

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](#)



Early Classical MSS. in the British Museum

E. Maunde Thompson

The Classical Review / Volume 1 / Issue 2-3 / April 1887, pp 38 - 40

DOI: 10.1017/S0009840X00182563, Published online: 27 October 2009

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0009840X00182563

How to cite this article:

E. Maunde Thompson (1887). Early Classical MSS. in the British Museum. The Classical Review, 1, pp 38-40 doi:10.1017/S0009840X00182563

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

is ascribed to this poet partly on the evidence of an interpolation in the Catalogue (*Il.* ii. 594-600), describing the blindness of Thamyris, the Thracian minstrel, whom the Homerids would claim as a predecessor, if not as an ancestor. The author of the hymn makes particular mention of his blindness at the same time that he sings his own praise:— 'Fare ye well, ladies all, and bethink ye of me hereafter, when any of earthly kind coming hither, a stranger worn with travel, enquireth of you: "Damsels, what man among the minstrels who resort hither is most welcome unto you, and in whom do ye chiefly delight?" Then give ye a kindly answer, one and all: "'Tis a blind man, and he dwelleth in rugged Chios. His song will

be prized even in aftertime." And I will spread your renown upon the earth, as far as I roam among the fair-lying cities of men.' The whole tenour of this speech, as well as the mention of the poet's migration, is certainly appropriate to the rhapsodist, who had made his name famous by his additions to 'Homer.' The object for which, according to Fick, these additions were made, was the competitive recitation by rhapsodists at the Delian festival, introduced, perhaps, about the time when the Ionian revolt was preparing and the Ionians were drawn together by an impulse of patriotism. (Cf. Professor Sayce in the *Academy*, Nov. 15, 1884).

G. C. WARR.

(To be continued.)

EARLY CLASSICAL MSS. IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

THE starting of a Classical Review in England affords an opportunity for attempting a piece of work, which, if rightly carried out, will be of no small advantage to scholars who may be engaged upon the texts of Greek and Latin authors, and, it may be hoped, also of interest to students in general. This work is the compilation of a brief catalogue of all existing MSS. of Greek and Latin classical literature in the libraries of the United Kingdom. Such a scheme can only be successfully accomplished by cooperation; but it may be anticipated that there will be no lack of assistance in the universities and large central libraries where the greater number of MSS. are accumulated. It may be objected that the catalogues of the several libraries should suffice; but, as every librarian knows, older catalogues are far from accurate, particularly in the matter of assigning dates, and in most large libraries the catalogues are inconveniently numerous, requiring in some instances rather severe study for the digestion of their contents. Moreover, in some libraries the catalogues are still unprinted. To lead the way, then, in this proposal, I hope to contribute from time to time to the pages of the *Classical Review* concise descriptions of the MSS. of early Greek and Latin writers in the British Museum. As an introduction to the work, the present article may be devoted to a notice of the classical papyri, which, from their great antiquity, occupy a preeminent position of their own.

Of the very few surviving classical Greek works written on papyrus, the most important have, one by one, found their way into the British Museum. This is matter for consolation; for the national collections are by no means strong in ancient copies of the Greek and Latin classics. In these days one cannot hope to make up much lost ground in this respect. The most precious vellum texts are already safely housed in public libraries. But papyri may still be unearthed from the tombs of Egypt. The great collection of documents now at Vienna and Berlin, among which many rare fragments have already been brought to light, and which are being subjected to the close labour of competent scholars, will probably yield important results. And when we bear in mind that the papyri, which it is proposed to form the subject of the present paper, have all been purchased within the last thirty years, we need not altogether despair of the future.

The Greek classical papyri of the British Museum are five in number. Two contain portions of two of the books of the *Iliad*: three, the orations of Hyperides. They have all been described at some length in the *Catalogue of Ancient Manuscripts in the British Museum* (part 1, Greek, London, 1881); I will briefly sketch their history and palaeographical value.

