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FROM
VIRGIL'S GEORGICS

EDITED BY
JOHN MASSON, M.A., LL.D.

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1921

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107487161

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First published 1921
First paperback edition 2015

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-107-48716-1 Paperback

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PREFACE

THAT excellent scholar, Mr T. E. Page, says in the preface to his edition of the *Georgics*, "Young students seem now to limit their reading of Virgil chiefly to the *Aeneid*." Mr Hirzel again, the editor of Virgil in the Oxford Classical Texts, writes in the *Classical Review* of "the unmerited oblivion into which the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* have fallen at our public schools." I find, on pretty wide enquiry, that as a rule very few pupils read more than a single *Georgic* before leaving school.

There exists a quite proper prejudice against reading mere extracts from any great poem. But to select from the *Georgics* is quite a different thing from selecting parts out of *Aeneid* I or II or VI. In each of the latter to omit a single scene is to cut off an organic part of the book. The *Georgics* is largely a descriptive and meditative poem which embodies much technical matter and young readers soon weary of description, even when done by a master-hand. It is not surprising that teachers of Classics should prefer the *Aeneid*, which possesses the interest of narrative and incident which the *Georgics* lack. But to make up for these drawbacks there are, scattered over the four books, many different passages of wide range and deep human interest. In these much of Virgil's best known and most characteristic writing is to be found. They show his practical 'philosophy' and attitude to life and reveal how profoundly his country's tragedy, in an age of Revolution like our own, had shaken and remoulded all his outlook. The personality and ideals

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of the poet come out so clearly in these passages that they help us to understand the *Aeneid* better in its meaning both for Virgil's own age and for all time.

The present edition is meant to meet the needs of pupils in the higher classes of Secondary Schools and those of the 'ordinary' Latin Class in the Scottish Universities. Lovers of Virgil may also find it convenient to have these passages collected.

The Introduction is intended to appeal both to younger and older students of Virgil's works in general and will, it is hoped, add to the interest of the book. Thanks mainly to British scholars we can now estimate the poem far better as reflecting the history of the time. Moreover recent research has thrown fresh light on all Virgil's earlier writings especially in relation to the poets of his day[1]. I have tried to point out the relation of the *Georgics* both to his earlier and to his later work and thus to show Virgil's steady growth both in thought and art.

The influence of Lucretius is also discussed both in the earlier admiration for Epicurean science, which Virgil soon outgrew, and also in the deeper and life-long enthusiasm which helped in great part to make him, more than all others, 'the Humanist Poet.'

British scholars from Conington, first and foremost, down to Page and Sidgwick have done such admirable work on the *Georgics* that not much room is left for fresh interpretation of the poem. A more conscientious editor than Conington could not be found: he passes over no difficulty, and is careful to admit to the full the force of any evidence for an interpretation even when he himself rejects it. It must be admitted that Virgil's language is frequently

[1] These results are skilfully summed up by Mr Mackail in an admirable paper, "Virgil and Virgilianism" (*Classical Review* for 1908).

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obscure so that we cannot decide which of several possible meanings he intended.

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.

Who can tell the exact meaning of this line? (Perhaps its strength may be partly in the very vagueness, which widens its application.) Munro regrets that Virgil lacks "the transparent clearness of Ovid." Water may be clear because it is shallow. It must be admitted that Virgil at times "shadows out more meanings than one, not discriminating them in his own mind as sharply as they must be distinguished by a modern commentator[1]." The *Georgics* offer fewer difficulties than the *Aeneid* with its frequent inversions and transferences of construction[2] and, not least, by "his habit of hinting at two or three modes of expression, while actually employing one[3]." But Virgil is in general difficult to translate. The position of a word, the choice of one synonym rather than another, may affect the meaning of a sentence in his case far more than in other writers. No commentator on the poet has equalled Conington in instinctive perception of such points: sometimes he may, with intention, overstress their force, but always with marvellous intuition of the relation of single words or phrases to the whole sentence. In the notes his readings have been frequently quoted and emphasized as a valuable lesson for the young student in the fine art of translating[4]. They make him realize the diffi-

[1] For a simple instance see Conington's note on *G.* III, 9, and *Aen.* II, 1.

[2] See note on *G.* IV, 50 in the present volume.

[3] Conington, Preface to verse-translation, 1879, p. xiv.

[4] See for instance the lines

Quo fletu manes, qua numina voce moveret?
Illa quidem Stygia nabat iam frigida cumba.
G. IV, 505–6.

Conington's rendering may be over-stressed but he has caught

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culties of 'conscientious rendering,' and often the almost impossibility of reconciling exact scholarship and the exacting literary sense which asks not merely an equivalent for each clause but demands also the spirit which binds all clauses together in a living, glowing sentence.

