The Classical Review

<http://journals.cambridge.org/CAR>

Additional services for *The Classical Review*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)

Three Essays on Asinius Pollio as a Writer *Untersuchungen zu Caesar u. seinen Fortsetzern: insbesondere über Autorschaft u. Komposition des Bettum Alexandrinum und Africanum*, von Dr G. Landgraf. Erlangen, 1888. 3 Mk.

W. Y. Fausset

The Classical Review / Volume 4 / Issue 1-2 / February 1890, pp 30 - 32
DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00189437, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00189437

How to cite this article:

W. Y. Fausset (1890). The Classical Review, 4, pp 30-32 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00189437

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

THREE ESSAYS ON ASINIUS POLLIO AS A WRITER.

Untersuchungen zu Caesar u. seinen Fortsetzern: insbesondere über Autorschaft u. Komposition des Bellum Alexandrinum und Africanum, von Dr. G. LANDGRAF. Erlangen, 1888. 3 Mk.

THE aim of this very ingenious monograph is to prove that C. Asinius Pollio, the famous orator, poet and historian, is the author of the military diary which is included among the works of Caesar under the name of the *Bellum Africanum*; that he is also the *rédacteur* of the remains of Caesar and his literary executor Hirtius, whose death at the siege of Mutina (Apr. 27, B.C. 43) cut short his plans for the completion and final publication of the *Corpus Caesarianum*.

It would be impossible in the brief space at our disposal to give an adequate digest of the argument: but its general course may be indicated. It will be remembered that in the received editions Books i.—vii. of the *De Bello Gallico* are attributed to Caesar, Book viii. to A. Hirtius, the *De Bello Civili* (three books) to Caesar; and the supplements to the latter, viz. the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, *B. Africanum*, *B. Hispaniense*, appear under the name of Caesar. But even in antiquity the authorship of these last three was a disputed point (Sueton. *Vit. Jul.* lv.), some attributing them to Oppius, some to Hirtius. It was Nipperdey who raised the question afresh in his *Quaestiones* prefixed to his edition of Caesar (1847), and sought to prove that *B. G.* viii. and *Bell. Alex.* were by Hirtius, to whom (and not to Oppius) the language of the *Epistula ad Balbum*, prefixed to the former by its author, is appropriate. This epistle plainly shows what Hirtius's design was, viz. to weave the Commentaries of Caesar into a connected whole and carry them down to the date of his death. Apart from the actual state in which the literary legacy of Caesar has come down to us, it is scarcely conceivable that Hirtius could have accomplished his design in the short and busy period which intervened between Caesar's death and his own. The facts of his consulate and his illness must be borne in mind. Nipperdey thinks that for *Bell. Afric.* and *Bell. Hispan.* he had done no more than to collect materials.

This hypothesis, though most valuable as clearing the ground for further investigations, was not in itself fully satisfactory.

There are undeniable differences of style between *B. Alex.* and *B. G.* viii. which militate against a unity of authorship. A distinct advance was made when it was recognized in part by Petersdorff, more fully by Schiller, that the depositions of eye-witnesses were incorporated in all parts of the work and that variety of styles is due to the variety of original sources. Schiller conjectures that Hirtius worked *over* these materials, without working them *up* into organic unity: it is the connecting and transitional chapters, he finds, which are stamped with Hirtian peculiarities. It is in reference to *Bell. Alex.* that Schiller formulates his theory.

Here then Dr. Landgraf takes the question up. He takes, one by one, all the members of the *Corpus Caesarianum*: they reveal to his fine perception of style the touch of one, of two, and in one case (*B. Alex.* i.—xxxiii.) even of three hands. He has made the remarkable discovery that C. Asinius Pollio was the eyewitness and original authority on whom Hirtius relied for those parts of the war in which he had not himself been engaged; and that he, as the next to Hirtius in Caesar's intimacy, undertook to complete, in outline at least, the literary project which fate had not allowed his friend to accomplish. The *Bell. Africanum* he published exactly as he had made it over to Hirtius. Its style, if the text be rectified, is much better than critics have allowed.

