Virgil and Roman Studies

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VIRGIL AND ROMAN STUDIES.

By J. W. MACKAIL.

“Virgile,” Sainte-Beuve wrote between fifty and sixty years ago in words which have become classical, “depuis l’heure où il parut a été le poète de la Latinité toute entière.” The saying has long been noted as marking what may be called the reinstatement of Virgil as a poet, after a period in which he had suffered some partial eclipse under the ignorant and impatient attacks of the romantic school. But to us now it may bear a further and a larger significance. The position of Virgil as a poet stands at the present day in need of no defence, but it is only during the last generation that his importance has come to be realised as an interpreter and recorder of Roman history and of the Latin civilisation. Classical study has during that generation been revolutionised. Our knowledge and understanding of the ancient world have become not only immensely greater in amount, but different in kind ; year by year, almost day by day, we are getting more into touch with that world as something alive and solid. The studies of this Society, defined by us as those dealing with the history, art, and archaeology of Rome, Italy, and the Roman Empire, bear directly on our appreciation of the most learned and most comprehensive of Roman or Italian poets ; and conversely Virgil’s poetry yields up to the new methods and new enthusiasm of historians, artists, and archaeologists material which is so far from being exhausted that we seem still only beginning to sort it out, co-ordinate it, and use it. Half a century ago a commentator on Virgil was content to treat the whole thing as a matter of book-learning : to discuss his text, to comment on his grammar, vocabulary, and metric, to enumerate his real or fancied borrowings from earlier poets, Greek or Latin, and to add remarks on his epic technique, his philosophy, or his psychological insight. Any one approaching the same task now would have to do so with a much larger scope and a vastly larger equipment. He would have to bring to it the whole armament of Roman studies, to recreate, so far as may be, through knowledge and imagination, the Rome and the Italy of Virgil’s own time, and also of those earlier times of which Virgil was so profound a student. The archaeological study, if one may so call it, of poetry is not without its dangers and its temporary drawbacks. The Homeric question, for instance, as would be admitted probably by most of those who have taken

part on one side or another in that long and fierce controversy, and undoubtedly by all those who have watched it as interested spectators, has to some extent obscured Homer, has diverted attention from the poetical greatness of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; but in the end it is bringing an appreciation of that greatness, deepened and enlarged by the further appreciation of the relation in which it stands to a whole civilisation and history. So, too, with Virgil. Admiration of his poetical genius is only heightened by the fuller knowledge we are gaining of him as the voice and interpreter of the Latin civilisation in all its aspects. We no longer study him as mere literature; or rather literature, with him as with others, has grown into a new meaning. It is not a picture drawn and coloured on the flat, but an organic solid, attached everywhere to a three-dimensional world. At every point Virgil's work throws light on Roman studies, and has light thrown on it by them. The beautiful pattern with which we have long been familiar becomes stereoscopic; the polished reflecting surface becomes translucent. We see deep into its structure, and have always the hope of seeing deeper; we can trace layers of growth; here and there we can watch the poetry coming into existence. And as we do so, point after point in the poetry kindles into new meaning, because it is seen in organic relation to an actual world.

In the remarks which follow, my object is to take up some points by way of illustration and suggestion, and to emphasise the fact that these are typical, that the connexion between Virgil and Roman studies is not only organic but continuously so, and that there is almost no point at which the two things do not give one another mutual reinforcement.

Virgil's extreme accuracy when dealing with nature is now well recognised; we have all ceased to think of his descriptions as academic, as drawn from a mixture of literary reminiscence and inner consciousness, at all events when he has passed beyond the tentative work of the *Eclogues* and moves "with the certain step of man." Of course one is continually finding fresh instances. Mr. Warde Fowler has told us how for long he himself, the most ardent of bird-lovers as well as of Virgil-lovers, thought Virgil had made a blunder where he wrote¹ of the nightingale as singing "under the poplar shade," until one day at Godstow he was at once rebuked and delighted to come on a nightingale doing precisely that. The President of the Royal Society, who is not only the head of organised science in this country, but a strong supporter of the classics and of Roman studies, has pointed out the truth of observation in the *nigra arena* of *Georg.* iii, 241, the dark volcanic sand which Virgil

¹ *Georg.* iv, 511; and see *Classical Review* for February, 1890.

had seen stirred up in stormy weather on the Campanian coast, and even more strikingly, the meteorological precision of the line describing a Mediterranean cyclone,

una Eurisque Notusque ruunt creberque procellis
Africus,¹

which had often been cited by critics, who were less observant and more ignorant than the poet, as an instance of academic treatment of nature and a mere rhetorical absurdity. But where he is dealing with matters which fall within the province of archaeology, Virgil had a similar grasp of knowledge, so far as knowledge was then available, and a similar gift of accuracy. We cannot scrutinise his work too carefully for veiled allusions, and for a meaning in epithets and phrases which are seemingly casual or ornamental. Very often Virgil shows in these the power, finely ascribed to him by Dryden, of "saying much in little and often in silence." We may to-day see, if not on the spot, at least in Dr. Leaf's photographs, the angle-tower of Troy,

turrim in praecipiti stantem,²

from which the garrison used to watch the Danaan ships and the Achaean camp across the plain. Travellers may still observe at midsummer the relics of the old fire-worship on Mount Soracte³ where

pineus ardor acervo
pascitur et medium freti pietate per ignem
cultores multa premimus vestigia pruna.

In the "tapering-pointed Sabellian pike" of *Aen.* vii, 655, we may trace the origin among lightly-armed mountaineers of the formidable Roman *pilum*: we may identify, as a recent writer has done, the *teres acilis* of the Oscans⁴ with a form of boomerang, and the *cateia* "hurled in Teutonic fashion" by the people of Abella⁵ with the northern throwing-axe, the famous *francisca* which won so many battles in the sixth century.

I pass over here the whole side of Virgilian archaeology which deals with Roman religion, though that is not the least important, for it has been fully dealt with in recent years as part of the general study of that intricate and fertile subject; but one brief note may be made before going on to other matters. It was a prescribed tradition that all practical treatises should begin with a formal invocation of the appropriate deities. Virgil duly follows this usage at the opening of the *Georgics*. It is interesting to notice exactly how he deals with the forms of the native ritual. Varro,

¹ *Aen.* i, 85; and compare *Aen.* ii, 406-409.

² *Aen.* ii, 460, foll.

³ *Aen.* xi, 786.

⁴ *Aen.* vii, 730.

⁵ *Aen.* vii, 741.

at the beginning of the *de Re Rustica*, had invoked the twelve *Di Consentes* (six pairs) who presided over agriculture: Iovis and Tellus, Sol and Luna, Liber and Ceres, Robigus and Flora, Minerva and Venus, Bonus Eventus and Lympha. Already here we see the beginnings of a syncretist Graeco-Italian religion; for the association of Minerva with olives and of Venus with gardens is not Italian. Virgil carries out this syncretising process fully. He invokes six Latin or Italian deities; and against each of these, but in studied variation and disarrangement, he balances a Greek deity, either by express name or by implication. Beside Liber and Silvanus he sets Achelous and the “*unci puer monstrator aratri*,” Triptolemus. Neptunus and Minerva are associated by him with the birth of the horse and the olive, that is, with Poseidon and Athena. Ceres is balanced by the unnamed Chaonian deity of the oak-tree. In the sixth place comes Aristaeus; but he has a double personality: he is at one and the same time the Greek pastoral deity who was worshipped under that name in Ceos, and also the Italian god who was the tutelary spirit of the *arista*, the corn-ear. Beyond this, he still further evades the stiffness of a formal catalogue by adding, linked with one another, the Latin Fauns and the Greek Dryads, and bidding Pan leave Maenalus and be the guardian of Italian sheep.