I am much indebted to Mr Page's commentary, which is extremely thorough and helpful. Sidgwick's brief notes are very much to the point and his Index of style is valuable as referring Virgil's peculiarities to general principles. Keightley's edition is very serviceable from his knowledge of ancient and modern husbandry in Italy as well as at home. For all that appeals to the naturalist, especially in *Georgic* IV, Mr Royds' interesting book, *Beasts, Birds and Bees of Virgil* (second edition, 1918), has been helpful.

Conington says, "There are few writers whose text is in so satisfactory a state as Virgil's." This is due to the fact that of our best MSS. several date from the fourth century. Moreover the text was from the first century the subject of close study by grammarians and commentators, much of whose work is preserved. A few important variants are discussed in their place.

Amongst many writers on Virgil, British and foreign, I am specially indebted to Sellar, whose admirable work is so condensed that it will always be read more by the scholar than by the young student, also to Sainte-Beuve's delightful *Étude sur Virgile.* Édouard Goumy's *Les Latins* (1892) is also useful. Dr T. R. Glover's very readable book treats ably the influences, literary and national, which moulded the poet's outlook. Dr Warde Fowler's *Social Life at*

the spirit of both lines and the relation of one to the other. Compare again at *Aen.* IV, 382 his version of "si quid pia numina possunt," or, at so different a passage as *G.* I, 79–81 his rendering of the effect given by the position of *arida tantum* and *effetos*.

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Rome in the age of Cicero throws a flood of light on the historical background of Virgil's poem. The book makes the period of Virgil's earlier manhood with all its human problems live before us, like some familiar landscape seen from a fresh height. It is to be regretted that the same scholar did not perform for the *Georgics* what he has done for the last half of the *Aeneid*, in his treatment of which 'science' in the shape of profound scholarship works hand in hand with intuition to most fruitful result. I am indebted to Dr Fowler for revising my list of Selections and suggesting several changes which have been carried out.

I have gained much from discussing a number of the passages with a scholar of so wide a range as Professor Grierson. I also owe valuable suggestions to my friend, Mr H. A. Webster, late Librarian to the University of Edinburgh.

Professor Grierson allows me to quote the following from a letter of his which expresses the growing sense of the importance of making the best work of those Latin authors, by whom English writers have been most influenced, easily accessible to the real student of English Literature. It is hoped that these selections may be of some service in this way.

"I read your Introduction to your *Selections from Virgil's Georgics* with the greatest interest. It is just such a book as I should like to be able to ask my English Honours Students to read and study. I am always being made to feel the need of some more extended and literary study of Classical Literature than most of them bring with them from school. But time is limited and there must be some selection. I believe that both teachers and publishers will have to consider the necessity for focussing classical reading on our own Literature—I mean selecting what is read

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INTRODUCTION

I. HISTORICAL

Virgil's life falls during prolonged Civil Wars. Relation of his countrymen North of the Po to Julius Caesar and to Augustus. Gain of the entire Roman world from the Empire. Virgil's personal debt to Augustus.

Most of Virgil's life fell amid the confusion and distress of civil strife. He was born on the 15th of October, 70 B.C., at Andes, a hamlet near Mantua in Cisalpine Gaul. This means that he was not a Roman, but one of those Italians who had suffered under the injustice and oppression of the Senate, which styled itself 'the Republic' but was in reality an Oligarchy of very extreme type. The Italians had paid taxes and fought in Rome's armies; they were in every way equal to Roman citizens but Rome had persistently refused them the rights of citizenship until, 20 years before the birth of Virgil, they had extorted them, in part at least, through the Social War. Even after this Rome schemed to make the new privileges of no effect. The weakness of the Senate's rule had been shown in a long series of Civil Wars. From 145–80 B.C. those had raged over Italy like a tempest, deadly and terrific, passing away but only to return again until the death of Sulla in 78 B.C. In two years of the Social War alone, from 90 to 89, 300,000 men were said to have been slain. Again and again Italy had known times like that in French history which is called 'La Terreur.' Cicero says, "The horror of those times is so burned into our country that it seems as if not merely men but even brute creatures could not endure the thought of their returning[1]." In the provinces oppression and misrule had become intolerable. For one Verres brought to justice by Cicero's splendid patriotism

[1] *Catiline Orations*, II, c. 9.

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and talent countless governors returned to Rome with fortunes wrung from their wretched subjects. In Italy itself the vast number of slaves was a cause both of anxiety and of national degradation. In 73 the Slave War and in 63 the Conspiracy of Catiline showed in alarming forms the general discontent and the undermined foundations of the State. The country was ripe for revolution but leaders such as Catiline who professed to aim at redressing injustice could only have substituted a still grosser tyranny. In 49 Caesar crossed the Rubicon and civil war began afresh.

