these articles with some fresh ones, more or less neutral, and got Lord Derby to accept the dedication of them. Suppose Lord Beaconsfield had heard beforehand of the coming publication and its contents, and had twice very distinctly warned

time I said ; if your name appears before the volume containing those Reprints, I cut you, and you'll get my 'tit' for your 'tat.'" * The volume appeared with a dedication to Mr. Hell.-P. ; I cut him, and threw the three last letters he sent me as feelers into my basket unanswered. When opportunity offered † I gave him the tit for his tat, as I said I would, in two or three sneers at some fresh stupidities he had put forward. This is a simple narration of the facts. And yet in the face of my two letters of warning to him, and my cutting him in consequence, Mr. Hell.-P. has now the assurance to assert three times over, that my well-deserved sneers at the "miserable nonsense" (as he says) which he wrote, was "entirely unprovoked by him."

How much more straightforward it would have been in him to have plainly stated the facts, and said, that in his opinion I ought not to have construed his action *re* the Pigsbrook insults as I did. And how much more manly it would have been in him to stand up and fight his own battle, than to go whining to our President, like a little sneak at school, "Please, Sir, Furnivall's been rappin' my knuckles. I never done nothin' to him. You punish him."

Lord Derby that he would consider the coming out of the book with Lord Derby as its dedicatee an insult to himself (Lord B.) personally and his whole party, in consequence of its sanctioning and adopting Mr. O'Connor's insults. Suppose the book had then appeared with its dedication to Lord Derby, would not men have rightly held Lord Beaconsfield justified in treating this as an insult by Lord Derby to himself and his party? I now add, Suppose Lord Beaconsfield had then written half-a-dozen sharp lines resenting Lord Derby's insult, and Lord Derby had thereupon appealed, as a most injured innocent, to the Tory cabinet he had insulted, to censure Lord Beaconsfield, and had solemnly declared three times that he had never given Lord B. the slightest provocation, would not men have rightly treated this declaration as an impudent falsehood or evasion? (I beg Lord Derby's pardon for using his name, even hypothetically, in a case impossible to him as a man of honour.)

* The effect of my letters is stated, not the exact words.

† In my Forewords to Grigg's Facsimile of the Second Quarto of *Hamlet*, 1604, to be had at Elm House, Hanover Street, Peckham, S.E., for 6s. Every one should buy it.

Just fancy you or me, or any fellow who's ever pulled in a racing-eight, going to the President of the *Antiquaries*, and saying, "Here's Mr. Hell.-P., *F.S.A.*, been sneering at me! Please stop him." Wouldn't it be a joke?

It would also have been more honest if Mr. Hell.-P. had said that my *Hamlet* Forewords contained the following passage on his criticism, so-called, and the following tribute to his search-work, which I admire heartily:—

"Men who dub our school the 'sign-post' one, who write inane and feeble allegories to show that labourers at Shakspeare should remain mere labourers, and never strive to become gardeners, much less scientific botanists (*Mem. on Hamlet*, p. 75), must not be surprised if we call their school the 'woodenhead' one, and treat it with the contempt it deserves when it steps outside the province which it has wisely declared that it is alone fit for. And I say this, *while yielding to no one in respect and gratitude for the admirably careful work of the leading members of the Labourer or Woodenhead school in their own province.*"

As to the wording of my sneers, you'll see that I've founded it only on Mr. Hell.-P.'s acts. He turned himself into the Pigsbrook's 'Co,' and I just treated him as such. The firm's vagaries (that Hamlet's soliloquies on his own character were not to be trusted), thus of course became 'porcine' ones. In his *Hamlet* Memoranda,—see the last quotation—Mr. Hell.-P. wrote a weak and washy allegory to show how superior he and his fellow amateur *labourers* were, as tenders of Shakspeare's trees, to us who strive to be not only gardeners but scientific botanists. And when I saw the worthy Labourer, dung-fork in hand, holding up the one word *sallied* (for *solid* I. ii. 129), accidentally coinciding in Qo.₁ and Qo.₂, as settling the question whether Qo.₁ was a first sketch or not, I could not help smiling, and making a note of it (p. ix. of my Forewords, two lines; the Pigsbrook note in p. iii. is four lines). So, though Mr. Hell.-P., "not being versed in the phraseology of Billingsgate"—in which I con-

sider him the greatest proficient I ever met—is “at a loss to understand the application of these words,” you will easily see that he supplied me with them.

