



The Bacchantes of Euripides and Other Essays by A. W. Verrall

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have arrived at the British Museum. The papyri contained in this volume belong to that period of transition, the age of Diocletian, and the years immediately following it; and it is this fact which gives them their main interest and value. The collection, containing many excellently preserved documents, does not throw much new light on problems of law and administration, nor does it include any single item so sensational as the edict of Caracalla among the Giessen papyri; but it is nevertheless of considerable interest as illustrating, more vividly perhaps than any other, the economic decay which marked the third and following centuries of our era. Theadelphia, a populous and flourishing village in the early Roman period, was ruined by the neglect of the irrigation canals, and the gradual encroachment of the desert sand; and not a few of these papyri give us striking glimpses of its death agony. We hear of the flight of the villagers to other neighbourhoods, and at last Sakaon, the person from whose portfolio many of the papyri come, seems to have been almost the sole inhabitant. The documents are published with introductions and ample commentary, and there is at the beginning a general introduction dealing with the village and its inhabitants; on pp. 9 and 10 is given a charming description of the site at the present day. There are the usual indices. Several documents, written in very long lines, are printed continuously across two opposite pages: the practice cannot be commended, and makes them awkward to read. In the introduction to 48 (pp. 204-5) the editor discovers in the document a new title *πραιπόσιτος ἐπὶ (τῆς) πόλεως*. It seems much more likely that *ἐπὶ (τῆς) πόλεως* is to be separated from the title and taken as referring to the place of payment—'in the city.' It is to be noticed that where the phrase does not occur its place is always (except perhaps l. 5) taken by an indication of place. For *ἐπὶ τῆς πόλεως* in the above sense see, e.g., B. M. Pap. 1170 *verso*, l. 388, etc. (vol. III. p. 202). The volume contains a good many misprints.

Les Épistratèges; Contribution à l'Étude des Institutions de l'Égypte Gréco-Romaine. Par VICTOR MARTIN. Pp. xv+201. Genève: Georg & Co. 1911, 8vo. 10 fr.

This work, yet another addition to the rapidly growing list of monographs on papyrological subjects, is a thesis for the doctorate of Geneva, and deals with the subject of the officials known as epistrategi. Considering the high rank of these officials, it is somewhat curious that we have so little information concerning their position and functions; and this work, collecting such facts as are known, and throwing fresh light on not a few points, is a useful addition to the literature of Graeco-Roman Egyptology. The author's arguments are not always quite convincing, and the gaps in the evidence make it impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion on several points, but this is of course inevitable, and in some cases he has certainly cleared up matters which have hitherto been in dispute. The work falls into two parts, the first dealing with the Ptolemaic, the second with the Roman period; the evidence advanced by the author makes it quite certain that in the former there was but one epistrategus for the Thebaid. In an appendix a useful list of known epistrategi is given, and there are indices of passages cited and of personal names.

The Bacchantes of Euripides and other Essays. By A. W. VERRALL, 395 pp. Cambridge: University Press, 1910. 10s.

The book consists of a long essay on the *Bacchae* followed by a number of shorter essays on Greek literary subjects. The essay on the *Bacchae* is one of the most elaborate and perhaps the most successful of the author's Euripidean studies. His view of the play resembles Professor Norwood's (*The Riddle of the Bacchae*), though it differs in some

important details. The Lydian stranger is not Dionysus, but an adept of a type common then as now, and the audience, or its more intelligent members, are not to suppose that the miraculous occurrences described in the play really took place. The root-ideas of Professor Verrall's Euripidean criticism are familiar to everyone; and most readers would agree that in many cases he has exaggerated the non-artistic *tendency* of the poet's work and turned the poet into a doctrinaire. But in the *Bacchae* he is on safer ground than elsewhere, for it is in the religious aspect of the plays that he is especially interested, and the subject of the *Bacchae* is without doubt Religion. To use his own words, 'what is new and unique (in this drama) . . . is the thing . . . observed and depicted, which is, in one word, *faith*, or a faith.' That is true: Euripides has seen both the beauty and the ugliness of the Dionysiac worship, and has drawn a keen, hard picture of it, coldly, *ὡς γραφεὺς ἀποσταθεῖς*.

The character and motives of the Lydian stranger are persuasively presented; but though we admit that such a person is 'not a possible object of adoration,' it does not follow that he is not identical with the Dionysos of the prologue and epilogue. The final scene of the *Bacchae* loses enormously if we consider the fading god a mere lay-figure.

The person of Teiresias is rightly interpreted, as we believe, by Professor Verrall; here our author differs from Professor Norwood, and we prefer Professor Verrall's view. But his Pentheus is less satisfactory: by manipulating certain difficult passages, he seeks to prove that Pentheus has not been maddened by divine power, and is not even drunk, but has actually been drugged by the adept who carries a little tube of poison in his bosom. It is not believable that his arguments from the text itself will find favour; in particular, his reversion, in line 913, to the MS. reading *σπένδοντα*, instead of the usually adopted conjecture *σπείδοντα*, seems simply wilful; and his general pleading on p. 115 shews him at his weakest: his phrases betray him—'I should suppose . . .,' 'the Athenian audience, the educated part of it, would probably expect . . .,' 'but even without this, . . . supposing only . . .'. In the fifth century, he says in the same place, owing to Ionian speculation, 'the connexion of enthusiasm with intoxicants must have been notorious.' No one denies it; nor do we need a ghost to tell us that: the chief known intoxicant and the most popular is alcohol. It is possible that a little alcohol, undrugged, contributed to Pentheus' frenzy; but it is not necessary to think so. The man is Agave's son: he belongs to one of those great, tainted, and disastrous houses which ruled the Greek countries at one time and were never forgotten by their subjects. The hysterical faith of Agave and Ino is represented in Pentheus by a temper so hot that from the beginning it is almost insane. The foreign plague has struck the zealot's own house; he is further infuriated by the provoking calm of the adept and by the wild stories rife among his people: a touch more and he is mad.

Dr. Verrall defends himself with great vigour and with his usual charm of style against the accusation that he does not realize the poetic value of the play. It is certain that he does; but his description, keen-sighted as it is, over-emphasizes certain details, and, we think, is sometimes distorted. This is almost inevitable when one seeks to prove anything about a work of art. But surely the *Bacchae* is seen to be a unity, if we consider that, although its theme is ecstatic religion, its substructure is Wine:—in its three phases, expectation, intoxication, and *κραυγῇ*: and this is the reason why wine is hardly mentioned in the play.

The most important of the remaining chapters in the book are 'Rhyme and Reason,' which brings to light really valuable and suggestive facts about the sporadic use of rhyme in tragedy, and 'Phrynichus and the *Persians*,' where good reason is shewn for believing that Aeschylus transferred large portions of the earlier drama to his own extant work. The other essays are slighter; and the concluding chapter, where the author applies his method to the Gospel narrative, must be left to the theologians.