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The Beasts, Birds, and Bees of Vergil *The Beasts, Birds, and Bees of Vergil*. A naturalist's handbook to the Georgics. By T. F. Royds. Blackwell. 3s. 6d. net.

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THE BEASTS, BIRDS, AND BEES OF VERGIL.

The Beasts, Birds, and Bees of Vergil. A naturalist's handbook to the *Georgics*. By T. F. ROYDS. Blackwell. 3s. 6d. net.

IN the short preface that he has written for this book, Mr. Warde Fowler has justly extended to it a hearty welcome. 'It is, I think, the best commentary we have for the naturalist, the farmer, or the sportsman.' The author does not claim to have written a complete commentary on Vergil's natural history, and it is much to be hoped that a writer so unusually equipped for the task will extend his labours in the same field. For my part I place this slender little book along with Henry's *Aeneidea* and Glover's *Aeneid*, and *Messianic Eclogue*, that is, beside the best modern English work on Vergil.

The only regret one feels after reading this book is that it is not much longer; and in the hope that Mr. Royds will some day produce a larger work, I add a few remarks on passages in which I venture to think that he may profitably reconsider his opinion, or amplify what he has written.

G. III. 140 surely means that *cows in calf*, not *mares in foal*, may be put to light farm work. Vergil's references to horses and cattle in 123 f. are perplexing. Mr. Royds rightly says that Vergil's horses are chargers and racers; and for this reason, as well as on account of the immediate context, it is improbable that *Belgica esseda* in 204 applies to the fashionable carriage affected by Mark Antony, though Servius' note suggests that interpretation.

At l. 255 Mr. Royds explodes the notion that '*Sabellicus sus*' is the tame pig. The error is due to Servius from whose note Martyn got his '*even the Sabellian boar*'—cf. '*et mansueta animalia*' in Servius.

I do not understand how '*Spartan*' can be 'a stock epithet for a good dog' at G. III. 405, when joined with '*Molossian*.' It means here, as Forbiger's note shows, the Spartan breed.

The reference at III. 532 for *uri* meaning buffaloes is to II. (not III.)

374, where Servius has the correct explanation, adding '*in Piceno monte nascuntur*.'

It is not the case that 'all commentators [on G. I. 186] ignore *Proverbs* vi. 6'; nor is Milton's '*parsimonious emmet, provident | of future, in small room large heart enclosed*,' from '*inopi metuens formica senectae*,' but from Horace *Sat.* I. 1, 33-35, which Mr. Royds, oddly enough, actually quotes presently. On I. 380 we miss a reference to the passage quoted by Servius from Varro of Atax, who thus becomes responsible for the error that ants in damp weather bring out their larvae ('ova') instead of grain. It is probably to the storing of grain by ants for the winter that Ovid alludes in *Fasti*, II. 685 *vos quoque, formicae, subiectis parcite granis, | post messem praedae copia maior erit*.

Mr. Royds is probably right in his view that at G. I. 307 *tum gruibus pediccas*, etc., the crane is referred to rather as game than as vermin. In Vergil's day, indeed, the stork was preferred to the crane as a table bird, but Varro already, Ovid (*Fasti*, VI. 176), and of course Horace, refer to cranes as table birds. The flesh seems to resemble that of the pheasant (*Stat. Silvae* IV. 6, 9).

It was very like Coleridge to say that a *spirit of religious mysticism* first named the notes of the nightingale a melancholy strain. But in reality it was simply the repeated *ἵρυς* detected in the note that labelled the harbinger of spring the bird of sorrow and ultimately made *ἀνδών* a synonym for Elegy (cf. Catullus, 65, 13). Our English poets merely borrowed from the Greeks.

Commenting on G. IV. 40 '*fucosque et floribus oras | explent*,' Mr. Royds says that *fucus* obviously means *propolis*. This explanation is already given in the note added to Servius. But what then are we to understand by *gluten* in the same context? At l. 160 Mr. Royds explains *gluten* as *propolis*, which is clearly right, and is what Servius says. Pliny XI. 7, 6 combines the two pass-

ages, and repeats the error about flowers; his 'propolis' appears to stand for *fucus* and *gluten* alike, and he writes *favorum stabilimentum* for Vergil's *fundamina favorum*. In order to discover the clue to all this, as well as the origin of Vergil's *narcissi lacrimam* in l. 160, we have but to turn to Aristotle *H. A.* IX. 40, οἰκοδομοῦσι τὰ κηρία φέρουσαι τῶν τ' ἄλλων ἀνθέων καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν δένδρων τὰ δάκρυα. Mackail's rendering 'pollen of flowers' for *fuscoque et floribus* does not seem defensible either on scientific or literary grounds.

Mr. Royds remarks that, whereas the ancients universally regarded the queen-bee as male, Xenophon 'in one passage speaks of ἡ ἐν τῷ σμήνῃ ἡγεμὼν μέλιττα.' As a matter of fact, Xenophon makes the leader feminine in more than one passage; but unfortunately he is merely following the grammatical gender of μέλιττα, and in *Cyropaedia* and *Hellinica* he writes ὁ ἡγεμὼν of the queen-bee; so he is no better than the rest.

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TRANSLATIONS OF TACITUS' HISTORIES.

The Histories of Tacitus: An English translation by G. G. RAMSAY. Murray.

Tacitus: the Histories. Translated with Introduction and Notes by W. H. FYFE. Clarendon Press.

TRANSLATORS of Tacitus have sometimes failed to please, because, assuming that his style is abnormal and eccentric in relation to the age in which he wrote, they have endeavoured to reproduce one form of eccentricity by another. If he plays tricks with language (they say), why, then, let us do so too, and we shall be like him. But while Tacitus' style is no doubt a thing apart and a new creation, it is not so in virtue of its general and pervading quality of brevity and pithiness: these are of his age, as he himself says in the *Dialogus*. What distinguishes him is the appropriateness of his epigrams to the subject in hand, and the restraint with which they are employed. He does what his age is doing, only he does it better. You do not find him, like Lucan and Statius, deliberately presenting or manufacturing different facets of a subject so as to be able to make epigrams about it. Apart from this, Tacitus is of his literary generation—at least, as far as can be judged, in the *Histories*: and essays in the bizarre and unusual are therefore out of place for his translators. And as he is above all severe and dignified, and ultra-meticulous in avoiding anything

that might seem to impair the high gravity of his style—witness his reluctance to employ even some harmless technical terms—no translator, clearly, should endeavour to produce a Tacitean effect by journalese or slang. Rather, on this line of reasoning, an English translation which attempts to be to us in some sort what Tacitus was to his contemporaries should employ as good modern literary English as it can. It should choose at will from all our best modern stylists. This rule is so simple that it will doubtless commend itself to everybody.

The English scholarship of our day is fortunate in having produced two excellent translations of the *Histories*—Mr. Fyfe's, published some time ago, and now Professor Ramsay's. Both, as we should expect, are faithful and scholarly: both have a fair measure of success in rendering the epigrams which cost Englishmen much often unprofitable labour, and which French reproduces apparently without an effort; but they differ in their canons of style. Readers must judge for themselves which is the best. Those who prefer plain unadorned Attic (of whom, on the whole, is the present reviewer) will put Professor Ramsay first. Those who look for vigorous rhetoric, and do not object to an occasional phrase that smacks a little of the *Daily Mail*, will rather vote for Mr. Fyfe. Each manner has its dangers, and each has its rewards. It is risky (and, as many