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Some 'Vexed Passages' in Latin Poetry

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SOME 'VEXED PASSAGES' IN LATIN POETRY.

ENNIVS, *Ann.* 411 (Vahlen), 435 (L. Müller):

Reges per regnum statuasque sepulcraque quaerunt,
Aedificant nomen : summa nituntur opum ui.

The passage is thought to refer to the efforts of the Macedonians to honour the memory of their dead king. Who are meant by *reges* is not at all clear, and *summa nituntur opum ui*, as we may infer from other passages where the same or a similar expression is used, can hardly refer to anything but the labour of the hands. Probably we ought to read *regis*, i.e. *Philippi*. The lines will then refer to the work of the people.

Again, *aedificant nomen* is not in keeping with the rest of the passage, as just explained, and the expression is so strange that it has generally been suspected. Vahlen actually proposed the monstrosity *aeuificant* in his early years, but has now grown wiser : *augificant* (a verb found in *Enn. Scaen.* 103) or *laudificant* would certainly be better. But as the passage obviously refers to the construction of monuments, it is probable that Ennius wrote *aedificant molem* or (if we press the plural meaning of *sepulchra*) *moles*, the former being the more likely.

VARRO, *Sat. Men.*, ap. Non. 314 M (p. 492 Lindsay):

Vbi graues pascantur atque alantur pauonum greges.

This line comes from the *Gerontodidascalus*, and seems to belong to a passage which denounced the growing luxury and gluttony of the Romans. It is cited by Varro as a proof that *gravis* is used in the sense of *multus*, but neither the other passages quoted by him nor ordinary common sense will allow us to suppose that *graves* ever meant *multi*. It is easy to conjecture *grues* for *graves*. Cranes as well as peacocks were dainty fare to the palate of the Roman epicure (see *Hor. Sat.* II. 8. 87 and other passages cited in the Latin dictionaries).

I may add that when I submitted the above line to my colleague, Mr. W. A. Bain, he independently made the same emendation as I have suggested above.

CATVLLVS, II.

It is a bold thing to attempt a new interpretation of this *carmen uexatissimum*, but as it seems possible by a very slight change in the reading and some alteration of the ordinary punctuation to get a reasonable meaning for the poem, I venture to print the lines with the corrections I would suggest :

Passer, deliciae meae puellae !—
 Quicum ludere, quem in sinu tenere,
 Quoi primum digitum dare adpetenti
 Et acris solet incitare morsus,
 Cum desiderio meo nitenti 5
 Carum nescio quid libet iocari :
 Et solaciolum *subit* doloris ;
 Credo. ut cum grauis acquiescît ardor,
 Tecum ludere sicut ipsa possem
 Et tristis animi leuare curas ! 10

If *suuit* were written for *subit*, the change to *sui* would be almost inevitable: for other instances of emendations based on the substitution of *u* for *b*, see Munro, *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus*, p. 149 (new ed.). *Credo* at the beginning of v. 8 is full of bitterness. According to the interpretation proposed, the meaning of vv. 7-10 is as follows: 'And then some gentle relief for her pain steals over her; I well believe it. Would that I, when the wildness of my passion abates, could play with thee as thy mistress does, and lighten my heart's bitter cares!' Catullus ironically envies Lesbia the power to find so simple a diversion and relief from her heartache.

LXIV. 285 sqq. :

Confestim Penius adest uiridantia Tempe,
 Tempe quae siluae cingunt super impendentes,
 †Minosim linquens † doris celebranda choreis.

This is another 'vexed' passage. Many attempts at emendation have been made. Friedrich strenuously supports Madvig's *Meliasin* for *Minosim*, but his arguments do not seem to do more than show that Madvig's conjecture is as plausible as any of the others. The fact, mentioned by Friedrich, that we do not find in the MSS. of Catullus any instance of the loss of the first syllable of a word at the beginning of a line, tells somewhat against the ingenious *Haemonisin* of Heinsius and similar conjectures. And even if we adopt one of these readings there remains the puzzling *doris*. This has been 'emended' in the wildest fashion (*uariis*, *solitis*, *diuis*, etc.). The old emendation *claris* ('clear-sounding') is favoured by Friedrich, but so familiar a word is not very likely to have been altered. I would suggest as a possible reading—

Maenasin Edonis linquens, celebranda choreis.

