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**Martial: Epigrams *Martial: Epigrams*. With an English Translation. By Walter C. A. Ker, M.A., sometime Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge; of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law. Vol. I. (to end of Book VII.). 8vo. Pp. xxii + 492. London: Wm. Heinemann. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1919. 7s. 6d. net.**

J. Wight Duff

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## MARTIAL: EPIGRAMS.

*Martial: Epigrams.* With an English Translation. By WALTER C. A. KER, M.A., sometime Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge; of the Inner Temple, Barrister-at-Law. Vol. I. (to end of Book VII.). 8vo. Pp. xxii + 492. London: Wm. Heinemann. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1919. 7s. 6d. net.

THE first volume of the Loeb Martial contains, in addition to an introduction and bibliography, the text and translation of the book 'On the Spectacles' and of the first seven books of epigrams. Mr. Ker's brief and interesting Introduction says the right kind of thing to put the reader in touch with the epigrammatist; and it is followed by notes on the MSS., from which one learns that the text used is that of the *Corpus Poetarum Latinorum* (1905). The bibliography is partly, and very appropriately, devoted to translations, complete or otherwise, from Martial.

All poets are in a sense untranslatable; but a witty poet possesses a double share of untranslatability. How shall the translator decide between the hunt for more or less analogous forms of verse vaguely suggestive of the original and a prose version which shall ensure that all essential points of subject-matter (so varied in Martial) are made clear? The latter is the way to do fuller justice; and it is Mr. Ker's way. He has done his work with care and taste, succeeding all the better in that he explicitly realised the hardness of his task. For some of the peculiar difficulties of translating Martial are touched upon in the introduction—especially two pre-eminent difficulties, the one, that of conveying the sense when a paraphrase rather than a translation would seem necessary to render the subject-matter luminous, and the other, that of representing in anything like comparable degree the terse pith and bite of the Latin. In this connexion a phrase from old Gawain Douglas about 'the mixt and subtile Martial' prompts one at times to hanker after a corresponding variety in any translator—a

range in English probably even from Limericks to blank verse (for Martial can be dignified, beautiful, and even pathetic), a range, that is to say, capable of producing effects such as he attains by his wealth of metrical forms. Prose inevitably loses so much. It does not readily exhibit either the neat ring and sting requisite in the satiric epigrams or enough rhythm and beauty of words suitable for the more poetic pieces. Subject to such reservations in favour of verse, one gladly commends Mr. Ker's achievement in prose.

Naturally there are words or expressions here and there open to criticism; for tastes differ. For example, I do not like 'burgeoning years' for the simple *crescentibus annis* of a young man's life in I. lxxxviii.; and to the English reader *nutantia pondera* in the same poem would be more intelligible as 'tottering weight' than as 'nodding weight.' I do not quite believe in the 'airy gambols of hares' for the *lasciuos leporum cursus* of I. xlv.; and it may be just a little bold to write of the 'chink' (*crepant*) of kisses, I. lxxvi., and may give some a needlessly modern jar to find *ne ualeam*, II. v., rendered 'may I be shot.' But objections on the score of modernity tend to be pressed hypercritically, and no one will censure Mr. Ker's version of the retort to 'A1 in cloaks' (*alpha paenulatorum*) in up-to-date war-style as 'B2 in togas' (*beta togatorum*, V. xxvi.). Occasionally a word appears to get less than its full value: e.g., in VII. lxxxiii., regarding the hairdresser, Master Nimble (*Eutrapelus*), who, shave he never so nimbly, finds the beard of Lupercus springing up or sprouting again beneath his very razor,

*Eutrapelus tonsor dum circuit ora Luperci  
Expingitque genas altera barba subit,*

there seems to be a falling-off in force when *subit* (retaining, as usual in Martial, the point to the end) is rendered merely 'grows' in 'While Eutrapelus the barber goes round Lupercus' face and trims his cheeks, a second beard grows'; and for my part

I should get more of Martial's effect here from flippant lines like

There once was a barber called Smart,  
Who plied his tonsorial art  
Round Lupercus's face,  
But in spite of his pace  
A new beard kept trying to start.

In IV. xlv. 6 *numine* is accepted in the text, but *nomine* is translated; and in I. cxv.,

*loto candidior puella cyno  
argento niue lilio ligustro,*

while I agree that *loto*, and not *toto*, should be read, I wonder whether Martial actually intended to picture 'a girl whiter than a washed swan' with a hyperbolic suggestion like that implied in the 'hoary-white swans' (*senibus cynis*) of V. xxxvii. I suspect that this too much resembles the proverbially unnecessary process of 'painting the lily,' and should in fact argue that he may have simply meant to refer to the Nile lotus of the white-flowered variety. If so, *loto* is not an epithet, but the first item in a list of objects with which the blonde damsel is compared:

A maid than lotus whiter or the swan,  
Than silver, lily, snow or privet-flower.

Error easily creeps into the numbering of references and cross-references in an author like Martial, and the few oversights which I have noted might be corrected in a second edition or in an inserted slip containing *errata*. In *Intro.* p. xii, footnote, IV. xxiv. should be read for IV. xxiii.; p. xiv, footnote, IV. xlix. for IV. xlviii., which is indecent; and p. 141, footnote, I. ciii. for I. civ. In the text of VI. xliii. 6 *hoc sunt mihi uestrae* is an obviously distorted half-pentameter, and in the translation of VII. xxvii. 5 'with' has dropped out of 'grow fat the steaming reek.' II. xiv. 6 has *Phillyrides* against *Philyrides* in the footnote; and IV. ix. 2 *Clytium* in the Latin against *Clitus* in the English. At I. lxi. 3 'appraised' is

presumably intended to be 'appraised' as a translation of *censetur*, and at IV. viii. 3 'tastes' must, I imagine, be a misprint for 'tasks,' to represent *labores*.

I venture to submit that it is awkward and sometimes a little confusing to have both the textual notes and those on subject-matter numbered on the same system, with the result that one may find three occurrences of the same reference-figure on the same page, e.g. p. 42 and p. 78.

One or two matters of fact call for comment. It is misleading to call A.D. 63 or 64 'the last days of Nero' (*Intro.*, p. viii); unfortunately the tyrant had still before him several years in which to work mischief. In footnote, p. 257, 'Annaeus Pomponius Mela' is reckoned a member of the Seneca family, and is further described in error as 'the writer on geography.' This is a serious confusion between Annaeus Mela, who was Seneca's brother, and Pomponius Mela, the geographer. On p. 267, if *Arpi* of IV. lv. is an allusion to Cicero's birthplace, as the footnote says, it would be well to add that Martial has substituted it for *Arpinum*; just as on p. 319, where 'for your Calabrian lyre' is explained as 'for lyrics like Horace's,' it would be desirable to mention that 'Calabrian' is inaccurate in view of Horace's familiar doubt as to whether he himself was Lucanian or Apulian.

Mr. Ker has shown skill in translating the maximum possible of a writer who can be ineffably coarse: sometimes toning down, sometimes resorting to discreet dashes, sometimes cloaking the Latin in the half-disguise of Graglia's Italian, he has contrived to avoid too many yawning gaps. The notes are kept excellently within due compass and are always to the point.

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