As to the sneers which Mr. Hell.-P.'s mortified vanity leads him to make against our Society, my Leopold Shakspeare Introduction, and myself, you know as well as I, that for some four years or more—as long as he was praised—Mr. Hell.-P. was a member of our Society, and hadn't a word to say against its constitution, &c. ; but he gets his knuckles rapt for insolence, and then all is changed, everything is wrong. As to myself, it used to be, “You're a *devilish* clever fellow ;” “There are some *devilish* fresh and original views in that Introduction of yours. I've bought four copies of it,” &c. Now it's “miserable nonsense,” &c. Well, I don't care which it is : either way 'll suit me. The one opinion is doubtless worth as much as the other in Mr. Hell.-P.'s mouth. But Mr. Hell.-P. wants things all one way. In the Facsimile Series, under my superintendence, in which the editors of the Quartos are chosen by me, the *Midsummer Night's Dream* vols., that came out with my *Hamlet*, Qo., are dedicated to Mr. Hell.-P. by their editor, with “sincere esteem and affection,” and in one of them his “ripe scholarship” is actually spoken of, a perfectly genuine expression, though, in my opinion, you might as well attribute “ripe *scholarship*” to a turnip-top. But Mr. Hell.-P. can't set the affection and the scholarship—ripe, too—against the “Co.” and his own labourer's tool, the dung-fork ; he wants all sugar and cream. That, however, is not healthy food for any man. Mr. Lowell's review of him in *My Study Windows* (1s. 6d.), and what I have told him and shown him of his need of wider views, while giving him full praise for his faithful labourer's work, are far more wholesome for him than the injudicious flattery which has made a fool's paradise for him to live in. Especially I wish that he'd attend to his English Grammar. I've pointed out to him before, his habit of swallowing *that's*. He promised not to do it again, and yet here in this precious fresh letter of his, is the

old fault once more—no printer's blunder. I correct it in capitals :—“ The useful results of that criticism are, as a rule, so limited, and so slowly evolved out of long and tedious discussion, [THAT] the public at large, who care only for the immortal text, have but a hazy idea of its importance.”

I hope you'll agree that I've treated Mr. Hell.-P.'s jobation * good-humouredly—one can't get angry with a man who swallows *that's*—and that you'll hold (1.) that he didn't state his case fairly; (2.) that he only got what he was warned he would get; and (3.) that he well deserved it.

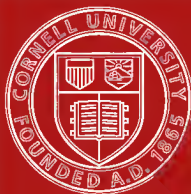
What he ought to do now, is clear : dissolve partnership with Pigsbrook, apologise to us all round, send the Society a cheque for £250 to pay for a Reprint, buy an English Grammar, and then I'll let him off turning teetotaller.

Very truly yours,

F. J. FURNIVALL.

P.S.—You will see that I have said nothing of Mr. Hell.-P.'s action as regards the Committee; but as I see it, this it is. After two warnings not to do an act which I, being Chairman of the Committee, tell him will be an insult to our Society, and each of us, he deliberately does the act. I retaliate, in a book for which I am solely responsible. He then comes coolly to the men whom he has insulted, and, using fresh insulting expressions to me, their Chairman, asks them to blame me. Had I been free to act for them, I should of course have torn Mr. Hell.-P.'s letter into four pieces, and sent 'em back to him with the inscription “ Mr. Phillipps's insolent epistle is returned to him.” But the Committee treated him with great forbearance, and he, unfortunately, has not been able to appreciate it.

* He seems to have taken six months over it. My *Hamlet* was out on July 26, 1880. His letter is dated 26th January, 1881. It isn't much of a thing for the time, is it?



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