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POETI ALESSANDRINI.

Poeti Alessandrini. By AUGUSTO ROSTAGNI. Pp. 398. Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1916. Lire 5.

THIS is a very interesting and well-knit book. The author holds a definite theory about the character of Alexandrian poetry in general. He has read widely in the scattered German, French, Italian and English books and papers on the subject, and supports his statements by notes placed at the end of each chapter. If he seems inclined, like many present-day scholars, to make his bricks with the straw of bad evidence in default of good, or it may be on occasion with no straw at all, it would at any rate need a critic of much learning to confute him, and the freshness of his interest in third-century poetry and the world from which it sprang throws much light on the political, literary, country and town life of the period. His habit of constantly inverting the subject and object of sentences makes his style somewhat difficult to an English reader, and the Italian language is apt to be more lavish of words than our own, but his power of making the charm of the authors whom he discusses felt is unquestionable, his translations are full of grace, and even the vivid pictures of Theocritus are enhanced by his descriptions.

In the fourth century, as Greek poetry declined, prose advanced, being, in Signor Rostagni's opinion, the appropriate means by which the scientific spirit of the age could express itself. But this spirit of intellectual curiosity needed an outlet for the imaginative portrayal of human life, which it could not find in the strict forms of classical poetry. Euripides had, it is true, given a new colour to the traditional framework of myth, but, as a rule, the fourth century, which had broken with the past, found the conventions of hymns, paeans, elegies, and tragedies artificial and hampering. For a time poetry withered; only scanty fragments have come down to us, but if we had lost none of the great quantity that was produced, we should still, says

Signor Rostagni, feel 'a sense of void,' as though these works, 'suffering from the effect of an unfavourable climate, had only come to birth out of respect for tradition' (p. 25).

Euripides, Antimachus, and Choerilus show a consciousness that society and art in their day had detached themselves from the society and art of the past. This consciousness 'created the atmosphere necessary for the refflorescence of poetry.' Artistic fiction, in the opinion of Signor Rostagni, is the distinctive quality of this refflorescence. The poets of an earlier age would compose a hymn or an epithalamium for a special occasion, to be sung by a special chorus; Theocritus and his contemporaries invent a scene, a marriage or a festival, describing the actors and their surroundings in detail, and introducing imaginatively the songs that they would sing in such situations. If we follow Signor Rostagni, we shall look on the art of the Alexandrians not as a decadence, but as a transition to a modern attitude of mind, which cheerfully takes the whole spectacle of human affairs, great and small, for its province, with a decided tendency to dwell on *οἷς χρώμεθα, οἷς σύνεσμεν*. Euripides felt pain in the process of coming down from the heroic to the ordinary world, but Theocritus wears his scepticism lightly, and all the Alexandrian poets reveal that they breathe the air of 'perfumed *salons* and comfortable libraries' (p. 41).

Signor Rostagni sums up Theocritus as the poet of all aspects and hues of life, who enjoys its many-coloured picture with a quiet sense of pleasure (p. 94). It is a mistake to look upon him as the typical poet of the country as opposed to the town, for he is fully as much, if not more, at home in the streets of Alexandria, as in the pastures and hills of Sicily and Magna Grecia (where Signor Rostagni conjectures that he may have lived for a while, before going to Cos), or in the literary circle of Cos. His natural bent is for the things of 'la piccola umanità,' and though he casts his eye over anything

and everything with intelligence, he does not take everything equally to his heart; hence a certain frigidity, when he deals with court and heroic themes. All through his work we can descry Theocritus himself enjoying the spectacle that he has created for us, whether it be Simaetha's passion, the litterateurs of Cos masquerading as shepherds, and betraying their knowledge of art and music, or the hints to Aeschines of blemishes in the character of Ptolemy Philadelphus. Herein lies the distinction between Theocritus and Herodas: 'Theocritus we know, but we could never know Herodas, except negatively, because he has never gone beyond the surface of the things that he describes' (p. 84). The lay figures of Herodas, in their own lack of vitality, disclose nothing of their inventor's temperament.

