

The Oracle in Procopius B. G., I 24.

On opening Haury's edition of the *De Bellis* of Procopius, on the completion of which he is heartily to be congratulated, the first passage to which I turned was the puzzling Latin oracle in V (= B. G. I) 24. He has not succeeded in restoring it, but he has given a reproduction, more accurate, I presume, than Comparetti's, of the characters which are preserved in K = Vat. 1690. Something more, I believe, can be done for the restoration of the original text.

The only words which have yet been recognised with certainty are *Quintili mense* and *nihil Geticum iam*. Haury indeed accepts *rege* as the word before *nihil*; but the second letter is not there. R is followed by G or C. Now as the three letters before R are INN, I think we may with great confidence regard the second N as an error for a vowel, obviously A; and this gives us at once: IN ARCE.

Turning now to the end of the sentence, the letters following *iam* are clear enough: ATMET followed by a dot. There is no doubt that we must seek here a verb corresponding to Procopius's *δείσσειε*. Maltretus suggested *metuet*, but it is much simpler to suppose that I has been omitted before M, and that the final dot is the relic of O. Thus we get:

nihil Geticum iam a timeto.

We have now to explain this isolated *a*. One of the difficulties in reconstructing the oracle is that, while it is certain that *Roma* (or *Romanus*) must have occurred in it, we cannot read this word into it without resorting to the violence of despair. Comparetti tried to read *Romanus* (before RCE), but it is not there. I conclude that *Roma* has disappeared; it originally followed *iam*, and its last two letters have survived (*mro* having dropped out):

IA<M RO>MA.

Going back now to the beginning, we find that the five letters after *mense* are perfectly clear:

SIREN.

As the interpretation given by Procopius shows that *rex* in some form must have occurred in the text, it is almost a logical inference that N here is a mistake for X or G since there is no place for the word elsewhere. The two letters before *in arce* are unmistakably AT. I will now write out the oracle so far as I have restored it.

Quintili mense si rex } . . s . at in arce
g }

nihil Geticum ia<m Ro>ma t<i>meto.

There are four characters still unexplained, evidently forming part of a verb ending in *at*. But before attempting to find this verb, let me call attention to a point which seems a strong confirmation of the correctness of the restoration. The last five words are the end of a hexameter, and the oracle seems to have consisted of two hexameters, the second of which has been curtailed of a word or words at the beginning.

Quintili mensē si rex } ∞ - at in arce
g }

- ∞ - ∞ nihil Geticum iam Roma timeto.

Of the four characters which have still to be interpreted, the third, seems to be undoubtedly *S*. The first differs from the two specimens of *u* (in *quintili* and *Geticum*), but is precisely the same as the first letter of *Geticum* and therefore admits of being explained as *g* or *c*. The second and fourth symbols are unique; they might each be taken for *m*, but they differ both from each other and from the four certain representations of *m* which occur. The first resembles an upturned omega; the second is represented by K in the Laurentianus. I think that both of them are probably conflations of two letters. But I cannot suggest anything better than (*rex*) *considat*.

My assumption that the oracle was metrical is not only probable in itself, but is borne out by the fact that the Mundus oracle in B. G. I 7 (p. 33 Haury) is described as ἀδόμειρον. This shows that the words which Procopius there quotes (*Africa capta natus cum mundo peribit*, Haury) are only a part of the ἔπος. *Africa capta* (nom., not. abl.) is evidently the end of a hexameter (e. g., *erit Africa capta*), the second verse beginning *natus cum mundo*. But Braun's *peribit* is not there. The letters are ρεϋϋταλ. The verb is, I have no doubt *periet*, a future form which occurs in Corippus, *Johannis* 6, 44 and 8, 27, and suits the metre. What *αλ* may represent, I cannot conjecture.

King's College, Cambridge.

J. B. Bury.