But the rise of Julius Caesar had brought new hope to the world. In him men saw a leader of real genius, a man absolutely fearless, deeply sensitive to the incompetence of the Government and the gross injustice done to the poorer citizens and to the Provincials. After many attempts to win reform from the Senate, he recognised that the task was hopeless. As he said, "The Republic is nothing—a mere name without substance or form." For this he was determined to substitute a Government that was real. As Consul he had carried over the heads of the Senate those 'Julian Laws' which were welcomed by all honest men as checking the gross abuses and meeting the needs of the time. He was specially interested in securing justice for the Provincials. In 49 B.C., when Virgil was in his 21st year, the Transpadani too received the full rights of citizenship which Caesar had long striven to secure for them. Northern Italians like Virgil must have watched his glorious career at home and abroad with gratitude and love as well as admiration. To them he was both hero and liberator. Hirtius, who continues Caesar's record of the Gallic War, tells us that Caesar, then Governor of Cisalpine Gaul, visited his province early in 50 B.C. and was received in the district north of the Po—Virgil's own country—"with incredible marks of honour and affection. Nothing that could be devised for the decoration of the roads, the gates and all places which he was going to pass through, was left undone. The whole populace along with

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their children went forth to meet him[1]." We can well understand the horror expressed by Virgil and felt by all his countrymen at Caesar's murder and also the gratitude which was transferred to his adopted heir.

Octavian (soon to be known as Augustus) strove so far as in him lay to carry out Caesar's aims, possibly with more success in the field of home politics than Julius himself could have done, since he did not attempt more than average men were likely to tolerate. A great part of his adopted father's prestige fell on himself. Under him Italy was to enjoy peace and prosperity long unknown to it. To the general gratitude for the many benefits of his rule there was added in Virgil's case a deep personal debt. In the Civil War Cremona had sympathised with the Senatorial party. After the battle of Philippi in B.C. 42, Octavian and Antony, who had to reward their victorious soldiers with land, confiscated for the purpose the country about Cremona and the neighbouring Mantua including Virgil's farm. The poet's life was endangered at the hands of the soldier who took possession of his land. He then journeyed to Rome and was reinstated in his property by Augustus at the intercession of his friends Pollio, Gallus and Varius, the former two being soldiers and men of action as well as writers. The event is recorded under slight disguise in the first *Eclogue*, in the form of a dialogue between Tityrus the poet and his fellow-shepherd Meliboeus. The latter is one of many who have been evicted and left to seek a home in some foreign land. "It is a God," says Tityrus, "who has created for me the peace you see: for a God he will ever be to me. He it is who has made my kine free to wander at large and myself to play at my pleasure on my shepherd's pipe." Thus threatened with poverty which would rob him of the leisure to study and write, Virgil never forgot that he owed to Octavian the restoration of his broken career.

A French scholar writes, "The *Georgics* had the great honour of being the first greeting, the first homage, the

[1] *De Bello Gallico*, VIII, 51.

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first cry of gratitude addressed by a poet in the name of the entire Roman world to a man in whom was incarnated that Revolution to which the world was destined to owe the two great centuries of 'Roman Peace,' *Pax Romana*[1]." Except for the Oligarchy whose unjust privileges had been cut away, and a few extremists like Brutus with whom the name of 'Republic' counted for more than the reality, this statement holds good. There was a feeling in the air that the world was entering upon a new era, free from the terrors and oppression of the past, and so it proved to be. The Alexandrian Jew, Philo, writing about A.D. 41, says of Augustus that, when he entered upon rule, Civil War was raging over the whole world and "the whole race of mankind would very nearly have been destroyed by mutual slaughter but for his control. He gave freedom to every city, he civilised nations which before were savage, he was the guardian of peace; he distributed to every man his due portion, he offered favours to all ungrudgingly, he never in his whole life concealed or reserved for himself anything that was good or excellent." Of Tiberius again he writes, "He never allowed any seed of war to smoulder or kindle into fire either in Greece or in the territory of barbarians, and he bestowed peace and the blessings of peace with rich and bounteous hand and mind upon the whole empire and the whole world[2]." Brutus and his friends could not conceive of this becoming true, and Tacitus too may talk with sovereign pity of the men of his own day who had the misfortune "never to have seen the Republic," but ordinary men, who were not blinded as were Tacitus and the nobles by party-selfishness and by the sense of privileges lost, were well aware that great possibilities of happiness were in store for the world under the young Augustus. And this 'faith' is one key-note of the *Georgics*.

