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LOVE AND LEGALISM: OVID, HEROIDES 20 AND 21.

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We give a summary of Mr. Kenney's paper (which he read to the Society on 22nd January, 1966, and which is due to appear, in a German translation, in Philologus) :-

The double Heroides (16-21) allowed Ovid greater opportunities than the single for his main interest, the exploration of the manifestations of love. In the letters of Acontius and Cydippe he adroitly solved the technical problems of adapting a story already well known in Callimachus' Aetia, and imparted to it a sophisticated psychological twist to produce a result altogether different from the dry and ironical tone of the original. He also wove into the argument of the dialogue between the two lovers a characteristically Ovidian and Roman strand of legalism, which culminates in a passage (21, 133 ff.) based on the familiar status ex scripto et ex sententia. The deficiencies of these brilliant poems suggest that the elegiac couplet was not the most suitable medium for the subtle interplay of emotion that Ovid was to bring to perfection in the Metamorphoses.