1. The Harris Homer (Papyrus cvii.). This papyrus is in two fragments which were obtained by Mr. A. C. Harris of Alexandria on two different occasions, in 1849

and 1850, from a tomb, known as the Crocodile Pit, at Ma'abdey near Monfalat, the second fragment being the first that was found. Both fragments were purchased for the Museum in 1872. They contain portions of book xviii. of the *Iliad*, viz. (1) lines 1—171 and, in a broken column, the first words of ll. 172—218, and (2) ll. 311—617. The papyrus is much discoloured, so much so indeed that the text requires a good light for the rather painful process of reading. For this reason it has been printed in full in the Catalogue. The writing is in slender uncials, generally upright, sometimes almost sloping back to the left. The regularity of the hand and its natural freedom, without trace of the artificiality which can generally be detected in imitative writing, has led me to venture to assign this papyrus to the first century B.C. But our palaeographical knowledge of these remote times is still but scanty. The documents are rare, and until more are brought to light, and until sufficient facsimiles are printed and collected together, we cannot hope to attain to that exact education of the eye which familiarity with the objects alone can give. I may notice in this place that a remarkably bad facsimile of a few lines from this Homer which was printed in Gerhard's *Archäolog. Zeitung*, 1849, gave birth to the myth that the rough breathing appears in the line of writing in the shape of an open *α*, which has been quoted as a noteworthy fact in the handbooks on Greek Palaeography.

2. The Bankes Homer (Papyrus cxiv.). This papyrus is in one piece, measuring upwards of seven feet, and containing sixteen columns of writing. It was bought by Mr. W. J. Bankes at Elephantine, in 1821, and passed into possession of the British Museum in 1879. The text is book xxiv. of the *Iliad*, wanting the first 126 lines; well known by the collation published by George Cornwall Lewis in the *Cambridge Philological Museum*, in 1832. This is one of the few surviving MSS. which contain stichometrical notes, every hundred lines being numbered in the margin. From its first discovery the Bankes Homer has taken high rank as a most ancient MS., and has been quoted with veneration in palaeographical and other works. In the Museum Catalogue, however, it is assigned to the second century of our era. This later date will probably prove in the end to be much nearer the mark than the more remote century before Christ in which it has been placed. The writing is in round uncials and much more nearly resembles the book-hand

of the early Biblical Codices of the fourth and fifth centuries than the writing of the Ptolemaic period.

The papyri containing the orations of Hyperides are, as already stated, three in number, that is, they form three numbers in the Museum Catalogue. Two of them, however, originally formed part of the same roll and must be taken together. The evil practice of the Arabs, who break up papyrus which they discover in order to make, as they think, better bargains by disposing of them piecemeal, is answerable for their mutilated condition. All the extant works of the Athenian orator are included in the Museum fragments.

3 and 4. The oration of Hyperides for Lycophron (Papyrus cxv.) and the oration against Demosthenes respecting the Treasure of Harpalus (Papyrus cviii.). The first is a very fine specimen, more than eleven feet in length, and contains forty-nine columns of writing. Mr. Joseph Arden purchased it, in 1847, at Gournou, in the district of Western Thebes. It was bought for the Museum in 1879; by a strange coincidence on the same day on which the Bankes Homer was also acquired. The second is in thirty-three fragments, which came into possession of Mr. Harris in 1847, and passed to the Museum in 1872. The texts of both orations are known by the facsimile editions of Prof. Churchill Babington and Mr. Harris. As to the date of the writing of this fine MS. there are various opinions. It is in very beautifully-formed uncials of, apparently, an unusual type. It has been assigned to as early a period as the second century B.C. The Museum Catalogue makes it a century younger. Dr. Blass goes further: he would place it as low as the period of Hadrian and the Antonines. We must be content for the present to leave the question open and await more light.