Another instance of this studied balancing of Greek and Italian elements in a composite worship is to be found in the short dedication at the opening of the third *Georgic*, where Pales and Apollo are coupled as they had already been in the fifth Eclogue,

ipsa Pales agros atque ipse reliquit Apollo;

and here may be noted what I do not think has been quite realised, that the Daphnis-song in that Eclogue includes, in lines 24-42, a sort of first sketch or suggestion for the work which took shape as the *Georgics*.

The purely Greek gods named later in the poem are those invoked by sailors, Glaucus, Panope, Ino and Melicerta;¹ just as it is sailors who give their Greek names, Arctos, the Pleiades and the Hyades,² to the stars. For it is the *Itala tellus*, the land of Italy, and not the surrounding seas, that is the subject of the poem; and just as in the fourth Eclogue one feature of the new Golden Age is that “there shall be no more sea,”

*cedet et ipse mari vector, nec nautica pinus
mutabit merces,*

so the more actual, though no less imaginative, Earthly Paradise of the *Georgics* is Italy and Italy alone,

*quamvis Elysios miretur Graecia campos,*³

¹ *Georg.* i, 437.

² *ibid.* i, 138.

³ *ibid.* i, 38.

though foreigners may go voyaging beyond the girdling ocean in search of strange worlds.

The scope of Virgil's Roman studies can be best appreciated if we have regard to his own origin, life and surroundings. As to these there are no fresh materials available, but the light in which we see and place the facts is materially altered by our larger knowledge: and thus they become related and suggestive. Out of them his figure builds itself up, so to say, in flesh and blood. The traditional figure of a Mantuan rustic, educated at home, and living afterwards chiefly at or near Naples, is not only incomplete but misleading. And further confusion has, I think, been introduced into the matter by the theory, for it is only a theory, that the new non-Roman element which he introduced into Latin poetry was that of Keltic blood and imagination. All the argument for this is, first, that Mantua was geographically in Cisalpine Gaul, and secondly that the name Maro is possibly or probably Keltic. I will not do the latter argument the injustice of comparing it with a recent attempt to prove that Virgil's blood was neither Latin nor Keltic but Thracian, and that he traces his descent from the Maron of Ismarus out of whose cellars Odysseus stocked his ship on the voyage home from Troy. As to the former, Virgil himself lays particular stress on the fact that Mantua and the district surrounding it were not Keltic, but Etruscan. It was, in fact, the great north-eastern fortress of the Etruscan league, and this fact is significant in more than one way.

Etruria and the Etruscans play a large part in Virgil's Italy, and he clearly took special interest in them. The "Tuscan Tiber" is coupled with the "Roman Palatine" in the *Georgics*,¹ and again the "Tyrrhene Thybris" in the *Aeneid*² with the sacred springs of the Latin Numicus. The roll of the armies of Italy is headed by Mezentius and his Etruscans: "primus init bellum"³ is the stately opening trumpet-note of that splendid catalogue. The later Etruscan catalogue in the tenth book is detailed and full of colour; it ends with the mention of the Mantuan contingent and the special emphasis, which I have already noticed, laid on the Etruscan origin and blood of Mantua and its great importance in the Etruscan empire. The whole passage⁴ repays careful scrutiny:

Ille etiam patriis agmen ciet Ocnus ab oris,
Fatidicae Mantus et Tusci filius amnis,
qui muros matrisque dedit tibi, Mantua, nomen;
Mantua, dives avis, sed non genus omnibus unum.
gens illi triplex, populi sub gente quaterni,
ipsa caput populis; Tusco de sanguine vires.
hinc quoque quingentos in se Mezentius armat,
quos patre Benaco velatus harundine glauca
Mincius infesta ducebat in aequora pinu.

¹ *Georg.* i., 499.

² *Aen.* vii., 242.

³ vii., 647.

⁴ x., 198-206.

From Etruria, in fact, with its complex and obscure relationships both to Mycenaean and to Asiatic culture in prehistoric periods, Rome derived in a very great measure her art, her religion, and her tradition of a distant past. These relationships are felt and hinted at, rather than set forth, by Virgil; but he fully realises their presence. The Lydian colonisation of Etruria is emphasised¹ as one source of its greatness, and conversely it was an adventurer "Corythi Tyrrhena ab sede profectus,"² who founded Troy.

In all these matters, art, religion, and the passion of the past, the special genius of Virgil (if we are inclined to pursue the slippery speculations of heredity) may derive from Etruscan blood; from the re-emergence in him of a prehistoric strain, not Italian in the ordinary sense. It is one of the attractive but unverifiable theories of the present day that great artists, or even great periods of art, have some connexion with this re-emergence of a primitive stock which had been overlaid and partly suppressed by immigration or conquest, and which, as it pushes to the surface again through the superincumbent layer when that wears thin, reappears strengthened by its long suppression and fertilised by mixture of race. At all events there would seem to be more in this than in Virgil's conjectural Keltic affinities. Where we can trace Keltic blood distinctly it produces a very different type of poet—eloquent, facile, scholarly, and above all, modern, but not Virgilian. The element which Virgil added to the *Latinité toute entière* of the world in which he lived suggests something going far back and deep down. Lord Morley, in his recent speech at Oxford³ to the Historical Congress, spoke of the modern European mind as being "born 2000 years old." This, in a somewhat different sense, is just what one feels about Virgil. He stands where he does, between two worlds, not only in the patent sense in which he sums up the Rome that was before him and looks forward upon the Rome that was to be after him, and is the voice of both, the interpreter of the one, and the guide and prophet of the other. His range, his outlook, are still greater. They extend to a prehistoric past and to a non-historic future; or rather—and this is the culmination of his genius and "the very sea-mark of his utmost sail"—they make past and future coalesce, out of what are ordinarily called time and space, in a world of ideas, of what Plato would call real things, of which the realities of common usage are only the projection of shadows on a background.

The importance of Virgil's early Mantuan upbringing, as distinct from his Mantuan blood, has been much exaggerated. Commentators are always trying to find traces of it in his landscapes. The fact is that his landscape is seldom Mantuan, except where he expressly

¹ *Aen.* viii, 480.

² *Aen.* vii, 209.

