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Note on Horace, *Ep. I. 2. 31*

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The Classical Review / Volume 17 / Issue 04 / May 1903, pp 203 - 203
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00207907, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00207907

How to cite this article:

W. C. F. Walters (1903). Note on Horace, *Ep. I. 2. 31*. The Classical Review, 17, pp 203-203
doi:10.1017/S0009840X00207907

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NOTE ON HORACE, *Ep.* I. 2. 31.

It will be found convenient perhaps, if I set down the context of this line first.

Nos numerus sumus et fruges consumere nati,
sponsi Penelopae nebulones Alcinoique
in cute curanda plus aequo operata iuuentus,
cui pulcrum fuit in medios dormire dies et
ad strepitum citharae cessatum ducere
 { curam.
 { somnum.

In considering this passage we should of course first try to account for the dittography *curam*

Unless we suppose Horace wrote *somnum*. Both in different editions, we must say that either *curam* is a gloss on *somnum* or *somnum* on *curam*. That *curam* is a gloss on *somnum* is incredible, except as a practical joke played on posterity just as some folk invent conundrums that have no answer. But that *somnum* is a gloss on *curam* is explicable; thus:—‘What is *curam*?’ ‘The business of the Phaeacians.’ ‘What is their business?’ ‘Somnus.’ This is in fact, I think, an answer on the right lines; for their ‘*cura*’ was really ‘*curare cutem*’ i.e. indolence and self-indulgence which they made a business of, as Horace says in v. 29 ‘in cute curanda...operata; sleep was of course a part of this but not the chief or essential part of this ‘*cura*’; they slept till noon, ‘then hastened to be drunk, the business of the day’ to use Dryden’s phrase. ‘*Curam*’ however is generally, I believe, rendered ‘anxiety’; but in the first place is Horace likely to have echoed ‘*curanda*’ with ‘*cura*’ in this sense? secondly, what anxiety had the Phaeacians? obviously none.

Assuming then that ‘*curam*’ means ‘their business’, we have still to account for *cessatum*. The explanation usually offered is that it is a supine; and the translation given ‘to induce anxiety to cease’ involves an extremely unlikely use of the supine and

necessitates the taking of *curam* in a sense which, as we have seen, is at least improbable. A simple change will, I believe, put all right. Read *cessatam ducere curam*.

Palaeographically this of course presents no difficulty; and *somnum* if it did not cause the error would help to perpetuate it. Nor grammatically does the passive *cessatam* present a difficulty: Ovid writes (*Fasti* 4. 617.) ‘largaque prouenit *cessatis* messis in *aruis*, ‘fields that have lain fallow,’ and also (*Met.* 10. 6. 69) ‘illa moram celeri *cessataque tempora* cursu corrigit,’ ‘makes up lost time’; and the author of *Aetna* has two instances vv. 69 and 389, the former being ‘*cessata* uenit per *sidera*’ where *cessata* is explained as *quiescentia*. Horace himself is rather free with strange passives e.g. (especially) triumphatus (*Od.* 3. 3. 43), and might well have used the passive ‘*cessatam*’ here exactly in the sense that Ovid used it in the *Atalanta* passage.¹

The Phaeacians’ idea of correct conduct in life was to sleep to midday and then to have a long spell of the other forms of indulgence, their real business, that sleep had interrupted: with the passage thus interpreted, *ducere* too has a natural and in the context an expected sense, and there is the required balance to ‘in medios dormire dies’: a long spell of sleep, then a long spell of the day’s chief business, sensuous enjoyments.

Another interpretation possible for my ‘*cessatam curam*’ would be ‘idled business,’ i.e. they idle through the business of the day; but the run of the passage and Ovid’s ‘*cessata tempora*’ favour more the sense of ‘interrupted.’

I am also inclined to think ‘*somno*’ was the original form of the gloss.

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March 1, 1903.

¹ *Cessatum* as a passive but in agreement with *somnum* is, I find, favoured by Kiessling.

THE DOUBLE RECENSION IN THE POEMS OF PRUDENTIUS.

FROM the point of view of textual criticism the late Latin Christian authors have enjoyed far better fortune than their great classical forerunners. But in this

respect few of them can compare with Rome’s earliest and greatest Christian poet, Prudentius. Dr. Kenyon has recently pointed out how Virgil, richly represented