5. The Funeral Oration of Hyperides in honour of Leosthenes, the Athenian general, and his comrades who fell in the Lamian war, B.C. 323 (Papyrus xcvi.). This papyrus, in fragments, was purchased in 1857 from Rev. H. Stobart, who procured it in the previous year from the neighbourhood of Thebes. It is well known by the edition of Prof. Churchill Babington. Palaeographically, it has a special interest. On the reverse side is written, among other matter, a horoscope, cast for a person born at the end of the first, or in the middle of the second, century. It was naturally inferred that this was an addition written after the oration had been inscribed on the other side. The

case is, however, exactly the reverse. Dr. Blass, from a close scrutiny of the joints in the papyrus and for other reasons, has conclusively shown that the horoscope is in fact on the *face* of the roll, and the oration on the *back*; and his suggestion that the latter is merely a student's exercise is supported by the existence of many clerical faults and by the character of the writing, which is in the roughly-formed uncial letters of apparently an unpractised hand. These facts bring down the date of the MS. to the second century of the Christian era.

Before concluding, it may be of interest to draw attention to a MS. in the Museum which bears internal and pretty conclusive evidence of having been copied from a prototype written on papyrus. This evidence consists in the gaps left blank in the text by the very conscientious or very ignorant scribe. The MS. in question is the Harley MS. 5792 (*Cat. Anc. MSS.* p. 10), containing a Greek and Latin glossary copied in the seventh century. The words in the two languages being written in parallel columns, it is evident that the scribe has followed exactly the arrangement of the prototype, which must have been, in places, in a very imperfect condition. From the exact way in which the scribe has copied only what he saw, arranging his letters on the plan of the text before him, we can trace the actual shapes of the lacunae; and these shapes lead us to the conclusion that the lacunae were caused by actual rents or holes rather than by abrasions, and that the material was papyrus and not vellum. The strongest piece of evidence occurs in that part of the

glossary which contains words beginning with $\pi\epsilon\phi$. Here there occurs a lacuna in which several successive words in the Greek have entirely disappeared with the exception of those three initial letters, or at most four letters, while the beginnings of the Latin equivalents are also mutilated. In this instance there has evidently been a large hole in the prototype, having on one side an almost even edge cutting the Greek words vertically. Papyrus, as we know, is a material which splits up just in the way indicated by the even edge of the lacuna; whereas a hole in vellum or a defacement upon it would scarcely follow such a straight line. Although not bearing directly upon the present argument, it is interesting to know that such glossaries were actually written on papyrus, although the example on record is not earlier than the sixth century, whereas the prototype of the Harley MS. was probably, from its mutilated condition, of a much older date. In the *Comment. Soc. Göttingen*, iv. (1820), p. 156, and *Rhein. Museum*, v. (1837), p. 301, the fragments of such a glossary are described. In conclusion it may be noted that exact line-for-line or page-for-page reproduction in the middle ages of ancient prototypes was, we know, practised not only in cases where, as in the Harley glossary, the nature of the text required it, but also where illustrative drawings accompanied the text and where it was therefore necessary to maintain the proper arrangement between text and drawing. Some examples of this will have to be considered hereafter.

E. MAUNDE THOMPSON.

THE REFORMED PRONUNCIATION OF LATIN.

FOR years the prevailing pronunciation of Latin in England has been condemned by all competent judges; and still it has been thought a hopeless task to supplant it. But within the last few months the prospect has suddenly brightened; and the hope that some day the ancient Latin tongue would receive its rights has grown into an expectation that this some day will be soon. The Cambridge Philological Society, stimulated by the efforts of teachers who felt that the old pronunciation and, still more, the jargon of old and new together, was an intolerable burden and anomaly, issued to its members

a scheme of pronunciation prepared for that purpose which, after running the gauntlet of searching criticism, has been published, with certain modifications, in a pamphlet published by Messrs Trübner, and entitled *The Pronunciation of Latin in the Augustan Period*. The scheme was most favourably received by members of the Society, both resident and non-resident; how favourably, may be judged from the fact that out of twenty-seven lecturers in Cambridge, twenty-five were in favour of a reform in the direction proposed, while out of thirteen headmasters, professors, assistant-masters, not