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**The Argonautica of Gaius Valerius Flaccus Setinus Balbus *The 'Argonautical of Gaius Valerius Flaccus Setinus Balbus*. Book I. Translated into English Prose, with Introduction and Notes by H. G. Blomfield, M.A., I.C.S., late Scholar of Exeter College, Oxford. 1 vol. 8vo. Pp. 148. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1916. 3s. 6d. net.**

J. Wight Duff

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by Mr. Sleeman, and the notes are of a rather more elementary character. Now and then little difficulties of language are explained which a pupil who is capable of reading Tacitus might perhaps be expected to overcome without help. The notes on subject-matter, which often contain well-chosen quotations from G. G. Ramsay, P. Frost and others, will help to arouse and keep alive the reader's interest.

Mr. J. D. Duff has added a vocabulary to the new edition of his *Silva Latina* (Cambridge University Press, 232 pp., 2s. 6d. net). This is an excellent book for providing some variety in the reading of pupils who have not gone very far in Latin, but

are able to understand and appreciate a piece of moderate difficulty. 'No passage has been included that is not, of its kind, excellent; no passage has been included that presents any serious difficulty in language or matter. . . . Though the original text has in no case been re-written, whole sentences or clauses have been omitted where this seemed desirable.' The pieces, 145 in number, selected mainly from Cicero, Livy, Virgil and Ovid, seem to us remarkably well chosen, and the introduction to each extract gives in a line or two just the sort of help that is necessary to make it intelligible. There are a few brief notes.

Σ.

#### THE ARGONAUTICA OF GAIUS VALERIUS FLACCUS SETINUS BALBUS.

*The 'Argonautica' of Gaius Valerius Flaccus Setinus Balbus.* Book I. Translated into English Prose, with Introduction and Notes by H. G. BLOMFIELD, M.A., I.C.S., late Scholar of Exeter College, Oxford. 1 vol. 8vo. Pp. 148. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell, 1916. 3s. 6d. net.

MR. BLOMFIELD has brought to the work of translating the first book of the *Argonautica* a manifest enthusiasm for his author. He regrets with much justice the absence in English of any fully annotated edition of Valerius Flaccus or of any translation except that of the first book turned into heroic verse by Noble in 1808, from which, by the way, extensive citations are made in this volume. But, as to translations, Mr. Blomfield in his preface overstates the neglect of Valerius abroad and the neglect, both at home and abroad, of Statius, with whom he compares him; for he says 'The *Thebais*—except for a verse translation of the first book by Pope—and the *Achilleis* have never been done into English—or, as far as I am aware, any other language—up to the present day.' It is, however, about a century and a half since Lewis translated into heroic couplets the whole of the *Thebaid*, and

in his preface recorded that 'five books have indeed been rendered into English verse,' and that 'Mr. Pope made the first speak English and the late ingenious Mr. Walter Harte of St. Mary Hall, Oxon, the sixth.' The *Achilleid* was expanded in English into five books and annotated by Howard in 1660; and as to Mr. Blomfield's 'any other language,' there have certainly been several versions of both *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* into French; Imhof's *Lied von Theben* in hexameters is not the solitary German rendering; while the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries produced each at least one notable translation of the *Thebaid* into Italian verse. And then of Valerius he says: 'no portion of the latter has ever been turned into prose in any language.' To contradict this a glance at the French Didot edition is sufficient; but as far as English prose is concerned, Mr. Blomfield has undoubtedly a fair opening.

His object is thus stated: 'my aim throughout has been to render faithfully the sense of the original, and at the same time to produce what I thought was a fairly readable version of my author.' In the main, the result attained has been readable and forcible, though it seems, if one may borrow from the author's ex-

pressed apprehension in the preface, 'to have erred on the side of diffuseness and prolixity.' The desire to give the full meaning has proved a temptation again and again to give more than the full. The English, while containing many good turns, falls short in respect of dignity and finish and homogeneity of style; so that one must hope that, if the translator proceeds with his plan of translating the whole of Valerius Flaccus, he will adopt a more succinct and more consistent literary manner both in translation and in comment.

Some of these points ought to be made good by instances. A favourable example of Mr. Blomfield at his best is the description of the Underworld, ll. 831-840, which runs:

'So vast are the limits of this grim Underworld that if the Earth, top-heavy with its gross burden, were suddenly to collapse, its cavernous jaws would engulf and swallow her up. Here stand eternally the twin gates of Hell: the one by an immutable law is ever open, and takes in the kings of the earth and the nations thereof; but the other stands barred, and foul sin it were to strive against it, or try by force to enter in thereat: seldom it opens, and then only of its own accord, whensoever there cometh a warrior chief, bearing his glorious scars upon his breast, whose door-post is hung with plumed helms and chariot-wheels, the spoils of war; or one whose aim in life was to lighten the lot of mortal men, who worshipped Truth, and knew no fear, and kept himself unspotted from the world; or if peradventure there cometh a holy priest, wearing a sacred wreath and robe of spotless white.'