³ 9th April, 1913.

names it as such. He studied in the most susceptible years of life at the university of Milan; and his poetry shows a wide personal knowledge, gained, we may well believe, in vacation rambles and *villeggiature*, of the whole of northern Italy and the Tyrol. The ancient like the modern Milanese flocked up into the hills in summer. Virgil must have ranged, at one time and another, not only over the Lombard plain by the pleasant Adige, "Athesis amoenus,"¹ in its lower course, or the Po with its timber-rafts,² but the alpine and sub-alpine hill country from Monte Viso, "pinifer Vesulus,"³ in the west right across to the country which was also Titian's, and whose colour and atmosphere the Mantuan poet has rendered with as intimate truth as the Venetian painter. He speaks with a sort of personal passion of the lakes of Como and Garda; he has been with the shepherds while they gathered medicinal herbs in the mown sub-alpine pastures, "tonsis in vallibus,"⁴ where the Mella comes down past Brescia; he has followed the coast from where the outflow of the Po discolours the sea⁵ and the fishing fleets ply their trade by the mouth of the Padusa,⁶ round the bay of Trieste to the sources of the Timavus; and far up from there into the Tyrolean highlands, with their castled dolomitic rocks and amber-coloured streams, "aërias Alpes et Norica castella in tumulis,"⁷ "purior electro campum petit amnis,"⁸ where the aurochs still roamed in the forests.⁹ Twice over in the *Georgics*, where the landscape and seascape are both normally those of Campania, he draws a most vivid picture of the north-eastern coast of Italy, from Ancona upwards, and describes with intimate precision the waves of the Adriatic racing to shore before the east wind,¹⁰ and the same scene in a more violent Etesian gale that comes down from the mountains of Friuli over the floating fields, driving the long rollers crowded before it and ruffling up the deep cornfields of the plain.¹¹

After his years of study at Rome, Virgil spent the greater part of his life at Naples or in Campania. There he wrote the *Georgics*,¹² and I remember (if I may transgress into a moment's autobiography) how a visit to Capua and the neighbourhood, many years ago, first made me really, I will not say fully, feel the *Georgics* in their actual truth. We all remember the charming story of Virgil's dispute over water-rates with the municipality of Nola, and the revenge he took by striking out the name of Nola from a poem in which mention gives immortality. But the *Aeneid* shows, what we are also told of in his Life, a wide and intimate knowledge of the whole of central Italy; of Etruria, Umbria, Latium, the Sabine and Samnite

¹ *Aen.* ix, 680.

² *Georg.* ii, 451.

³ *Aen.* x, 708.

⁴ *Georg.* iv, 278.

⁵ *ibid.* iii, 373.

⁶ *Aen.* xi, 457.

⁷ *Georg.* iii, 474.

⁸ *ibid.* iii, 522.

⁹ *ibid.* ii, 374; iii, 532.

¹⁰ *ibid.* ii, 107-108.

¹¹ *ibid.* iii, 196.

¹² *ibid.* iv. 564.

countries, as well as of Campania. I can hardly deny myself the pleasure of quoting some of these golden lists of names, where the words make pictures and music, in the exquisite catalogues of the seventh and tenth *Aeneid*.

Quinque adeo magnae positis incudibus urbes
tela novant, Atina potens Tiberque superbum,
Ardea Crustumérique et turrigeræ Antemnae.¹

Quique altum Praeneste viri, quique arva Gabinæ
Iunonis gelidumque Anienem et roscida rivis
Hernica saxa colunt, quos dives Anagnia pascit;
quos, Amasene pater.²

Una ingens Amiterna cohors priscique Quirites,
Ereti manus omnis oliviferaeque Mutuscae,
qui Nomentum urbem, qui Rosea rura Velini,
qui Tetricae horrentis rupes montemque Severum
Casperiamque colunt Forulosque et flumen Himellae,
qui Tiberim Fabarimque bibunt, quos frigida misit
Nursia, et Hortinae classes populique Latini,
quosque secans infaustum interluit Allia nomen.³

Qui Caerete domo, qui sunt Minionis in arvis,
et Pyrgi veteres intempestaeque Graviscae.⁴

We may note likewise in passing, here and elsewhere, a few of those epithets, lumps of distilled and crystallised romance, of which Virgil alone had the secret: the town *delle belle torri*, "turrigeræ Antemnae"; the "roscida rivis saxa" of the Hernican country; "frigida Nursia" high at its 8,000 feet in the thin clear air of the Apennines; "oliviferae Mutuscae," where the old name has disappeared, but the epithet survives in the modern village of Oliveto; Lake Fucinus "vitrea unda,"⁵ with its clear pale limestone water; the apple orchards under the walls of Abella in a combe of the Campanian hills⁶; ancient towns fallen into decay and forlorn, "empty Acerræ," "silent Amyclæ," "fever-stricken Graviscae."⁷ I do not know either that the vivid delicacy of the epithets, somewhat obscured by the punctuation of modern editions, has been sufficiently noticed in the

viridi gaudens Feronia luco
qua Saturæ iacet atra palus,⁸

with its expression of the delight of emerging into the bright verdure and clear gushing springs of the woodlands that rise from the sombre

¹ *Aen.* vii, 629-631.

² vii, 682-685.

³ vii, 710-717.

⁴ x, 183-184.

⁵ vii, 759.

⁶ vii, 740.

⁷ *Georg.* ii, 225; *Aen.* x, 565, 184.

⁸ *Aen.* vii, 800.

unhealthy levels of the marshes by Terracina. As striking as any of these is the noble picture¹ of the *nivalis vertex* of the central *massif* of the Apennine, "ipse pater Appenninus," the *Gran Sasso d'Italia* that towers 10,000 feet into the sky, visible from both Adrian and Tyrrhene seas, and keeping its snowy covering through midsummer into July.

Now and then Virgil speaks of places in phrases which imply his own visits: *monstrantur*, he says of the caverns and blow-holes in the vale of Amsanctus.² But his only direct piece of autobiography is the *memini vidisse*, of Tarentum and the countryside near it where the old Cilician pirate, become a reformed character, worshipped Mithras, kept bees, and grew prize hyacinths.³ This particular spot in southern Italy Virgil clearly knew well, and he refers to it more than once. There seems a personal touch too in his few references to the "Calabrian lawns,"⁴ the forests of Sila and the ridge of Aspromonte.

Beyond Italy the traces of personal knowledge in Virgil are more elusive. We are told in Donatus' Life (c. xi.) that he lived much in Sicily in his later years, but it does not appear to have impressed itself deeply on his poetry. The visit he made to Greece in the last year of his life can hardly have been his first, for the descriptions in his account of the voyages of Aeneas from Troy to Sicily are not only detailed and vivid, but are those of one who had made a good deal of the journey himself. He speaks of the Cyclades not as one who had only got them up on the map, but as one who had sailed among them, had noticed the vineyards of Naxos, the green forests on Donusa, the white quarries of Paros; who had himself landed at Delos and visited the shrine of Apollo; this whole passage⁵ is strangely unlike Virgil, one might almost venture to say unworthy of him, and has about it a strong flavour of the Easter holiday tourist who has now become a British institution: who had run under bare poles before the south-easter as it swept down from the Cretan mountains; the description of the storm⁶ is not only unusually detailed, but has the vividness of a personal experience, and one is not surprised to find it again in the poet's mind, in the sharp, clear touch of the *Maleae sequacibus undis*⁷; who had touched and picnicked among screaming, ill-smelling seafowl, at the Strophades, had seen from shipboard the Albanian coast opening point beyond point, had made the night-crossing from Buthrotum to Portus Veneris and watched the low line of the Italian coast coming into sight in the glittering morning. We may notice that when he goes farther afield his descriptions

¹ *Aen.* xii, 701-703.