We have therefore no reason to regard Virgil as a mere flatterer, even though in his opening address to Augustus

[1] *Les Latins*, by Édouard Goumy, 1892.
[2] *Legatio ad Caium*, c. XXI.

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he may err surprisingly in point of good taste[1]. In that day it was the habit of men, and even of the wisest, to look in Nature for signs of the Divine approval or disapproval. Even in modern days it has been noted that disturbances in Nature often coincide with the loss of great leaders. To the minds of men obsessed by the great career of Julius, by all the good it promised to the world and all that was lost by his death, a great and portentous sign was given. To them the comet which blazed in the heavens during the games held in Caesar's honour after his death was a flaming witness of Heaven's condemnation of his murderers and of his own reception among the deities[2]. And Virgil's actual creed was not so different from that of ordinary men but that he too may have seen in it a solemn message from the powers above. How deep, how passionate was his conviction of the great gift granted to Rome in Julius, of the monstrous sin of the generation who plotted or tolerated his murder, of the Divine wrath as manifested in many a boding portent, is made clear in the conclusion of the first *Georgic*: "The sun out of pity for Rome hides his shining head in murky gloom and a godless generation feared everlasting night in a world where right and wrong are confounded." And he adds with solemn emphasis, *Ergo* "*Therefore it was*, that Romans butchered Romans at Pharsalia and Philippi." And with deep earnestness he prays the Gods of Rome to spare Augustus, "At least permit this youth to come to the succour of a world overthrown. Oh! hinder him

[1] See Sellar's *Virgil*, Ch. VI, 3. Nettleship fixes the composition of *Georgic* I early in B.C. 49. Dio Cassius (LI, 20) tells us that about this time all kinds of public honours were conferred upon Octavian after the settlement of the East, and among others it was decreed that his name should be mentioned in the public forms of worship. Thus about the time when Virgil was writing the *Invocation* the Emperor's fame was being exalted in the name of religion. (*Ancient Lives of Virgil*, p. 58.)

[2] The Caesaris astrum of *Ecl.* IX, 7, the farmer's star under which corn and vines were to prosper: the Julium sidus of Horace, *Odes*, I, 12.

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not." 'At least' do not snatch him away like Caesar from a world that so terribly needs him! Every note of sincerity is here.

Such was the birth-time of the *Georgics* at the dawn of the great Roman Revolution. An old world, effete and corrupt, was passing away with violent throes and, amid the hopes and fears of men, a new world was beginning to take its place.

II. PERSONAL

Virgil born and bred in the country. His father and his home. Sainte-Beuve on the influence of his rustic upbringing. His studies at Rome in rhetoric and philosophy. Siro. He returns home to study and write. His favourite Greek poets. His own early poems. The *Culex*, 'Virgilianism.' Virgil the centre of a band of poets, with whom he collaborates. The *Georgics* show great advance on his early work. His dream of art roughly broken. His father's farm confiscated. He has to fly for his life and leaves his native district. Effect of the crisis upon his character and work. A parallel from English Literature.

No one can read a few pages even of the *Georgics* without knowing that Virgil had the good fortune to be born and bred in the country. Everywhere he is recalling the familiar scenes of a happy boyhood spent amid fields and woods, observing and unconsciously chronicling all the sights and sounds around him, familiar with living things, both tame and wild, and all their ways. He knew all the beauty and gladness of what he calls 'the divine country.' It was for him as for our Blackmore a delight to watch the growth and expansion of every green thing. The lines about the shooting of the young vine-branch might for minute observation and sympathy have been written by that great Victorian: "The grasses dare with safety to trust themselves to the spring suns and the young vine-branch has no fear that the south winds will get up or that mighty blasts from the north will hurl

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down a blast of rain from the sky, but pushes out its buds and unfolds all its leaves[1]." The trees were his friends: for him every different kind had an individuality, and the voice of its rustling sounded as did that of no other: every change that the season brings had its beauty and he touches it with loving hands[2]. Probably the poet's genius could never have developed had he been born and brought up in Rome.

The life of Virgil, long attributed to Donatus, but in reality the work of Suetonius, says that his parents but especially his father were "of humble position." His father was either a potter or the paid servant of some small official of the law-courts, whose son-in-law he became, being commended by his industry. He added to his small means by buying up forest-land and keeping bees, honey being at that time a necessary of life. Evidently he was a man of energy. The hostile critic in Macrobius speaks of Virgil as "a Venetian brought up among woods and thickets"; in the same tone the fellow-artists of the young Millet used to call him "a man of the woods." (There is a legend, unconfirmed, that Virgil's mother, Magia, was a sister of the poet Lucretius[3].) At the age of 12 his father took him to Cremona and seems to have resided with him until his fifteenth birthday, the very day when the poet Lucretius died. From Cremona he passed to Milan and from thence, when he was 16 or 17 years old, to Rome. Probably his father had by this time risen in the world and enlarged his farm, adding field to field, at all events he took pains to give his son

[1] *G.* II. 331–5: see also 362–6.

