

AUTHORSHIP IN THE 'AMCENITATES ACADEMICÆ.'

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FEW subjects have been more discussed by librarians and bibliographers than the authorship of many of the academical theses and dissertations which are met with in large collections of books. I may quote a sentence from Mr. H. B. Wheatley's volume *How to Catalogue a Library*:—"In the 'title-taking' of these dissertations the difficulty is not in their subjects, which are sometimes confined to a single word, but it is in the choice of their author's names: whether the præses, the respondent, the proponent, or defendant is to be chosen."

In many cases there can be no room for doubt, as in the present day, when each thesis may be taken to be the work of the graduate who maintains it. But formerly in Germany and Scandinavia, the præses ranked as author, a practice continued in Sweden almost to our own times. The difficulty arises when some novel ascription is made in the title of the dissertation, when, in place of the opposed præses and respondens, some such title as "auctor" or "auctor respondens" makes its appearance, or still more embarrassing when we find such as these:—"Quam deo ter optimo maximo Præside ex auctoritate D. Rectoris exam. subicit J. G. W.," or "Quam præside summo numine ex auctoritate D. Rectoris subicit . . ."

My object is, however, not to discuss the subject as a whole, but to confine my remarks almost exclusively to the dissertations which were printed with the name of Linnæus as præses, and subsequently reissued in the volumes of the *Amcœnitates Academicæ*. If these are held to be the work of the præses, they must be quoted as of Linnæus, with all the authority attaching to his name, but if, as some of recent years have held, the respective respondents are the actual authors, then the names of many obscure individuals will stand as sponsors in place of the hitherto reputed author.

Prof. T. M. Fries has given an account of these dissertations, and it will be best to give his statement concerning them. According to the existing regulations, down to 1850, everyone who wished to be examined in the faculty of philosophy had to dispute *pro exercitio*, and, after the examination, another thesis *pro gradu*, before the degree was conferred. The former in most cases was entirely or chiefly the work of the professor, who took the chair at the function as præses, and also assumed the lion's share in defending the thesis. On the other hand, the respondens took but little part in the composition or defence. To determine how many of these one hundred and eighty-six dissertations entirely proceeded from Linné's pen is impossible. That such was the case with certain essays, we have his own word, and their contents also show that; others, such as Löfving's *De gemmis arborum*, Söderberg's *Pandora et Flora Rybyensis*, Tillæus's *De varia febrium intermittentium curatione*, are, on the contrary, exclusively the result of the respondent's own study and observations. But

even these have certainly to some extent received the stamp and imprimatur of Linné, who completed and corrected them throughout before they were printed.

As to what happened in most cases, one of his pupils, J. G. Acrel, supplies the information. "All disputations," he relates, "he wrote by dictating, partly in Swedish, partly in Latin, which it was the task of the respondent to reduce to method and order; and although he did not trouble himself about the Latinity in them, he took care to intimate his opinion as to whether they were well written or the contrary. To write an essay thus needed scarcely three hours, for it was for him nothing but a lecture on the subject, which the respondent took down." But that all could not be so easily dealt with is apparent from even a hasty perusal, and often they demanded from the respondent a fair amount of trouble and knowledge, though the most requisite thing was to provide a passable Latin translation. It was also the custom that he should appear to be the real author and to add some flattering phrases praising the learning and acuteness of the præses.

In the library of the Linnean Society there are many duplicate copies of the original theses, corrected and annotated by Linnæus himself, and the later revision is that printed in the *Amœnitates Academicæ*. That Linnæus regarded most of these exercises as his own may be learned from such instances, as where he cited plants from *Centuria 1* (-2) *Plantarum* in the second edition of his *Species Plantarum* as first described in those parts, but without naming any author whatever. He plainly looked upon these productions as entirely his own.

There is, however, another set of dissertations which must have required a large amount of patience and reference on the part of the respondent, such as the *Flora Anglica* of 1754, soon followed by *Fl. Alpina*, *Fl. Palæstina*, and *Fl. Monspeliensis*, 1756, chiefly based on comparing certain published Floras with the recently issued *Species Plantarum*. After a short interval we find also *Fl. Danica*, *Fl. Capensis*, *Fl. Jamaicensis*, and *Fl. Belgica* (excluding *Fl. Akeroensis* and *Fl. Rybyensis*). The *Flora Anglica* is a list of names, with references to the third (Dillenius) edition of Ray's *Synopsis*, so that the name has to be established by a double reference, with the risk of a wrong number vitiating the result. *Fl. Monspeliensis* labours under the same defect, consequently when the *Index Kewensis* was in course of compilation, I was careful not to include any of the Floras above mentioned, though the dissertations on new genera and the *Centuriæ* were of course utilized.

We see, therefore, that the prevailing custom was for the præses to suggest, dictate, and correct the academic exercises of his pupils, and he therefore took them to be his own work. This point of view long prevailed in Sweden. As an instance, I may mention the elder Agardh's *Aphorismi Botanici*, a volume of sixteen dissertations issued as the work of as many students, whose names appear on the respective title-pages. The work is divided amongst them, a sheet apiece, ending sometimes in the middle of a word,



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