² vii, 563.

³ *Georg.* iv, 125; cf. Plutarch, *Pomp.* c. 24.

⁴ *Georg.* iii, 425.

⁵ *Aen.* iii, 78, foll.

⁶ *Aen.* iii, 192-200.

⁷ *Aen.* v, 193.

become vague and unreal. Of Crete he has nothing distinct to say; the Carthaginian coast and landscape are simply those with which he is familiar in Italy; and Mount Atlas is described as though it were in the Alps or Apennines, with pine-clad peaks and rivers fed from snowfields or glaciers. No doubt in the third *Aeneid* he made much use of the *de Ora Maritima* and the *Ephemeris Navalis* of Varro, as he did also in the astronomical and meteorological portions of the first *Georgic*, but there seems more in it than that.

How great the debt of Virgil to Varro was, not only in this matter but throughout, we cannot know unless and until Varro's own lost works should be recovered, but may guess from the constant use he makes in the *Georgics* of the extant treatise *de Re Rustica*. There are whole chapters in that treatise which Virgil has, so to speak, taken up bodily and incorporated in the *Georgics*: "multa ad suum hoc opus Vergilius transtulit," the phrase of the Servian commentary, is less than the truth. Good instances may be studied in *R.R.* i, xxxix, the whole of which is full of phrases taken over in the *Georgics*: it is worth special remark how the *nonne vides* which Virgil took from Lucretius¹ occurs, as good current prose, in the "*nonne videmus*" of Varro; and in *R.R.* ii, ii, 9-11, a passage the main substance of which is worth quoting:

Haec magis ad villaticos greges animadvertenda. contra illae in saltibus quae pascuntur et a tectis absunt longe portant secum crates aut retia, quibus cohortes in solitudine faciant, ceteraque utensilia. longe enim et late in diversis locis pasci solent, ut multa milia absint saepe hibernae pastiones ab aestivis . . . eaeque ibi, ubi pascuntur in eadem regione, tamen temporibus distinguuntur, aestate quod cum prima luce exeunt pastum, propterea quod tunc herba roscida meridianam quae est aridior iucunditate praestat. sole exorto potum propellunt, ut redintegrantes rursus ad pastum alacriores faciant, circiter meridianos aestus, dum defervescent, sub umbriferas rupes et arbores patulas subigunt, quoad refrigeratur, aere vespertino rursus pascunt ad solis occasum . . . ab occasu parvo intervallo interposito ad bibendum adpellunt et rursus pascunt, quoad contenebravit: iterum enim tum iucunditas in herba redintegrabit. haec a vergiliarum exortu ad aequinoctium autumnale maxime observant.

Here the last two paragraphs are transferred bodily, but with added poetical loveliness, to *Georg.* iii, 322-338, while paragraph 9 gives the immediate suggestion for the lines (339-345) in which Virgil continues, though he applies the material to a different setting.

These and other passages Virgil has distilled and transfigured: they have become poetry under his hands; but like all poetry, they remain a record and interpretation of actual life. The modern commentator on the *Georgics* will stick by Varro and the other writers on Italian agriculture and economics, and will, by comparison, neglect the Greek literary models, Aratus or Nicander.

¹ *Georg.* i, 56.

What comes out very clearly, if we read Virgil in this spirit, is the whole economic condition and economic movement of the time. The publication of the *de Re Rustica* in 37 B.C. synchronised with the inception of the *Georgics*. An object of both works was to promote the economic reorganisation of Italy, in which agriculture was the staple industry, by turning the revived taste for country life among the educated and wealthy classes to practical use. Something of the same kind is being attempted in England now; and here as elsewhere archaeological and historical research has results of more than a merely abstract value. One striking feature in the *Georgics* is the way in which the doctrine of small holdings, the watchword of "back to the land," exists side by side with the capitalisation in large masses of agricultural wealth. The precept of "*exiguum colito*"¹ is advanced on mixed grounds, economic, political and sentimental; yet simultaneously a contradictory ideal is unconsciously dominant, that of "*latis otia fundis*," the pleasantness of those *latifundia* which were too much for the small holdings in the end.

But the matter in Virgil's mind, or at least in the mind of the statesmen who inspired him, was more than agricultural reorganisation; it was the creation of new wealth by a fuller exploitation of the agricultural resources of Italy. The nation was on the verge of bankruptcy, but had enormous undeveloped wealth. The small holdings whose decay was deplored had covered only portions of the country here and there. Great parts of Italy were still virgin soil, potentially rich, but as yet unreclaimed. Much of the plains was still primeval forest, much of the hill country consisted of *calles publici*, crown lands as we should call them, let for grazing at a low value. Varro's description of Italy as one vast orchard, "*arboribus consita ut tota pomarium videatur*,"² may apply well enough to his own home in the rich country about Reate, but for the whole peninsula is clearly rhetorical hyperbole. He tells us of the *mouflons*, the wild sheep that ranged over the Sabine country,³ almost within sight of Rome, and of continuous pasturage all the way from Apulia to Reate, uninhabited but for occasional *cobortes in solitudine*, movable encampments such as those of the Libyan shepherd in the *Georgics*.⁴ Virgil himself three times mentions, as something quite familiar, the task of the pioneer farmer in an undeveloped country, who has to fell or burn the forests before he can set agriculture on foot.

silvam devexit arator,
et nemora evertit multos ignava per annos,
at rudis enituit impulso vomere campus.⁵

¹ *Georg.* ii, 413, 468.

² *R.R.* i, ii, 6.

³ *R.R.* ii, i, 5.

⁴ *Georg.* iii, 339-345.

⁵ *Georg.* ii, 207-211.

ac velut, optato ventis aestate coortis,
dispersa immittit silvis incendia pastor,
correptis subito mediis extenditur una
horrida per latos acies Vulcania campos.¹

and once more

immissi diversis partibus ignes
arentem in silvam,²

where the reference is to the systematic burning down of forests on a large scale in the dry weather. Draining, clearing, planting were being pressed forward with the whole energy of the state: much of Latium itself was still unreclaimed swamp or thicket, just as it is represented in the later books of the *Aeneid*. As Virgil and Horace drove with Maecenas along the Via Appia towards Beneventum, they skirted the whole length of Mount Taburnus on their left hand. The exact year of the journey is uncertain, but it was just when Virgil was beginning to work on the *Georgics*. "Iuvat olea vestire Taburnum," he writes in the poem³: he had seen, then or at some other time, those miles of southward-facing slope being planted with olive orchards, and the sight had been welcome to him as well as to the Minister of the Interior.

The fourth Eclogue and its problems hardly come within the scope of the present paper, but in connexion with it I would wish to remark just one point which is relevant to the subject, because it brings out the distinction, in one sense between the archaeologist and the poet, in another sense between the organic and operative ideas of the Ciceronian age as represented by Varro and those of the new imperial or Augustan age as represented by Virgil. Varro in his treatise *de Vita Populi Romani*, written in or about the year 44-43 B.C. "pour rattacher le peuple," as Gaston Boissier says, "aux institutions du passé," had expounded the cycle of human history, in its four stages of infancy, youth, maturity, and (in our own times, he adds) decay. All his hope was in some degree to arrest this decay by returning on the past, by making the clock go backwards. Only a few years later, Virgil saw and expressed in the *Pollio* the splendid vision in which this cycle renewed itself, and a new age of hope, of growth, of achievement began. This vision was the vital creative force of the new-born empire. It soon faded; but Virgil's expression of it survived and is alive yet.