[2] See *G.* II, 398–419, describing how the farmer's operations come round with the changing months, each with its demand of toil and closing with the maxim "Praise a large estate but farm a small one."

[3] It is added in the text of several MSS. of the life of Virgil. The style and language of the Vita are enough to prove unquestionably that it formed one chapter of Suetonius' famous lost book *De Viris Illustribus*. See Nettleship's *Ancient Lives of Virgil*, 1879.

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a liberal education; no doubt he realised his talent. Virgil, however, did not, like Horace, study at Athens.

Sainte-Beuve lays stress upon Virgil's origin as son of a small farmer. "Such a condition of life," he says, "makes everything better appreciated and more valued...not that the rich cling any less tightly to their vast estates, forests or castles but they cling to them with less of sensibility, in a fashion, than does the poor man or the modest owner of an allotment over which his sweat has dropped, who has counted his vine-stocks and his apple trees and almost reckoned up beforehand even the produce of each. This little domain of Virgil's (perhaps not so small after all) between the hills and the marshes, with its coolness and its springs, its wide pools and its swans, its bees in the willow-hedge, we see it from here, we love it as did he, we cry along with him in the same distress, when he saw himself in peril of losing it, 'Barbarus has segetes!' 'Shall a barbarian become master of fields like these?'"

This fine passage gives one a good notion of the situation of Virgil's early home between the hills and the river, Mincius, which tends to expand into marshes wherever it finds a plain, thus making the climate damp and subject to fogs. Sainte-Beuve is just in emphasising the fact that the crofter watches the welfare of all his crops and cattle more carefully, and anticipates the harvest with far more both of hope and anxiety than does the large farmer. No doubt this helped to produce the homeliness and sympathy with common life which marks Virgil's poetry.

Several of his teachers in Rome we know. One was Parthenius, said to have written the poem translated by Virgil under the title of *Moretum*; it is a description of a countryman, rising at break of day, pulling vegetables in his garden and preparing his breakfast; a charming Dutch picture, full of the enjoyment of homely details. He studied rhetoric under Epidius; the teacher also of the young Octavian, who was some seven years younger than Virgil. It is not impossible that they were pupils at the same time and, though so different in rank, may

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have been known to each other. Later he studied under the famous Epicurean Siro. In the most interesting of his minor poems, he expresses his contempt for the teachers of rhetoric;

Away with you hence, ye empty swelling phrases of rhetoricians, mere words puffed out, but not with dew from Helicon, ye tribe of pedants, soaking in fat. Get hence, ye empty tinkling cymbals of our youth, and thou, O Sextus Sabinus! my dearest care, farewell; farewell ye goodly youths. I am now setting sail for the blissful haven, seeking the wise words of the great Siro, and I will deliver my life from every care. Away hence, ye Muses, yes, ye too must away, O sweet Muses! for I will confess the truth, sweet have ye been. And yet I ask you, visit my studies again, though seldom and without wantonness.

It would seem that Virgil left Rome with a certain disenchantment, although he was deeply impressed by the teaching of Siro. Evidently the professional scholars of that day tended towards the same faults as do those of our own. These very fresh and spontaneous lines show a profound contempt for mere learning and intellectual pretentiousness, as well as a determination, not shared by most young poets, to come into touch with the reality of things by means of philosophy. They show also his keen delight in poetry, his affection for his fellow-students and his distaste for the licentious tone common in the poetry of his day. If the Roman litterateurs disappointed Virgil, the teaching of Siro impressed him deeply. Siro belonged to that noble class of Epicureans, who followed closely in their master's footsteps and of whom Cicero speaks so highly. Epicurus' strong advocacy of temperance and the simple life, his earnest warnings against ambition and his deep sympathy with the poor and the ignorant must have commended him deeply to Virgil, both in his youth and always. At the same time Epicureanism as a system could be no abiding-place for a spirit so broad and well-balanced as Virgil's. In his early years he admired it for its attempt to solve the problems of natural science though he soon recognised that this was not his own province. Grand as was the gain of a reign of law

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established in Nature Virgil ere long came to feel that there were many problems which Epicurean science, with all its dogmatic pretensions, was helpless to explain. What of the origin of life? What of the facts of our self-consciousness? The world was too big a world, and Lucretius' solution of it far too complete ever to satisfy a mind like his.

