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NOTE ON THE MESSIANIC CHARACTER OF THE FOURTH ECLOGUE.

READERS of Virgil are perhaps not commonly readers of Josephus. But I think that in Josephus is to be sought the explanation of the 'Messianic' character of the Fourth Eclogue. The year 40 B.C. was the year of the Consulship of Pollio, and it was also the year in which, on the advice of Antony, Herod, the son of Antipater, was given the throne of Jerusalem. Octavian, also, was anxious to forward this arrangement, since Antipater had fought for Julius Caesar in Egypt (Josephus, *Antiquities*, xiv. 14. 4). Josephus says nothing of any part played by Pollio in this bestowal upon Herod of the Jewish crown. Herod, he says, was introduced into the Senate by Messalla and Atratinus. But in the next section (xiv. 14. 5) he mentions the fact that Pollio was Consul at this time. He does not usually reckon the years both by Olympiads and by consulships—his chronology is usually very loose indeed—nor was there any real reason for his doing so in this case. The year 40 had not any peculiar importance for a Jew, since the Jews generally (and Josephus) seem to have regarded the year 37 as the first year of Herod's reign. There is, of course, nothing unnatural in the mention of Pollio at this point; but Josephus' main reason for mentioning him here is, I think, the fact that he was accustomed to associate together, in connection with Jewish history of the period, the names of Pollio and Herod. The two men were undoubtedly close allies. This appears clearly from a passage in the fifteenth book (xv. 10. 1), where we gather that about the year 24 B.C. (or possibly 27 B.C.) Herod sent his two sons on a mission to Augustus (was it a mission of gratulation upon the honours which fell to Augustus in 27 B.C.?), and these young men 'lodged at the house of Pollio (= C. Asinius Pollio), who was very fond of Herod's friendship.' The explanation of this fondness for Herod's friendship appears, I fancy, from yet another passage of the *Antiquities* (xv. 1. 1): 'Pollio the Pharisee, and Sameas his disciple, were honoured by Herod above all the rest; for when Jerusalem was besieged [*sc.* consequently upon the bestowal of the kingdom upon Herod in the consulship of Asinius Pollio] they advised the citizens to receive Herod.'

The Romans, then, gave the kingdom to Herod in the consulship (one can but infer on the motion) of Asinius Pollio, and the

Jews were advised to accept Herod as king by 'Pollio a Pharisee.'

Is it possible, looking at these facts, to doubt that certain of Pollio's relations were Jews? 'Pollio the Pharisee,' since a Pharisee and (as Josephus mentions incidentally) a member of the Sanhedrim could not have been a mere 'proselyte of the gate.' We may suppose him to have been the son (or descendant) of some member of Pollio's family who had become a 'proselyte of righteousness.' Have we not here a better explanation than any other of the Messianic element in Virgil's poem? Asinius Pollio, if members of his family were Jews, must have been familiar with Jewish ideas, and even with Jewish literature. (We might, perhaps, infer this merely from his friendship with Herod.) He was also himself a poet of distinction. Is it unnatural to suppose that in his poetry he embodied something of the thought and sentiment of Hebrew poetry? Is it unnatural to suppose that Virgil, writing a poem in honour of Pollio, adopted, perhaps merely by way of compliment, the Hebraic style of Pollio himself? This would be particularly appropriate at a moment when Pollio, by securing the election of Herod, had shewn himself so eager a partisan of Jewish ideas.

The name of Herod is associated with the Massacre of the Innocents. This is, perhaps, I would suggest, an echo of a much earlier event, the slaying of Hezekiah and his band—a violation of 'the Law' which the Jews never forgot. But, however that may be, this story of the Innocents connects Herod's name with the expectation of a 'child,' such as that spoken of by Virgil. What Messianic ideals Herod (a much maligned man) may have entertained we do not know. But they may have been known to Pollio and, through Pollio, to Virgil. In some such way as this I think it possible that the Fourth Eclogue may be in very truth Messianic. The 'little child' of Virgil may literally be one and the same as the 'little child' of 'Isaiah.'