Virgil did not like Rome, and lived there, we are told, as little as he could help. The city, on its material side, does not bulk largely in his poetry. There is no work to be done on Virgil comparable, for instance, to the reconstruction of the performance and surroundings of Horace's Secular Hymn for which we are indebted to the genius and

¹ *Aen.* x, 405-409.

² *Aen.* xii, 521-522.

³ *Georg.* ii, 38.

patient skill of Mr. Warde Fowler. That scene on 3rd June, 17 B.C. was nearly two years after Virgil's own death. The episode of the visit to Evander in the eighth *Aeneid* is of course crowded with archaeology; we can realise now, in the light of modern research and excavation, the features of the scene at which the Trojan ship arrived, and of the ground over which Evander led his guest, better than we could do earlier: we can identify each spot, and we must regard with heightened admiration the power of imaginative reconstitution by which Virgil saw the prehistoric site so vividly, the Capitoline hill a wilderness of wooded rocks (348-351), the Campus Martius a broad meadow dotted with clumps of brushwood (594), and, as they skirt round the Palatine and begin to ascend it, the view opening out of the cattle grazing over the *Campo Vaccino* and up the long grassy slopes of the Carinae where in his own time the forum roared and the tide of life and commerce flowed daily through wealthy and crowded streets (360-361).

Two other passages, however, may be mentioned to which the archaeological study of Rome gives new life and added meaning. One is in the praise of country life at the end of the second *Georgic*:

nec ferrea iura
insanumque forum aut populi tabularia vidit.¹

To appreciate this line we have to realise the actual scene that Virgil had before his eyes; the long trough of the forum in which the life of the city and empire was concentrated for politics and commerce and business; the crowds that seethed about the rostra, the exchange, the temple of Concord, the banks and shops; and, stretching above and across that welter of life, the long grim line of the Tabularium with its cliff-like wall of massive masonry, watching as it were over the turmoil and crowd below. The other is the passage in the *Aeneid*² where he forecasts immortality for Nisus and Euryalus,

dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum
accolet, imperiumque pater Romanus habebit.

We do not realise the full value and relevance of the wording until we place before our inward eye the antitype which Virgil has before his; Augustus, the descendant and representative of Aeneas, *pater patriae*, invested with consular and proconsular *imperium*, and his house on the Palatine facing the Capitoline rock across the valley, with the Capitoline Jupiter literally his *accola*, the dweller side by side with him. Later, if we believe the story of Suetonius, the great-grandson of Augustus carried the neighbourliness a step further, and threw a vast bridge or gangway across the

¹ *Georg.* ii, 502.

² *Aen.* ix, 448-449.

corner of the forum that he and his brother Jove might pay visits to one another without having to go up and down stairs.

There are other passages in the *Aeneid* which have to be read in the light of Roman archaeology. These are the set pieces in which Virgil describes work in architecture, sculpture and painting. Some at least of these suggest, and were probably suggested by, the great temple of Apollo on the Palatine and the mass of richly decorated buildings which were clustered round it. How far the general description of the works in progress at Carthage in the first *Aeneid*, and particularly of the temple of Juno, "hoc illis curia templum," an imperial senate-house as well as a temple, draws from those which he saw going on in Rome is a matter of conjecture. But the frescoes in seven great panels of the war of Troy¹ may have been a series actually executed on the Palatine; and this applies also to the vivid descriptive passage earlier in the same book, of Fides and Vesta, Quirinus and Remus, enthroned as lawgivers, and the allegorical figure of civil war, "furor impius,"² with fettered hands seated on a pile of armour. So too with the portraiture on the shield of Aeneas.³ In placing it on a shield he followed the epic tradition; but while the Homeric shield of Achilles is a possible work of art, to which no doubt a large imaginative extension was given by the poet, the shield of Aeneas rather resembles a magic mirror in which there passes a long detailed series of pictures of Roman history: and these clearly suggest the fresco decoration either of some great single hall or of a series of rooms and corridors, as on the walls of the Sistine chapel or of the *stanze* in the Vatican; a pictured history of Rome in panel after panel, beginning with the twins and their wolf foster-mother, and ending with the triple triumph of Augustus. Notice particularly how the triumphal procession in the final panel is represented as defiling before this very temple of Apollo; and how the artifice by which Augustus, *le Roi Soleil*, is half identified with Apollo in person and becomes the *praesens divus*⁴ of the Apolline temple,

ipse sedens niveo candentis limine Phoebi,⁵

echoes as it were the other artifice by which the painted picture of the temple as it stood on the great day of the triumph is set up in the temple itself. Like the Carthaginian temple of the first *Aeneid*,⁶ it was then unfinished; its completion and dedication were a year later: and the scene of Augustus seated in the portico while the procession passes before him is exactly parallel to that of Dido, "foribus divae media testudine templi, solio alte subnixa," when she receives the Trojans.⁷ In the gallery adjoining the Palatine

¹ *Aen.* i, 456-493.

² i, 294.

³ viii, 626-728.

⁴ Horace, *Od.* iii, v, 2.

⁵ *Aen.* viii, 720.

⁶ *Condebat* of Dido, *Aen.* i, 447.

⁷ *Aen.* i, 505-506.

temple of Apollo, called the *porticus ad nationes*, there was¹ a series of representations, whether frescoes or sculptured reliefs is uncertain, but more likely the former, of all the nations subject to Rome. Possibly too it was in the same group of buildings that other works of art stood or hung which Virgil has described, imaginatively no doubt, but with a detail that suggests an actual and well-known original, just as years earlier he had described actual originals in the engravings on the two cups of the third Eclogue: for instance the very elaborate Rape of Ganymede in needlework in *Aen.* v, 250–257.

At the opening of the third *Georgic* there is a celebrated passage which has perplexed many readers, and on which the commentators, according to their method, do not throw much light. After the lines in which Virgil says that the old subjects of Greek mythology are outworn, and that his work shall be on a new way, by which he will bring the Muses home from their Aonian summit, he goes on with extreme elaboration² to describe a temple, a circus, and a theatre, which he proposes to erect and embellish at Mantua, and to adorn with elaborate sculpture in marble, ivory, and gold, with historical statuary and allegorical frescoes. So long as we regard this whole description as merely fanciful, as an allegory of his own aspirations in poetry and of the reflected credit which they would bestow, when realised, on his native town, the whole passage must seem artificial, disproportioned, and not free from the charge of being both tumid and frigid. But when Virgil seems to us to fail in good taste and in fundamental constructive power, we had better make sure that the fault lies not in his taste but in our understanding. It seems clear that this passage was not so elaborated and given such prominence without serious reason. To understand that reason we must look to political and administrative history.