The young poet must have been glad to return to Andes. As years went on his father grew blind. No doubt Virgil assisted him in managing his farm. At the same time he was busy studying and writing. We imagine him reading Homer and Theocritus under the shadow of some mighty beech or by the side of a stream, never yet realizing that he was himself to become one of the world's great poets. How completely he assimilated Homer the whole plot and action of the *Aeneid* shows. Probably he did not become a student of the great Athenian dramas until later years. His first poems, the *Eclogues*, are manifestly the work of one who "lives" in the study of literature, assimilating in ample leisure the poets whom he loves. He trained himself after the noble models of Greece, not excluding the Alexandrians, whom the young writers of his day generally imitated. But Virgil's passionate love for Lucretius made him proof against their sickly seductions, with all their erudition and their pretty and laboured pictures, which do not grow organically out of the subject. As Sainte-Beuve says of Apollonius Rhodius, such poets "made no hearts beat." Virgil knew this well. In the opening of *Georgic* III, he refers to the myths which the Alexandrians and his own Roman contemporaries loved to treat as subjects "which could once have captivated idle minds[1]," but which were now impossible for himself. Not improbably he was thinking of the *Culex* with its catalogue of mythological lay figures.

One main feature of Virgil's work as a poet is the steady growth and advance which it shows. In the *Eclogues* he imitates a true poet, Theocritus. Theocritus is more real:

[1] Cetera quae vacuas tenuissent carmina mentes, *G.* III, 3.

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his shepherds are drawn from life; but Virgil has transmuted the *Idyll* of Theocritus and made of it a new poetic form: his shepherds are also friends of his own, who, under this disguise, set forth their own troubles and loves. This, though graceful, is no doubt a very artificial kind of poetry, but *Colin Clout's Calendar* and *Lycidas* show how much of genuine feeling it can be made to hold. Virgil was well aware of its artificiality. At the close of the *Georgics* he says, looking back to his *Eclogues*: "Once I played with shepherd's songs[1]"; and also of the poem he had just completed: "Such was the song I was making of the tending of fields and cattle and of trees, while Caesar, that mighty one, is hurling war's lightnings over deep Euphrates and imposing statutes upon the willing nations. At that time I was being nursed in the sweet lap of Naples, treading the flowery ways of inglorious ease." Surely these words are most unjust to that noble poem the *Georgics*! But Virgil felt that the poet's mission was to deal with the whole of human life, not merely with that spent amid the quiet of the country that he loved so well. These concluding words prepare us for the opening of his great poem, "Arms and the man I sing—a man made exile by destiny, much buffeted on land and on the deep by violence from the gods and much scourged in war, him from whom sprang the Latin people and the towering walls of Rome." His theme is now the story of the whole Roman nation bound up with that of a man who had to battle with all the forces of destiny banded against him as well as with his own human weakness, who, conquering at last, reached a home and abiding-place for himself and his people. With this lifelong aspiration and striving after growth we can understand his final charge to his friends, Varius and Tucca, when, just before his death, he forbade them to publish anything which he had not himself included in his published works.

The *Georgics* were composed during Virgil's prime,

[1] Carmina qui lusi pastorum, *G.* IV, 565. See note.

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between his thirty-third and fortieth years[1]. Probably the *Aeneid* was planned (set forth in prose first of all, as Suetonius tells us) and much of it written during the same period. A number of poems are attributed to Virgil, which are not included in his published works. These used to be looked upon as spurious. Of late they have been much studied, and many scholars now consider several of the shorter ones to be genuine early work of Virgil's. Dr Warde Fowler and Professor R. S. Conway regard the *Culex* also, a poem of over 400 lines, as a work of his youth[2]. All these poems are full of what seem, at first, to be echoes or imitations of Virgil's accepted writings; but when compared with the latter, they impress us not as derived from these but as expressing the same thoughts and emotions in a feebler and undeveloped form, as if he had returned in later life to the same notes of thought and feeling which had attracted him in youth, and now expressed them more forcibly. We know that Virgil collaborated with other poets, notably with Gallus[3]. Mackail says that "the two poets worked at their art together," and he compares this joint literary activity to that of Spenser and Sidney, or that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. One of the parallel passages occurs at *Georgic* II, 458–74,

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint, | Agricolas!

Both in thought and treatment this reproduces *Culex*, 58–78, beginning "O bona pastoris." Both deal with the joys of the Simple Life and the original inspiration of both is in the opening of Lucretius' Second Book. But the

[1] In *G.* II, 163, Virgil refers to the double Julian harbour constructed by Agrippa in B.C. 37. The completed poem was read to Augustus after his final return from the East in 29. Various passages with historical references were probably inserted after the poem was composed.

[2] See *Class. Review*, 1914, p. 119.

[3] Thus the closing four lines of the long poem, *Ciris*, now generally attributed to Gallus, recur verbatim at *G.* I, 406–9, where see note.