The evidence is partly external, partly internal. (a) While no ancient writer connects the name of Pollio with the authorship of the supplements to Caesar's work, he is mentioned by Suetonius (*l.c.*) as a somewhat severecritic of the Commentaries: 'parum diligenter parumque integra veritate compositos putat.' He did moreover write a History of the Civil Wars himself (*Hor. C.* ii. 1). He had served in the African war himself; had also been governor of Further Spain from the year B.C. 45, so that he may well have furnished Hirtius with information upon the Spanish events narrated in *Bell. Alex.* xlviii.—lxiv. He was in a position to supply from personal knowledge—conformably with his severe veracity—a discreditable fact in *B. G.* viii. 23, 3—6, 47, 48, 1—9, which Caesar had suppressed in its right place, vii. 75. It may be doubted if any other Caesarian had similar qualifications for the task. (b) The internal evidence of diction, &c. is the

strongest. In spite of the ravages of time, enough has survived of Pollio's composition by which the theory may be tested: especially three letters to Cicero, *Ad Fam.* x. 31, 32 and 33. We know from the *Dial. de Oratoribus* and Quintilian that his style admitted archaic and poetic elements, and even colloquialisms. Examples are (1) *portendo*, in the *Corp. Caes.* only in *B. Afr.* 82, 2, and in *Ep. ad Fam.* x. 32. 5. (2) In the *B. Afr.* the following poetical expressions, *suppetias ire*, *tristimonia*, *sauciis decem factis*: (3) *nullum vestigium ab aliquo discedere*, *Ad Fam.* x. 31, 6., *B. Afr.* 73, 3. Dr. Landgraf certainly makes out a strong case for Pollio as author of the *Bell. Africanum*: besides style and diction, the absence of partisan unfairness, as in the treatment of Cato's character, is given in evidence. The very faults of the work—its haste, triviality and want of historical perspective—may be accounted for if it was a soldier's diary, not a history.

The main objection to the theory will be this. Why is Pollio never mentioned in the Commentaries, although he distinguished himself so much in the field (*Plut. Caes.* 52)? For the same reason probably which led him to grudge to the Caesarian remains that effort which might have given them an artistic uniformity and unity which they lack. He had his own literary ambition, to make himself the historian of the First Civil War; and he had no mind to forestall himself by a work, of which two-thirds of the renown would belong to Caesar and Hirtius. So he studiously dissociated his reputation from their work, while he was too loyal to neglect to make it worthy of theirs. But it must be confessed that it is difficult to understand how it was that his disguise baffled all detection by critics, ancient or modern, until Dr. Landgraf pierced it. We understand now that Prof. Wölfflin has in preparation an edition of the *Bellum Africanum*, to be published, *missis ambagibus*, under the name of C. Asinius Pollio. Dr. Landgraf promises us (p. 78) a future discussion of the contribution made by Pollio to the *Bellum Civile*: pointing out for the present the Pollionisms in *B. C.* iii. 108–112, the opening of the Alexandrine war. No student of the diction of Caesar can afford to neglect the contributions to the subject which enrich Dr. Landgraf's pages, e.g. the valuable note on *postquam* with subj., p. 20.

But it is not true that the historic infin. is used by Cicero 'only in the Verrines and the Letters' (p. 41): v. *Cluent.* §§ 59, 177; *Pis.* § 69; *Phil.* xii. § 1; *Acad. pr.* ii. §§ 11, 63.

Ueber den Sprachgebrauch des Asinius Pollio in den bei Cic. ad Fam. x. 31—33 erhaltenen Briefen mit Berücksichtigung der bei Quintilian, Seneca, etc. überlieferten Fragmenta, von J. H. SCHMALZ.

Wölfflin, *Archiv*, vi. pp. 85—107, 'Ueber die Latinität des Asinius Polio.' München, Beck, 1889. Mk. 1.40.

A REVIEW of Dr. Landgraf's treatise would be incomplete without a short notice of these two essays, the former of which discusses the diction of Asinius Pollio as it appears in the *Letters*, the latter that of the *Bell. Africanum*. In their general conclusions they are at one: that Pollio (or Polio as Wölfflin prefers to call him) did not give allegiance to the Latinity of Caesar and Cicero, but consciously copied other models, and stands nearer to the speech of the archaising Varro, and the abrupt and sometimes colloquial Sallust. Surely it is curious that he himself criticised the archaisms of the latter—'Asinius Pollio in libro quo Sallustii scripta reprehendit ut *nimia priscorum verborum affectatione oblita*' (Suet. *gramm.* 10), while he allowed himself the use of such archaic words as the following *pollicitatio*, *commectus* 'a way,' *superesse* 'survive,' *quiritare* (which has lived on in popular speech to become Fr. *crier*, Ital. *gridare*), *palpari*, all cited by Schmalz: *suppetiae*, *grandis* 'large,' *rapsare*, *tristimonia*, *satagere infatuo conpotare* (these three perhaps old-fashioned colloquialisms), cited by Wölfflin. It seems possible that in his maturer work Pollio was less unwilling to part with some of the angularities of his style, though still the declared foe of Ciceronianism gone mad (*Quint.* x. 2. 17, *si quid modo longius circumduxerunt, iurant ita Ciceronem locuturum fuisse*). The task which at present occupies Landgraf and the others is to prove that Pollio forms a link, in the development of Latin prose, between Varro and the historians Livy and Tacitus. They may afterwards hope to consider the growth of Pollio's own style in the fragments preserved to us.