The Peace of the Empire had not yet been established, or the safety of Italy secured so far as to allow of that great economic re-organisation and development, that restoration of credit and increase of prosperity, which was the real task of the government. The menace of war in the East still hung over the empire, but the real and pressing danger lay, as it had lain for some years, nearer at hand. The Gauls were peaceful and thriving; the tribes of western Germany were far distant; the troubles in Spain, though they afterwards became serious, were local, and could not spread beyond the Iberian peninsula. But the storm centre was on the north-eastern frontier. Italy, as history had over and over again shewn, and was to shew over and over again down almost to our own time, was open on that side to invasion and conquest. The fear to which

¹ Servius on *Aen.* viii, 721.

² *Georg.* iii, 12–39.

the Italian cultivator was subject was not the distant terror of the East, "purpura regum"; it was closer and more formidable, "coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro."¹ It was invasion on a huge scale through the Tyrol from the territories of the Austrian empire and the northern Balkans. Julius Caesar before his assassination had been preparing for a campaign, as serious as his earlier campaigns in Gaul, to arrest and crush the advance of the Dacians. In the confused years which followed there was imminent danger that their confederacy, united under Cotiso, would break into Italy while it was almost denuded of troops. In 35 B.C. Octavianus was obliged to make a personal campaign, in which there was hard fighting, against the restless Iapydian and Pannonian tribes on the immediate border. But nothing decisive was effected then, and meanwhile a great civil war in the east was becoming more and more threatening. For the time, recourse had to be had to a policy of withdrawal and concentration. Northern Italy lay in grave peril: and the strategic key to northern Italy was Mantua.

There are two, and only two, main gateways by which Italy can be invaded from the north-east. One is by Laibach (Emona) and along the coast. The other is over the Brenner and down the valley of the Adige. The two great military roads leading through these gateways met within a few miles of Mantua, probably at Hostilia on the Po. The coast-road had been commanded, for more than a century, by the fortified military colony of Aquileia. The Brenner route might be commanded by a similar position at Verona, but the advantage of Mantua was that it covered both. Below the junction of the Mincio and Po, the whole country was a maze of rivers, swamps and canals, impassable by any large armies, and the subsidiary coast-road from Ravenna to Altinum was commanded in all its length by the Roman fleet. A great fortress and garrison at Mantua would completely block all invasion between the foot of Lake Garda and the Po delta. We may reasonably believe that the military advisers of the Roman government were pressing to have Mantua taken in hand. Its territory had already been settled with the disbanded veterans of the civil war: now it might be made into a great place of arms, the military and administrative capital of northern Italy.

Its military importance was no new discovery: for it had been, as Virgil tells us, the great northern fortress of the ancient Etruscan confederacy. Then indeed it had been not merely a fortress but a naval base. In the passage of the *Aeneid* which I have already quoted, emphasis is laid on both these aspects, and Virgil speaks not only of its wealth, troops, and fortifications, but also of its fleet.²

¹ *Georg.* ii, 497.

² *Aen.* x, 206.

Such a project in contemplation gives the whole passage in the *Georgics* proper setting and relevance. But things went otherwise. The campaign of Actium was swift and decisive; the Far Eastern question became quiescent: and after that, the Roman government, when the troublesome insurrection in Spain had been quelled, found themselves able to check the north-eastern peril by a renewed forward policy. This was carried out systematically with large forces. The series of campaigns conducted by Tiberius and Drusus in 15-9 B.C. subjugated the Tyrol, pacified Illyricum, and drove a wedge between the formidable tribes of central Germany and the Balkan kingdoms. Mantua sank back into an insignificant provincial town. The fleet was at Ravenna, the Pannonian legions quartered far forward on the Drave. For the architectural and artistic adornment which Virgil had anticipated, Mantua had to wait until the fifteenth century and the rule of the Gonzagas: and when later still it became the effective military key of Italy, it became so in Austrian hands. Once more now the wheel has circled: Mantua is a decayed town, its fortifications have been levelled and its palaces are half ruinous.

In the sixth *Aeneid* all the elements of Virgil's genius coalesce at their highest power; and in their fusion they create, so to say, a new element. Or to put it otherwise: while the world of Virgil's poetry is, as I said, a world not merely drawn on the flat but modelled in the solid, is a three-dimensional world; and while as we search its depths and discriminate its planes in the light of increased knowledge and new methods, it becomes to us, on all the sides on which it is connected with the field of Roman studies, more and more solid, living, and fertile, in this sixth book we find ourselves, we hardly know how, transferred into a transcendental world, one of more than three dimensions. This is what gives it its mystical, here and there we might almost say its bewildering quality, and this is, in particular, what makes it difficult to relate it with archaeology, whether as it throws light on archaeology or as archaeology throws light on it. We are moving here in a world which is imaginative in a further sense than that in which all poetry is imaginative. The agricultural subject-matter of the *Georgics*, the historical, geographical and ethnological subject-matter of the main fabric of the *Aeneid*, are no doubt fused and in large measure transmuted by the poetic imagination: we cannot argue either from them or to them as though the poems were prose documents. But on matters of fact or of history the imagination is there working within certain definite limits which we can trace and mark off. Here it is working (to continue the mathematical analogy) within limits which, so far as the actual world is concerned, are equivalent to absence of limit. By ordinary criteria we do not know, at any moment, where

we are. It is, as will be remembered, one of the qualities of four-dimensional space that in it an object may, so far as the criteria of three-dimensional space are concerned, be in two places at the same time. This is just what we feel in the sixth *Aeneid*. Up to a certain point—up to line 263, to be precise—we can follow Aeneas' movements on the map, can place Virgil's scene, from point to point, in its geographical and archaeological bearings. Then there is a faint click; and with the "ibant obscuri" we are suddenly in a scene of which we cannot say whether it is real or not, nor what relation it bears to known or ascertainable facts.

Yet in this impalpable undeterminable scene "among the empty mansions and void realms of Dis" (l. 269), Virgil has plunged deeper than he does elsewhere into the recesses of what was for him, hardly less than for us, an ancient world, half forgotten and only recoverable in tantalising fragments, "res alta terra et caligine mersas" (l. 267): and we may say with some confidence that recent archaeological research has enabled us to understand what was in his knowledge and in his imagination better than any one could have done twenty years ago. For the scene in which he sets the drama or mystery of this book is, to a startling degree, that of what we have now learned to call a Minoan palace, far back in history. There is not space here to do more than offer the most summary sketch of what might be expanded into detail at every point: in the notes which follow I necessarily omit much both of fact and of inference.

Aeneas has landed at Cumae. The "Euboean coast," the "Chalcidic fortress" (ll. 2, 17) were, according to the current and superficial tradition, of Greek settlement and foundation: and this, in the artificial chronology of the ancient historians, was fifty years later than the war of Troy. Virgil at the very beginning of the book lays strong emphasis on an earlier settlement, coming from the "Minoan realm" (l. 14) of Crete. The temple of the sun-god on the citadel (l. 10), and the vast underground halls somewhere below, belong to that earlier world. On the great entrance-doors are six panels in metal relief (ll. 20-32) with subjects from Minoan history: the slaying of Androgeos, the drawing of the lots, Pasiphae and the bull, the Minotaur in the labyrinth, Theseus and the clue, and the flight and fall of Icarus; the last of these panels being either missing or incomplete. This gateway appears to be the main entrance to a vast mass of chambers and corridors, partly at least underground, "lati aditus centum, ostia centum."¹ In some central chamber is what may be called the Record Office, where the utterances of the Sibyl are "committed to leaves."²

¹ *Aen.* vi, 43.