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poet of the *Culex* is no mere imitator of the passage in the *Georgic*: he has a voice of his own. Suetonius says that Virgil wrote the *Culex* at the age of sixteen.

Saturated as Virgil's mind was in youth with the Greek poets, he came as we shall see under another influence more mighty still, that of Lucretius. The leaven of Lucretius worked on his heart all his life through. In those early years the young poet was training himself in the mastery of his craft, acquiring the exquisite command over expression and verse which is seen in the *Eclogues*. So consummate is his skill that the pleasure of reading these is like that of sipping some exquisite wine or enjoying the scent of some rich flower: as Tennyson puts it:

> All the charm of all the Muses
> Often flowering in a lonely word.

Thus his youth was passed in a dream of art, a peaceful existence in which the stern facts of life are known merely from books, as of one who watches the movements in a street from a mirror inside his room. Those who follow such pursuits are apt to drop out of touch with ordinary men struggling in the great world outside their own little circle. But it was not to be so with Virgil. The great forces which were then shaping the destiny of Rome were to come into rude collision with his own too safe and quiet life.

Virgil's acquaintance with all the details of country life and farm-work is so full and so tinged with his own personality that it must have been acquired through assisting his father on his farm. He writes of the operations of planting, pruning, grafting with the delight of one who has put his own hand to the work. In the ninth *Eclogue* the land of Menalcas (who stands for Virgil) is described thus: "I had heard that all the land from where the hills begin to draw themselves up and to send down a ridge with gentle slope on to the water and the old beeches with broken tops, your Menalcas had saved by his songs." The lines seem to give a real picture of Virgil's farm as it dwelt in his memory and affection. Doubtless

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he loved every field there and many a fancy of his hung round those tempest-shattered beeches which marked the boundary. (The passage has been thought to imply a considerable stretch of land but, until we know the exact position of Andes, we cannot be certain as to this.) The tone of the *Georgics* however does not suggest that Virgil had ever himself spent whole days in ploughing, sowing or reaping as did Robert Burns or the great painter who received his first inspiration from Virgil, Jean François Millet[1].

In the year after the battle of Philippi when Virgil had reached the age of twenty-nine the territory of Cremona and part of the Mantuan was confiscated. The soldier to whom the farm of Virgil's father had been allotted threatened the poet's life and he had to escape by swimming the river Mincius. His father had become blind and a home had to be found for him; in a poem of a few lines Virgil tells us where.

> O cottage that once was Siro's and thou, poor little croft! yet even thou wast as good as wealth to an owner such as he, to thee, if I hear ought gloomier news about my native place, I entrust myself and along with thee, those whom I have always loved and foremost of all my father. To him thou shalt now be what Mantua and Cremona had beforetime been.

Virgil seems never to have returned to his native region: probably the mosquito-haunted Mantuan district with its lagoons[2] did not suit health like his. He went up to Rome, where his first poems found great favour with Augustus. The emperor, himself fond of writing, presented him at different periods with valuable estates near Naples and in Sicily. The poet tells us that it was in the district of

[1] "Virgil," says Sensier, "charmed Millet so much when a boy that he could not stop reading him. The *Bucolics* and *Georgics* captivated his mind. At the words of Virgil 'It is the hour when the great shadows descend towards the plain,' the child was filled with emotion: the book recalled to him his own surroundings, the life in which he was growing up."

[2] The subject of the *Culex* or 'Gnat' may thus have been suggested.

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Naples that the *Georgics* were composed. Augustus also offered him the estate of some banished man, but this, Suetonius tells us, the poet "could not endure to accept," *non sustinuit accipere*. This rude experience of insecurity and danger seems to have had a profound influence upon Virgil. When we compare the *Georgics* with his early poems, the *Eclogues*, a great difference appears. Instead of dialogues of make-believe shepherds, we have passed into a real world of actual men, the same world of labour and toil in which we live and struggle to-day. He is now no longer "playing with shepherds' songs." His own harsh experiences seem to have deepened his sympathy with all the suffering of the world from whatever source it may come.

There is a parallel to this in English literature. The poet Wordsworth was profoundly attached to his brother John, who was captain of an East Indiaman. He was making his last voyage before retiring to live at Grasmere, when his vessel was sunk during a hurricane in the Bristol Channel, almost in sight of land. The poet describes how, after this, a great change passed over himself: he paid more heed to the actual world, to the men and women whom he was meeting every day. In a very beautiful poem entitled *Elegiac verses written on a picture of Peele Castle in a storm* he describes the change thus wrought. The picture represented an old castle on a cliff with the sea in a tempest and a disabled ship drifting on to the rocks. Wordsworth had lived near it in calm weather when the castle was always reflected in the waves and one could have fancied the sea the gentlest among all gentle things. Had he been a painter, he would then have painted it in full sunshine with the sea sleeping at its feet.

> Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
> Such Picture would I at that time have made:...
>
> So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
> I have submitted to a new control:
> A power is gone which nothing can restore;
> A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

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He now commends the painter because he has chosen to represent the castle in storm:

> This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
> This sea in anger, and that dismal shore....
>
> O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well,
> Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
> That hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
> This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!
>
> Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
> Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
> Such happiness, wherever it be known,
> Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

Some influence like this seems to have passed over Virgil: his forcible expulsion from his old home along with his neighbours, also exiled to wander homeless: his narrow escape with his life, all this seems to have created in him or rather to have intensified his sympathy with all human hardship and peril. Thus the *Georgics* show his profound fellow-feeling with all who suffer from war as well as with those who have to toil for the bare necessaries of living. One might point to his picture in the *Aeneid* of the emigrants, storm-tossed and sea-weary, hating to think that they must again cross the ocean from which they have just escaped and now shudder at the very sight of, sick with hopeless longing for some home in the unknown land they seek. His heart is now in touch with all human experience.

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III. VIRGIL'S ATTITUDE TO ETHICS AND RELIGION IN THE *GEORGICS*

The poem as a manual of Husbandry. Agriculture destroyed by the Civil Wars. Degeneration of the Roman character. Sense of guilt in the Nation. Virgil counsels his countrymen to restore Agriculture as the basis of recovery. His practical Philosophy. The Dignity of Labour; its necessity for man. Providence has ordained in kindness that the husbandman's life should be hard. The husbandman's work more than any other man's brings him into touch with the Divine Power behind Nature. Influence of Lucretius in the *Georgics*. Two sides of Lucretius' Poem. I. His science, which Virgil admires but only very partially mastered. Virgil's strange inconsistency here. He is more of a Lucretian than an Epicurean. II. Lucretius' passionate pity for mankind, his sense of the nothingness of man in the Universe yet of the Dignity of his Spirit, also of the marvellous beauty of the Earth. On this side Lucretius' influence over Virgil was life-long and enriched his humanity. Virgil outgrows Lucretius' influence in the former case. He makes no attempt to reconcile his Epicurean science with his attitude to national and personal religion. Constant advance and growth in Virgil's thought and art.

The *Georgics* have a two-fold aspect. The poem professes to be a treatise on Husbandry and it is also a great work of literature. In the first respect it shows an intimate and practical knowledge of the whole subject which could only have been acquired by personal experience. Virgil also uses well-known authorities on agriculture such as Varro, *De Re Rustica* (published just before he began to write his poem), especially in the third and fourth *Georgics* treating of cattle-breeding and bee-farming, also Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* as to soils, ploughing, sowing and so on. He is also acquainted, probably not directly, with Aristotle's *History of Animals*, and he uses Aratus' poems on *Weather-signs* and other works. The poem was accepted as a practical and standard manual upon the subject, for example by Columella who wrote on agriculture about

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A.D. 60. Even on this practical side the book is a labour of love. It is worth noting that Virgil recommends, as a principle taken for granted in his day, thealternation of crops: the farmer should allow the land to produce and lie fallow by turns: he must let grain alternate with beans, vetches and lupines: either plan will give 'rest' to the fields. The rotation of crops is now an established rule in Britain but was not so until well into the 18th century. In so far Roman husbandry was for long in advance of our own.

When we consider the state of husbandry in Italy while the *Georgics* were being written, we cannot wonder that Maecenas suggested this subject to Virgil or at least strongly encouraged him to write upon it. During a long period of civil wars, agriculture had been neglected, so much so indeed that an impression had spread that the earth had become less fertile because the world had reached its extreme old age and would soon come to an end. Lucretius in the end of his second book puts this feeling in the mouth of the aged ploughman lamenting over the rich produce of old days, although the former holdings were far smaller than the present ones while "the planter of the exhausted and shrivelled vine sadly cries out upon the changes in the seasons, and wearies Heaven with his prayers, and understands not that all things are wasting away little by little, and are passing to the grave, spent and worn out by age and length of years."

The facts of barrenness and decay were plain enough. But Lucretius misread them. He forgot that the strong arms which had tilled the soil, once so prolific, were mouldering on many a battlefield. Many districts were going back to the waste. The independent peasantry who had been the most valuable class of the community were rapidly disappearing. The fashion of *latifundia*, 'big estates,' had come in. Wealthy absentee owners had bought up the farms at nominal prices and had them cultivated by gangs of slaves, with whom owing to the Roman conquests the markets were flooded. These had multiplied enormously while the few peasants were

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