I do not, of course, mean that Virgil is speaking to the Jewish world, or has his eyes fixed upon Jerusalem. His eyes are fixed upon Rome. He is speaking to Romans. His mind dwells on the golden promises of the peace of Brundisium. He looks off from the 'little child' of Isaiah, perhaps, to some one of the expected children whose

names have been traditionally connected with this poem. But Jewish ideas of a reign of peace and splendour, of a mysterious prince and saviour who should re-organize

the earth, colour every word—ideas derived, through Pollio, from ‘Pollio the Pharisee’ or Herod the Great, or both.

H. W. GARROD.

VIRGIL, *AENEID* VII. 695–6.

Hi Fescenninas *acies* aequosque Faliscos,
Hi Soractis habent arces Flauiniaque arua.

THE zeugma involved in the accepted version of these two lines is so harsh that critics tend either to regard the word *acies* as corrupt or to argue that the passage is one of those which would have been recast, had Virgil lived to revise the *Aeneid* for publication.

If the reading *acies* were condemned, the conjecture ‘Hi Fescenninos<s>altus’ might claim consideration, but it is ill meddling with fourth century MSS., and besides, is it quite certain that the traditional interpretation is sound?

In the first place *Faliscos* may quite possibly be the name not of the people but of the city, employed here as in Ovid (*Am.* iii. 13.1), because the more usual form *Falerii* is not suited to a dactylic metre. Then the epithet *aequos*, as Müller pointed out long since, may mean the city ‘in the plain.’ Virgil is thinking of the Roman, not the Etruscan, town—the modern Falleri, which¹ Dennis describes as standing ‘on the very level of the plain by which you approach it.’

The town of Fescennium (or Fescennia) was situated somewhere in the ager Faliscus. Its exact position is now unknown. Two sites have however been suggested—Civita Castellana and San Silvestro—and with regard to these one point is noteworthy. Each occupies a fairly lofty plateau surrounded or bounded by some of those deep and abrupt ravines,² which are the most striking feature of the ager Faliscus.

Now I submit that the word *acies*, which sprang from the same root and developed on the same lines as our own word *edge*, was used locally to describe these ‘sheer rock walls,’ the escarpments terminating the plateau on which Fescennium stood. Virgil was an enthusiastic antiquary, and in a

passage full of old-world terms and legends he has preserved the name which the Fescennines themselves had given to this striking feature of their home. We have then in the two lines a double antithesis between hill and dale, plateau and plain. Translate: ‘These are they of the Fescennine Edges and these the people of Falisci in the plain: these the hillmen of Soracte, and these the tillers of the Flavianian levels.’

No precise parallel for such a use of *acies* is given in the new Thesaurus, although the cognate word *acumen* is twice used by Ovid (*Met.* xii. 337 and xiii. 778) to mean a mountain-bluff; but names borrowed from the configuration of the country are to be found in all languages.³ A bolder man might argue that in *Aeneid* x. 408⁴ the word has the same force, but I would rather rely on our own analogous use of the word ‘Edge’ to support, as it suggested, my theory. Thus (*e.g.*) Kinver Edge near Stourbridge is ‘almost a precipice on one side, and a very gradual ascent on the other, about 400 feet high,’ not higher that is to say than the site assigned by Dennis to Fescennium.

Soon after Virgil’s time the town fell into ruins, and with the town the name also died. Few indeed are the allusions in our own literature to the many English Edges, and Macaulay’s New Zealander, if he ever arrives, is likely to be as much puzzled by such a couplet as:—

‘Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
Gold that I never see’;

as are the critics of these two lines with their theory of a harsh zeugma in an unrevised poem.

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¹ *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria*, vol. i. p. 101. Servius in his note uses the masculine Falisci to signify the town: ‘Is condidit Faliscos.’

² Dennis, *op. cit.* i. 121.

³ Cf. Isaac Taylor, *Words and Places*, p. 492, § vii.: and *Aeneid* i. 109 saxa uocant Itali mediis quae in fluctibus Aras.

⁴ extenditur una Horrida per latos acies Volcania campos, A jagged edge (or precipice) of flame stretches across the broad plains?