

Poetry," and tells us that "a great many Books were sent down by the Enemies of this Poet" to Eton. It is amusing to envision the enemy-critics at Eton with their common-place books, one hugging a huge *Polyanthea* in his arms and another fondling a little *Sententiae Ciceronis* in his hand, with which to demolish Shakspeare. Gildon wishes that Dryden "wou'd give the Public a juster Account of this Affair"; we wish he had. In a supplement to Rowe, who has a different version of the session, Gildon in 1709 lists these common-places,⁶ but does not attribute them to the session; they exhibit his own learning. How much of this formal session of the wits, a frequent form of invention in the seventeenth century, Dryden was responsible for beyond his own general statement we have no certain means of knowing.

But it is reasonably certain that someone's memory, whether Gildon's or Dryden's, or that of someone else, has been bringing in elements from another well known work into the story of Hales as told by Dryden. It will be remembered that principally through Dryden Suckling has become the arbiter of wit in the court of King Charles, and the official champion of Shakspeare as against Jonson. This inevitably brings in Suckling's own *A Sessions of the Poets*, where he begins with Jonson, but does not mention Shakspeare, since he is dealing with the living only. Apollo is to bestow the laurel, and the poets and wits have gathered to proffer their claims.

The first that broke silence was good old *Ben*,
Prepar'd before with Canary wine,
And he told them plainly he deserv'd the Bayes,
For his were call'd Works, where others were but Plaies.

Then came Carew, D'Avenant, Bartlet, Selwin, Mathews, and two or three from court. Suckling himself was next called, but he was away sporting with the ladies. Then came Montague, little Cid, and Murrey.

Hales set by himself most gravely did smile
To see them about nothing keep such a coil;
Apollo had spied him, but knowing his mind
Past by, and call'd *Faukland* that sate just behind.

Finally a rich Alderman won the prize on the ground

that the best signe
Of good store of wit's to have good store of coyn.

⁶ See below, pp. 56-57.