There is here a tendency to expand the original in phrases like 'engulf and swallow' for *consumere*; 'top-heavy' strikes a wrong note for *fessam*; and 'here stand eternally the twin gates of Hell' seizes the chance of making the most of both the variants *aeternum* and *infernum*. But on the whole the piece is a fair rendering.

Other passages are less successful, where the English is exposed to two cardinal objections—its diffuseness and its welter of conflicting literary associations. In many cases, much more is im-

ported into the English than the Latin can bear, so that the result amounts to an exegesis rather than a translation: e.g. *ivenesque vocantem*, l. 78, is 'beckoning a young man on to deeds of derring-do'; *eripe me*, l. 88, 'save and deliver me from all perils'; *nec qua se ardens effundere possit*, l. 701, 'can find no vent or outlet for his wrath'; *hiememque mereri*, l. 197, 'and that storm and tempest should be my portion to drink' (a grotesque amplification); *flava quercum damnavit arista*, l. 70, 'gave to men the golden ears of corn in exchange for the acorn whose death-sentence he pronounced' (17 words for 4); *magnis Nereus socer erigit ulnis*, l. 658, 'father Nereus for his son-in-law's sake had delivered from the great waters by a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm' (22 words for 5); *tantus nostras condere per urbes*, l. 680, 'so often and in such mighty shape will I also set up thy graven image throughout the cities of our land for all men to worship' (26 for 5). The 6 words of l. 252,

*paretur: molli ivenes funduntur in alga,*

are paraphrased in 19 words: 'The young men hearkened unto his word and stretched themselves upon the sand, pillowing their heads upon the seaweed.' Similarly at l. 311 the four neat words *novo crispans pelagus*... Phoebos are cumbersomely quadrupled into 'softly tinging the rippling waves so that they shimmered with the rays of the rising sun.' On pp. 78-79 there are 22 words of an interpolation which cannot be justified even though portions of it come direct from the Scriptures. In such cases all sense of the original proportions is lost.

Nor is the style self-consistent. The importation of biblical phrases, though sometimes effective, tends as a rule to raise an inappropriate association of ideas in the reader's mind and to seduce the translator from the paths of fidelity to his text. But the incongruity becomes marked when scriptural English is sandwiched between reminiscences of *The Ingoldsby Legends* and modern colloquialisms. Thus, when the words with which Peleus entrusts the young Achilles to Chiron's care, ll. 268-269,

*te parvus lituos et bella loquentem  
miretur,*

are rendered 'while still a lad let him lithe and listen with wonder to thy tales of wars and the blare of bugles,' the inevitable suggestion is

One tale I remember of mickle dread;  
Lithe and listen, my little boy Ned.

After this the surprise is less to find in l. 688 *salum* rendered 'the briny,' which would be acceptable in *The Sporting Times*. I do not know what a 'caulky' craft may be, except that it is the rendering for *cava pinus* on p. 123; nor is there justification for the revival of the obsolete 'emergement' on p. 51 any more than for the invention of 'subsidual' of a storm in a note on p. 107. Occasionally there are prosaic turns: 'and hence I had no opportunity for favouritism' remarks Jupiter for *iustique facultas hinc mihi*, l. 534, and in one of Jason's prayers 'no whit less vast' rings untrue to *penitus par*, and is followed, still in the prayer, by the matter-of-fact clause 'whether that storm was merely our misfortune' and 'that it may have pleased thee by this time to have become more gracious and favourable unto thy servants' (plural for *mihi*, l. 675). The correct sense is not always conveyed: e.g. *adclinisque tapetis*, l. 147, is not 'prone upon the table'; *salientia*, l. 206, is 'palpitating' rather than 'crackling'; *haesura*, l. 333, is not 'that will ever ring,' nor is *undisonam*, l. 364, 'wave-washed.' In lines 265-266

*'placido si currere fluctu,  
Pelea vultis' ait 'ventosque optare ferentes,'*

the translation takes *optare* with *placido currere fluctu*, which is rather dependent on *vultis*.

Mr. Blomfield has incorporated in the notes a number of alternative translations of his own in rhymed couplets. On p. 73, in order to make 'true-born' rhyme with 'lawn,' he naively accepts an interpretation with which on another part of the page he says he 'cannot agree.' How far the verse renderings suggest a dignified original may be judged by these lines on p. 81:

Who for the Quest gave up the steeds of  
Thessaly  
To seek the timid Helle's, and especially

Left his own Cyllarus to grow fat and sickly,  
Upon the luscious pastures of Amyclae.