Both writers show exhaustively that there is alike an archaic and a poetic element in the style which we are considering: our author uses *communibam*, a form which 'Cicero would have barely touched in kid gloves' (Wölffl. p. 88), an isolated form (if we can trust our MSS.) which Pollio may have picked up from the *sermo castrensis*; he uses *vectigaliorum*, and a few other anomalous forms. It is further shown that he deals in colloquialisms, such as the use of

compound words in the sense of the simple forms (*commendare se fugae, ex promerito, inibi, depugno* = *pugno*). Lastly, in his earlier work at any rate Pollio cannot be acquitted of the charge of occasional slovenly writing. The abl. absolute is carelessly used: *B. Afr.* 24, 2, Pompeio adveniente oppidani usque eo passi propius accedere, donec cet.; and even *Ad Fam.* x. 31. 4, nam quibus comeatibus invito illo per illius provinciam legiones ducerem? *V.* also *B. Afr.* 63. 5. But for the sake of *distinctness*, such a thing is not unknown even in Cicero: *v. Roby*, 1247. Again we find a sort of Homeric construction in relative clauses, *B. Afr.* 97. 3, Leptitanos

quorum bona Juba diripuerat et ad senatum questi...sua receperant. Other idioms, such as *dubito* with acc. and inf., *opto* with inf., *studeo* with acc. and inf. (*Schmalz*, 26—28) seem to be due to the influence of the older poets. But is not the pregnant use of *in* (*Ad Fam.* x. 32. 4, in victoria = si vicisset) commoner in Cicero than *Schmalz* implies on p. 20? *V.* my note on *Cluent.* § 32.

An examination of the facts adduced in these two treatises will lead, I think, to the conclusion that even in his Letters Cicero was much more of a purist, than Pollio in his most studied efforts.

W. Y. FAUSSET.

NETTLESHIP'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO LATIN LEXICOGRAPHY.

Contributions to Latin Lexicography. By HENRY NETTLESHIP, M.A., Corpus Professor of Latin in the University of Oxford. Oxford. Clarendon Press. 1889. 21s.

THIS book, like the larger work of Professor Key which appeared a year ago, contains the portion of a Latin lexicon which was more or less advanced when death in the former case, and disinclination or other engagements in Professor Nettleship's case, interfered to prevent the completion of the undertaking. Necessarily they appeal not so much to the general public, even of classical scholars, as to the makers of lexicons or to special students, but both were worth publishing, and will doubtless contribute to improve the Latin dictionaries of the future. Both lay great stress on the early Roman literature, both are the work of independent scholars, and both testify to a great deal of thought and labour. Professor Key no doubt aimed specially at setting forth his peculiar views of etymology. Professor Nettleship has a bit of a bias for another side of the investigation. He has paid great attention to the Latin glossaries, and among numerous other recondite additions has quoted many of them in the articles which form the present work. Such sources have some sort of value for lexicons on a large scale which profess to give the materials, important or not important, for the history and signification of a Latin word. I have myself a poor opinion of Latin glossaries: they are evidence of very uncertain character—uncertain in their age, in their author, in their ultimate origin; they may

be witnesses to a regular use and meaning, they may record merely the momentary fancy or whim of a speaker or writer, or they may embody a misunderstanding of the reporter or a blunder of a copyist. And even the better authenticated productions of Latin grammarians are so uncritical, that I think them often much overrated testimony. Unless we have the context and the circumstances, a reported use of a word requires special corroboration from general analogy or probabilities before it is entitled to any considerable weight. The desperate eagerness of scholars to throw some fresh light on obscure or disputed matters seems to me often to result in a very factitious importance being attributed to the dustheaps of antiquity.

About two-thirds of the present volume is occupied with the letter A; the rest contains articles on various words, which for some reason or other attracted Professor Nettleship's attention. He tells us he has included nothing in this volume which, in his own judgment, is not a necessary improvement of Lewis and Short's Dictionary, either by rearrangement of the matter, or by novelty in explanation, or in instances, or by correction of references, or by the supply of omitted words. Possibly he has in this adopted the right principle, but the result is that one never quite knows whether any article should be regarded merely as a supplement and correction of Lewis and Short, or really representative of what Professor Nettleship considers a proper and adequate treatment of the word. However the articles are always scholarly and clear,