If *linquens* were accidentally omitted and then written above the line, it might easily, of course, have been introduced in the wrong place by a copyist. It is easy to see how a corruption like that of V could have arisen from the following :

linquens
Menasinedonis celebranda choreis.

donis would naturally be changed to *doris*, which was intended to mean, and might indeed mean 'Dorian' (= *Doriis*; for this form of dat. plur. see Friedrich *ad loc.*). The region of Mount Edonus was celebrated for its Bacchic rites, as many passages in the Latin poets show. The geographical confusion of localities in the northern part of Greece is too frequent to require illustration.

LVCANVS, V. 596 :

Inde ruunt toto congesta pericula mundo.
Primus ab oceano caput exseris Atlanteo,
Core, mouens aestus : iam te tollente furebat
Pontus, et in scopulos totas erexerat undas.
Occurrit gelidus Boreas pelagusque retundit,
Et dubium pendet †uento cui concidat† aequor.

Concidat in the last line seems impossible. *Concido* = 'fall down,' 'fall limp,' and is used of wind = 'fall' in Hor. *C. I.* 12. 30. It might also, no doubt, be used of the sea falling into a calm. But that is exactly what the sea does not do in this passage. The winds struggle for its possession; then

Scythici uicit rabies Aquilonis et undas
Torsit, et abstrusas penitus uada fecit harenas, etc.

Thus we must depart from the MSS., and adopt another reading. Ald. has *pareat*, which gives excellent sense, and is easily explicable on the supposition of a gloss *concedat*, afterwards altered to *concidat* and incorporated in the text. But if this reading be correct, it is strange that not one out of the great host of extant MSS. retains any trace of it. It is therefore safer, perhaps, to read *uentus qui concidat*, 'which wind is to fall' in the struggle. This gives the required meaning, and the corruption is easily accounted for.

VALERIVS FLACCVS, *Arg.* VII. 394 :

Iamque tremens longe sequitur Venus ; utque sub altas
Peruenere trabes diuaeque triformis in umbram,
Hic subito ante oculos nondum speratus Iason
Emicuit, uiditque prior conterrita uirgo.

The incident is the same as is related by Ovid, *Met.* VII. 74 sqq. :

Ibat ad antiquas Hecates Perseidos aras,
Quas nemus umbrosum secretaque silua tegebat.
Et iam fortis erat, pulsusque recesserat ardor,
Cum uidet Aesoniden, exstinctaque flamma reluxit.

Medea has at last summoned up courage to go to the grove in order to meet Jason. He, however, appears unexpectedly before she reaches the *nemus umbrosum*. Venus and Medea are walking hand in hand :

Dat dextram uocemque Venus blandisque pauptem
Adloquiis iunctoque trahit per moenia passu. (373 sq.)

Not till Jason appears does the goddess withdraw her hand from her companion's (*inde Venus dextrae delapsa tenenti*, 399). How, then, can she be said in l. 394 to be 'now following afar off'? Professor Bury, the editor of the *Corpus* text, understands the reference to be to the planet Venus. But surely this is impossible in such a context. The Venus of v. 394 must be the Venus of ll. 373 and 399; any other interpretation seems intolerably harsh and far-fetched, and Professor Bury would doubtless admit that his explanation was merely a refuge of the desperate. But why not read *nemus* for *Venus* in v. 394? With *Venus* mentioned so often in the context the corruption was easy and natural. *Sequitur* = *petit*, a meaning extremely common in poetry. The use of *trabes* and *nemus* in conjunction may have been suggested by Ovid, *Met.* XIV. 360, *densum trabibus nemus*.

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