² *Aen.* vi, 74: cf. *Aen.* iii, 443-452 for a fuller description.

It is to be noted here that the traces of pen-and-ink writing on cups of Middle Minoan III show that such libraries may very well have existed, and in fact palm leaves are conjectured by Principal Burrows to have been the substance on which they were written. Those leaves of (shall we dare to say ?) Minoan script had for many centuries a mysterious and magical significance.

The passport for exploration of the "covered-up places of earth," *telluris operta*,¹ is the golden bough, which Aeneas finds in a wood somewhere between Cumae and Misenum: it was made of *brattea*, gold leaf or rather thin gold plating, like those wreaths and masks with which we are familiar in Mycenaean tombs. Somewhere in those same woods, hidden among beds of gravel, black pools of water, and thick shade of trees (l. 238), and further made difficult of access by mephitic vapours, was another entrance to mysterious underground dwellings. Here Aeneas and Deiphobe enter just before sunrise; the ground sounds hollow under their feet (l. 256), there are sounds as of dogs howling, and the treetops are shaken by blasts of subterranean wind. Then "ibant obscuri;" and we, like them, begin to move in obscurity, and find ourselves in a mysterious world.

The palaces of Dis through which Aeneas is now led, are, in their general aspect and in an astonishing number of particulars, Minoan like the palace of Knossos. Virgil recreated or imagined such a palace near Cumae, in great part ruinous, choked with rubbish or completely hidden underground: here and there waterlogged, as in that volcanic region is often the case, so that its explorer has to be ferried over a stagnant pool, the "Stygia palus" (l. 322), the "alta stagna Cocyti," thick with volcanic sand and bubbling with gases (ll. 296, 297); or moves precariously along the side of a boiling stream, Phlegethon, that issues from subterranean depths. By doorways and in corridors are sculptured figures of monsters: a couchant hound, Cerberus; a female figure grasping serpents, Tisiphone; creatures hundred-armed, three-headed, serpent-haired, beaked, and clawed. The great entrance-hall is half filled by a huge elm that has grown up through the shattered pavement. The vestibule walls are covered with frescoes of allegorical figures: Grief, Sickness, Eld, Care lying on a couch, Fear, Hunger, Poverty, Violent Death, Toil, Evil Joy. Facing the entrance is a great group of War, Discord with serpent locks bound in bloody ribbons, and the Furies in iron cells. Farther on is a pool which has to be crossed in a leaky ferry-boat stained rust-red by the volcanic water (l. 303). Beyond it are more frescoed halls: one painted with the *lugentes campi*, female figures with a background of forest; another with groups of warriors.

¹ l. 140.

Passing through these, one comes to a great wall-space on the left built up against the cliff and painted with an elaborate representation of the city of Dis, triple-walled, and moated with a flaming torrent. The gateway of the city is flanked by massive columns and surmounted by a gateway tower plated with iron; in front of it is a seated figure of Tisiphone, wide-eyed and wrapped in a crimson cloak. Sounds are heard, as though they came from inside the walls, of blows, groans, the clash of iron and the rattle of chains. Before the scene, as it bursts upon him, Aeneas comes to a stand: "*respicit subito*" (l. 548); and as he stands amazed and terrified, the Sibyl expounds to him all the actual hell which lies across that threshold which he sees represented. Through it, in the body or out of the body, she herself had been led by Hecate when she was made priestess of the place:

me cum lucis Hecate praefecit Avernis,
ipsa deum poenas docuit perque omnia duxit.¹

In that infernal world "Gnosian" Rhadamanthus reigns and judges; just as, in one of the portrayed scenes past which Aeneas had already gone, Minos the Cretan was shown holding his court of justice and passing sentences (ll. 432-433).

After the Sibyl has finished her account, they go forward again, through an arched gateway on the right, and along dark corridors (ll. 631, 633) to an entrance where Aeneas deposits his golden bough on the threshold. By this touch Virgil, with his wonted subtlety, indicates that what follows is, in some fuller sense than what has preceded, a vision or initiation rather than an actual journey. No doubt what Aeneas sees there, particularly the line of Latin heroes shown and described by Anchises (ll. 760, ff.), from Silvius to Marcellus, is not wholly without reference to actual galleries of national history. It suggests portrait-statues, not painted panels. Some such gallery is probably in Virgil's mind where² he describes the ancient palace of Laurentum, a building planned like the throne-room in the royal villa at Knossos, but also like a Roman basilica. In that palace also "*veterum effigies ex ordine avorum astabant*," carved in cedarwood, and each figure bearing his own cognisance, Sabinus the pruning-hook and Picus the *ancile*, just as here, in the vision of Aeneas, Silvius leans on his spear, Numa carries the *sacra*, and Torquatus points towards the axe. But the Fortunate Fields into which Aeneas has entered, though their scenery and equipment may be suggested by actual places and monuments, cannot on their large lines be imagined as corporeally existent, or even as having an analogue in the scenes through which he had hitherto been passing in the body. They have an "ampler ether," "a sun and stars of their own" (ll. 640-641). The landscape, the figures and actions which display them-

¹ *Aen.* vi, 564, 565.

² *Aen.* vii, 177-191.

selves to him, are visionary. He and his guide move through them as in a dream,

tota passim regione vagantur
aeris in campis latis,¹

unconfined by space, unhampered by the body. From that vision he has to return into life through the gates of sleep: not by that gate through which the *verae umbrae*, the souls undergoing re-incarnation, pass from the other world into this, but by the gate of ivory. Through that gate unreal and disturbed dreams (*falsa insomnia*) issue, and through it he now resumes life from the visionary existence into which he has, so to speak, been rapt and disembodied.

The Minoan colour generally, and the specific Minoan analogies, of the scenes through which Aeneas passes between his entrance into the cave's mouth and his deposition of the golden bough, are obvious and need hardly be laboured in detail: it will be sufficient to add here a few illustrative sentences from the description of the palace at Knossos given by Sir Arthur Evans and Mr. Burrows. It was, they tell us, "a vast complex of chambers, courts, and corridors, hard to find one's way through, even on the spot." "The winding staircases and the stories piled one above the other . . . must have made it bewildering in the age that followed the sack, when the upper structures were still partially standing, but enough of them had fallen to block up doors and passages. The very existence of basements and upper stories would be new and confusing to the northerner." "Whole areas were covered with stone carvings or frescoed plaster." "On the corridor walls were frescoes that helped out the story and suggested its details." "Everything around, the dark passages, the lifelike figures surviving from an older world, would conspire to produce a sense of the supernatural. It was haunted ground, and then, as now, phantasms were about." One is reminded of the experiences of Manolis when he was left as night-watchman in the Hall of the Cupbearer: how the cupbearer came alive, and the animals round began to low and neigh:

ecce autem primi sub lumina solis et ortus
sub pedibus mugire solum, et iuga coepta moveri
silvarum, visaeque canes ululare per umbram.²

"The later stories of the grisly king," says Sir Arthur Evans, "sprang as it were from the soil, and the whole site called forth a superstitious awe." The "grisly king" here is the legendary Minos; but the phrase, as will be remembered, is Milton's, used of Satan; and in Virgil too, the palace has become the palace of the infernal monarch, the realm not of Minos but of Dis. "At Knossos," Sir Arthur Evans continues, "the tradition of the ancient sanctuary

¹ *Aen.* vi, 887-888.

