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978-1-108-01198-3 - P. Vergili Maronis Opera, Volume 3

Edited by John Conington and Henry Nettleship

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From the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, Latin and Greek were compulsory subjects in almost all European universities, and most early modern scholars published their research and conducted international correspondence in Latin. Latin had continued in use in Western Europe long after the fall of the Roman empire as the lingua franca of the educated classes and of law, diplomacy, religion and university teaching. The flight of Greek scholars to the West after the fall of Constantinople in 1453 gave impetus to the study of ancient Greek literature and the Greek New Testament. Eventually, just as nineteenth-century reforms of university curricula were beginning to erode this ascendancy, developments in textual criticism and linguistic analysis, and new ways of studying ancient societies, especially archaeology, led to renewed enthusiasm for the Classics. This collection offers works of criticism, interpretation and synthesis by the outstanding scholars of the nineteenth century.

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P. Vergili Maronis Opera

With a Commentary

VOLUME 3

EDITED BY JOHN CONINGTON
VIRGIL
AND HENRY NETTLESHIP



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WITH A

COMMENTARY

BY

JOHN CONINGTON, M.A.

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P. VERGILI MARONIS
OPERA.

THE WORKS OF VIRGIL,

WITH A

COMMENTARY

BY

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LATE CORPUS PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD;
LATE FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD.

AND

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FELLOW OF LINCOLN COLLEGE, OXFORD, AND ASSISTANT MASTER IN
HARROW SCHOOL.

VOL. III.

CONTAINING THE LAST SIX BOOKS OF THE AENEID.

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PREFACE.

THE publication of this volume has been long delayed: owing partly to the fact that for a considerable part of the time during which he was writing his commentary Mr. Conington was engaged upon other works, partly to the labour of seeing the sheets through the press, partly to the lamentable event which devolved upon me the duty of bringing out the book.

I must briefly explain what has been my share in the work. In 1863 Mr. Conington first proposed to me that I should assist him in the third volume of his edition of Virgil by writing the notes on the last three books of the Aeneid. I did not begin my part of the work until 1864; and on my finding that I could not keep pace with him, we agreed ultimately that he should write the notes on Book 11, and that I should confine myself to Books 10 and 12. The notes on Books 7, 8, 9, and 11 are accordingly the work of Mr. Conington, while for those on Books 10 and 12 I am mainly responsible. I say mainly, for Mr. Conington made considerable additions to the notes which I had originally written on Book 10. He had not, however, read through the notes on more than about three hundred lines of Book 12 before his death. The rest of the notes on Book 12 have been looked through by Professor Munro, to whose kindness I owe some valuable remarks, some of which have been embodied in the notes, and others printed among the *Ad-denda*. To the notes on Book 11 I myself made a few additions,

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besides writing the introduction. Two Essays on parts of Ribbeck's Prolegomena, originally published by Mr. Conington in the Cambridge Journal of Philology, are printed at the end of the volume: which, like the two preceding ones, has had the benefit of Mr. Long's revision throughout.

Mr. Conington's death deprived a large circle of intimate friends of one whose powers of sympathy were never exhausted, and in whom succession after succession of students found a centre of encouragement for their talents and industry: while to philological study was lost a scholar whose gifts were of a singular and representative order, deserving the more to be dwelt upon as they are unlikely to be replaced. Mr. Conington was, in a striking manner, a representative of that kind of criticism which is supported rather by acuteness of the linguistic and literary sense than by width of reading, and which rests on the study of the formal rather than of the real side of Philology. This is the side of scholarship which, as is well known, has been chiefly cultivated in England during the present century: it is in this direction that the main effort of our classical education has been made. From this point of view Mr. Conington approached his favourite authors, the Greek tragedians and Virgil. Three points in his method of study deserve notice, all depending upon the general character of it which I have endeavoured to sketch. First, he turned his attention mainly to a few authors, with whose characteristics his great powers of memory and swift critical insight readily gained him an astonishing familiarity. This comparative confinement of range, which would be dangerous to a student of inferior capacity, was in his case to a great extent prevented from exercising a narrowing influence by the singular energy which he brought to bear upon his chosen field, the energy of a mind endowed with first-rate ability and no mean creative power. Those who, like myself, enjoyed his intimacy, will recall the fruitful way in which a few first-class authors were employed

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in his hands for the illustration of points of literature, or the philosophy of language, outside their immediate circle; the way in which his mind, readily seizing on principles of criticism, would draw with rare judgment and insight far-reaching and suggestive inferences; the penetration with which he would seem at once to comprehend the range of a train of thinking, and the prudence with which he would point out its limits.

Connected with this limitation of his studies to a few authors was the concentration of his energies upon the linguistic as opposed to the real side of their writings. The predominance in his mind of the literary and grammatical, as opposed to the antiquarian interest, might be considered almost an advantage when the object of his study was Virgil, a poet in whose thoughts, however stored his memory might be with antiquarian, historical, and philosophical reminiscences, there can hardly be a question that the literary interest occupied the chief place. Here Mr. Conington was assisted by the thoroughly poetical bent of a mind intimately familiar with the master-pieces of English literature. It will, I think, be generally acknowledged that the language of Virgil has received new and valuable explanation and illustration from his commentary. To do over again for this century what Heyne did for the last,—to draw into focus all the light which contemporary study, critical, historical, antiquarian, and linguistic could throw upon the works of the most learned and allusive of ancient poets,—would require a combination of gifts not usually found in a single mind.

Thirdly, though Mr. Conington had a singular talent for conjectural emendation, as his work on the fragments of the Greek tragedians sufficiently shows, his interest lay, on the whole, rather in interpretation than in textual criticism. It may be that this bias was encouraged by labouring on an author like Virgil, whose text is comparatively well established, and the nature of whose

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writing makes emendation in it extremely perilous, while it stimulates the utmost efforts of the interpreter. It was the very rare combination, which his friends so much admired in him, of subtle and acute insight with a kind of Johnsonian sense and shrewdness, that made his remarks on any point connected with interpretation peculiarly valuable. On this ground his sight seemed clearest and his tread firmest.

Mr. Conington's name has so long enjoyed the recognition and deep respect of the public, that the separate testimony of a single friend might seem superfluous if not affected. But, in bringing out the work to which he devoted so much of his best labour, I have been unable to refrain from thus doing something towards paying my own tribute to the memory of one with the graces of whose character and intellectual gifts an intimate friendship of several years brought me into inner and continual contact, from whom I received my first introduction to the methods of classical study, and to whose sympathy, encouragement, and guidance I, in common with many others who take an interest in that study, am so deeply indebted.

HENRY NETTLESHIP.

HARROW,
March, 1871.