

The Letters of Junius

The reasons for believing that Sir Philip Francis(q.v.) was Junius are very strong. His evasions were only to be expected. Several of the men he attacked lived nearly as long as himself, the sons of others were conspicuous in society, and King George III survived him. Sir Philip, who had held office, who had been decorated, and who in his later years was ambitious to obtain the governor-generalship of India, dared not confess that he was Junius. The similarity of his handwriting to the disguised hand used by the writer of the letters is very close. If Sir Philip Francis did, as his family maintain, address a copy of verses to a Miss Giles in the handwriting of Junius (and the evidence that he did is weighty) there can be no further question as to the identity of the two. The similarity of Junius and Francis in regard to their opinions, their likes and dislikes, their knowledge and their known movements, amountn apart from the handwriting, almost to proof. It is ~~xxxxxx~~ certain that many felons have been condemned on circumstantial evidence less complete. The opposition to his claim is based on such assertions as that his known handwriting was inferior to the feigned hand of Junius, and that no man can make a disguised hand better than his own. But the first assertion is unfounded, and the second is a mere expression of opinion. It is also said that Francis must have been guilty of baseness if he wrote Junius, but if that explains why he did not avow the authorship it can be shown to constitute a moral impossibility only by an examination of his life.

The case for those who decline to accept the claim of Sir Philip Francis is stated by C. W. Dilke, Papers of a Critic(1875); Abraham Hayward, More about Junius, Franciscan Theory Unsound (1868); and C. W. Everett, The Letters of Junius (1927), in which a claim is put in for Lord Shelburne.