The effect is like that of the mock-heroic verse of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* either in the Italian or in Byron's translation. The five lines 774-778 are rendered into nine, containing these:

Still stood the stallion steer whose shanks  
subfusc  
And sickening sides shewed sallow thro' the  
dusk,

which is annotated 'I have endeavoured here to reproduce in some measure the alliteration which is so characteristic a feature of the poetry of Valerius Flaccus.' If this sibilant couplet is only 'some measure,' what would generous measure be? The really significant alliteration in the passage *cui caeruleae per cornua*, is ignored when its turn comes for translation; and of 'subfusc' one cannot tell whether it is an echo from the eighteenth century or from *Verdant Green*.

The notes are mainly mythological, and they usefully elucidate the individuality and affinities of the personages involved, while genealogical tables clear up troublesome relationships. It is not without a sense of the pains taken that one expresses a preference for more concise annotation. Sometimes the translation is a mere rivulet of two or three lines, or actually a single line, in the midst of a flood of comment. The translation has notes to it, and these notes have sub-notes, and even the sub-notes on several pages have footnotes in turn; yet notwithstanding such elaborate detail, their author apologises in the preface 'for their scantiness and brevity.' One is tempted to think this must be a jest in keeping with the jocular garrulities of the notes; for while they do not leave much unexplained as far as matter and mythology go, they are extraordinarily rambling in their illustrations and extraordinarily undignified in their colloquialisms. An example may be seen on p. 21 in the note on the Clashing Rocks (*iuga concita*) through which, it is fully explained, the Argo passed not without damage, and then we have half-a-dozen lines to the effect that 'one is rather reminded of the passage in the Leech of Folkestone . . . or of the young fellow who went Nap on a hand

of five aces and *only* got shot in the leg.' The inclination to jest at the expense of Zeus has run away with the annotator on p. 81. There, after assuring us whose sons Castor and Pollux were 'officially and ostensibly,' he reminds us that 'actually they were the offspring of the *πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε*, who, like Cicero and Charles II., was in very truth the father of his country.' An entertaining trio, no doubt; but Mr. Blomfield does not expand his wit to tell us to what country he intended Zeus to belong!

The riotous profusion of notes and illustrative allusions might at first glance suggest that the commentator took his material seriously and expected his readers to do likewise; but one's attitude changes as one reads that 'even Augustus, Nero, and others of that ilk would now take a back seat,' p. 25; that the Hydra was 'polished off by Hercules,' p. 28; that the river-God Achelous was 'that worthy,' p. 29, as Hercules was 'the broth of a boy' p. 52, and the Centaurs 'rough diamonds,' p. 43; that

Juno 'had a down on poor Hercules,' p. 39; that Helle 'slipped off the ram's back and perished in the locker of Mr. David Jones, Esq.,' p. 33; that Medea, when banished, was 'given the royal and ancient order of the boot,' p. 49; or that the thunderbolt of Zeus was no smoky pine-torch 'but the genuine article,' p. 120.

Can it be supposed necessary to annotate a quoted translation with such comments on 'express' as '*sic* for expressed,' p. 132, or to quote 'Virgilian (*sic*),' as if the use of the traditional English form of the poet's name implied inability to spell it correctly in Latin? The proof-reading has been well done; but *Athamus* is a slip for *Athamas*, p. 30; and Burmann should not have *insignum* put to his account for *insignem*, p. 77. On p. 27 the title of Schiller's play is given wrongly, as *Todt* is not the German for 'Death.'

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## SHORT NOTICES

*Ovid: Metamorphoses.* With an English Translation by FRANK JUSTUS MILLER, Ph.D., LL.D., Professor in the University of Chicago. Two vols. London: William Heinemann. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916 (Loeb Classical Library).

I FEAR that these two volumes will not win much commendation. The translation is at times creditable, even excellent, but readers will be annoyed continually by blunders and slipshod paraphrase. To give an exhaustive list of these blemishes would serve no useful purpose. As samples the following may be quoted:

I. 62 'Eurus ad Auroram Nabataeque regna recessit Persidaque et radiis iuga subdita matutinis'—'where the Persian hills flush beneath the morning light.' 189 'flumina infera sub terras Stygio labentia luco'—'infernal streams that glide beneath the

earth through Stygian pools.' 257 'regia coeli'—'regions of the sky.' 299 'graciles capellae'—'pretty sheep.' II. 151 'statque super'—'standing proudly.' 554 'nam tempore quodam Pallas Erichthonium, prolem sine matre creatam clauserat Actaeo texta de vimine cista'—'once upon a time a child was born to Actaeus, named Erichthonius, a child without a mother. Him Pallas hid in an osier box.' III. 73 'plenis tumuerunt guttura venis'—'his gorge swells full of poison.' 537 'inania tympana'—'empty mummeries.' 564 'hunc avus . . . corripuit dictis'—'these words his grandsire urges him to recall.' V. 487 'Alpheias'—'Arethusa, Alpheus daughter.' VI. 392 'illum ruricolae, silvarum numina, fauni et satyri fratres'—'the country people, the sylvan deities, fauns and his brother satyrs.' VII. 435 'quodque suis securus arat Cromyona colonus'—'and that the farmer of Cromyon may till his fields in