² *Aen.* vi, 255-257.

survived, and prevented the actual palace site being inhabited.”
 “It was left severely alone by the newcomers.”

What information had Virgil before him, from records or traditions or actual relics that he may have seen, for building up this picture of what looks so like a Minoan palace in the neighbourhood of Cumae? Of some Minoan settlement there, as in other parts of southern Italy, there was certainly some quasi-historical tradition such as is mentioned by Herodotus,¹ ἀπὸ Κρητῶν γενέσθαι Ἰήπυγας Μεσσηπίους. The author of an interesting article on Symbolism in the sixth *Aeneid* in the *Classical Review* for March, 1910, makes bold to say that “Virgil originated the story that Daedalus founded the temple of Apollo at Cumae,” but we must take that hardy statement in the light of another in the same article with which we shall hardly be inclined to agree: “the author of the sixth *Aeneid* is no archaeologist.” But that tradition so far as it has reached us is vague and does not touch on the *Realien* of the imported civilisation. Had Varro’s books of *Antiquitates* survived we should doubtless have material for answering the question. As it is, there are certain points suggested, and certain inferences which may be drawn from them, in the chapter on labyrinths in Pliny.² “Dicamus et labyrinthos,” he begins in very striking words, “vel portentosissimum humani impendi opus, sed non, ut existimari potest, falsum:” the sentence might serve as a motto for an account of the discoveries in Crete. Pliny considers the so-called labyrinths, vast complexes of prehistoric building, of the Graeco-Italian countries, as all originating from or suggested by the Labyrinth *en titre*, that in the nome of Heracleopolis on the edge of the Fayûm in Egypt. What he says about that labyrinth may be taken as a sort of loose but vivid definition of what the word as applied to other buildings means. “In it,” he says (I quote from Philemon Holland’s picturesque translation), “are contained certain vast and stately palaces, temples of all the gods, and a world of images and statues, besides an infinite sort of other pieces portrayed in monstrous shapes . . . rooms formed in such manner that no sooner are the doors and gates opened which lead into them but a man shall hear fearful cracks of terrible thunder . . . the passages from place to place for the most part so conveyed that they be as dark as pitch, in manner of caves vaulted overhead and as dark as dungeons” (“maiore in parte transitus est per tenebras,” like Virgil’s *ibant obscuri per umbram*), and again, “lofts and galleries so high that he must climb stairs of ninety steps apiece ere he can land at them.”

The details of the Egyptian labyrinth were matter of common knowledge in Virgil’s time, and no doubt they had some share in

¹ vii, 170.

² *N.H.* xxxvi, 19.

shaping his construction. He had never, so far as we are aware, been in Egypt himself, but Gallus was his most intimate friend, and it may be assumed that during the four or five years of Gallus' prefecture many communications passed between them. Some measure of Egyptian influence may be doubtfully traced in the sights recounted by the Sibyl: they give something of the effect of a recollection of pictures seen by her as she unrolled the pages of a Book of the Dead. On the whole, however, there is little in the *mise en scène* of the sixth *Aeneid* which suggests any distinct Egyptian motive.

Pliny goes on to mention three other labyrinths: that of Crete, of which "nulla vestigia exstant": then and long before, as since then until the other day, it had wholly disappeared from sight; one in Lemnos, of which there were a few fragments extant that he does not particularise, but as to which there seems no reason to doubt that it was a Minoan work; and one in Etruria. This last had also wholly disappeared, but accounts remained of it both in records and in a local tradition which survived in Pliny's own time. It was also known under the name of the tomb of Lars Porsena: it would seem to have served among other purposes as the burial-place of the Etruscan kings, and to have been the Westminster Abbey, as one might say, of Etruria. I use this analogy deliberately, because the description of it which Pliny quotes from Varro reads amazingly like some distorted version of a description of some great cathedral of the full Gothic of our own thirteenth century, made at a time when no architecture of that kind survived, and when the description had thus become unintelligible. One can dimly make out from it a mass of building with flying buttresses and copper-sheathed domes, and with a central spire or group of spires rising from among clustered pinnacles to an incredible height. Varro wrote, Pliny tells us, that he was ashamed to mention the reputed height: according to the figures quoted by Pliny from "Etruscan fables" it was 600 feet, exceeding, that is, the height of old St. Paul's in London and even of the short-lived spire of Beauvais, which while it stood was the wonder of the world. The audacities of prehistoric and of mediaeval engineering were very fragile. Beauvais collapsed twice over. So too—to take a modern instance—did the great tower 300 feet high built at the beginning of the last century by Beckford at Fonthill. The later of the two spires at Beauvais, which soared 300 feet above the gigantic roof, is described in the account of its collapse in 1573 as a *tour pyramidale*, exactly the phrase that Pliny uses of the building at Clusium. That even the ruins of this gigantic building should have rapidly disappeared is not difficult to understand when we think how little is left of the vast conventual buildings of Cluny, and how the abbey church at Westminster was only saved from total destruction by the sudden

turn in the wheel of politics which sent the Protector Somerset to the scaffold.

Of the Minoan Cumae, whose existence Virgil asserts, no relics have hitherto been found. The earlier settlement was merged in or replaced by the later Hellenic city : the site and buildings of any ancient Minoan palace may even then have been avoided in superstitious awe and left to the slow decay of nature, or to the accidents of her more catastrophic action in that region of subterranean fires and insecure surface. After a long period in which it was populous and powerful, able to repel in the sixth century B.C. an organised attack by the whole force of the Etruscan and Umbrian confederacy, the Greek Cumae slowly decayed. In 420 B.C. it succumbed to the Samnite league, was stormed and sacked, and never again recovered. The New Town across the peninsula replaced it as a seaport and centre of commerce : long before Virgil's day it had sunk into decay and became the *vacuae Cumae* of Juvenal.¹ The fashionable watering-places of the earlier empire were only a few miles away ; but fashion sticks close by its own resorts, and with regard to prehistoric remains the Roman business-man or pleasure-seeker, like the modern Chinese, "was not curious." We hardly hear of Cumae again until in the sixth century it resumed some passing importance as a Gothic fortress. The cave of the Sibyl, or what passed for such, was blown up by the Byzantine engineers of Narses in the campaign of A.D. 553 : and that was the end. Since then, the whole features of the district have changed ; new hills have been thrown up, new lakes hollowed out, by volcanic action ; the shore along the gulf of Puteoli has sunk under the sea-level and risen again ; of the great engineering works of Agrippa near Misenum hardly a trace survives. Possibly there may still exist, under the modern surface, recoverable by some daring and lucky excavator of the future, remnants of the palace through which Aeneas was led by the Sibyl.

¹ iii, 2.