The handling of the Daphnis myth in popular legend, and in literature from Stesichorus downwards, gives Signor Rostagni the opportunity of discovering what he takes to be the true nature of literary pastoral poetry. With Maass, he finds the origin of the legend in Euboea, and believes that it was transplanted to Sicily by Ionian colonists. One form prevailed round about Himera, another in the regions of Leontini and Catana, and the Ionian Daphnis, spreading his sphere of influence, came into contact at Syracuse with the Dorian bucolic hero Diomos, and superseded him in popularity. Rustic legends and songs, peasant life as represented in these songs—such was the natural material for third-century poets to seize eagerly in their revolt against the rigidity of classical restrictions. In particular the myth of Daphnis, with its romantic story, provided Hermesianax, Sositheus, and others, including above all Theocritus, with a theme after their own hearts, which reappears again and again. Alexandrian bucolic poetry is many sided; sometimes it depicts country folk in their 'rudezza originale'; sometimes it shows us town poets playing at being Arcadian shepherds (in Watteau's sense), and again it develops the lyrical and emotional side of current legends as a means of expressing 'la

propria poesia della natura e del cuora' (p. 162). Signor Rostagni might have referred to D'Annunzio's *La Figlia di Iorio*, as a splendid example of the Theocritean spirit in our own day.

In a chapter on Asclepiades and his school in Samos, the same tendencies of the Alexandrian age are set forth. Humour, scepticism, a lively interest in the world at large, and especially in themselves and their emotions, characterised these poets, and they, one after another, made play with the myth of Glaucus just as another group used Daphnis for a poetical air and variations. But the part of the book which is the most likely to attract attention and challenge controversy is the treatment of Callimachus in Chapter V. The author holds that the six *Hymns* are inspired by one design, and all date from 280-270. The *Hymns* to Demeter and Pallas stand somewhat apart from the rest, in being free from current politics, but all six are literary compositions, not songs intended to be sung at actual festivals. As other Alexandrian poets paint town or country life, so Callimachus chooses to set before us 'the sacred ceremonies which in a certain degree satisfy his tastes as an artist and a learned man' (p. 256). Along with this wish to 'hold up a mirror to the religious hymns of the past' (p. 261), Callimachus unites, in the *Hymns* to Zeus, Delos, Artemis, and Apollo, the purpose of celebrating his king, Ptolemy Philadelphus, and Arsinoe II. Signor Rostagni finds that the parallel between Zeus or Apollo and Ptolemy runs throughout the poems, and does not merely crop up incidentally in the few passages where it is distinctly announced. In order to support his views, he discusses several chronological questions, notably in an appendix on the dominion of Ptolemy in Ionia, which he considers to have lasted from about 274 to shortly after the death of Arsinoe. At the end of the *Hymn* to Apollo he holds Apollonius Rhodius to be the poet 'as vast as the sea,' to whom Callimachus objects, and thinks that the date of the hymn is approximately that of the time when Apollonius left Alexandria, owing to the failure of the first book of the *Argonautica* to win

royal favour; from this position it is an easy step to see in the peroration of the hymn the triumph of Callimachus over his discomfited rival.

Besides chronology, some questions concerning Theodorus Syracusanus, Rhinthon, Dosiades of Crete (who is the Lycidas of Theocr. VII., according to Signor Rostagni), and the debt of Propertius IV. 6 to Callimachus are discussed in appendixes. A confusing slip inverts Dorians and Ionians on p. 143.

Though on his own showing, Epicharmus, Menander, not to speak of Euripides, Antimachus and many more, have qualities which would be called Alexandrian in third-century writers, Signor Rostagni is a very persuasive advocate, and has a great body of learning at his command, whether to call witnesses to his aid or to overthrow his opponents.

ADELA MARION ADAM.

MODERN GREEK IN ASIA MINOR.

Modern Greek in Asia Minor: a Study of the Dialects of Silli, Cappadocia, and Pharasa. With grammar, texts, translation, and glossary. By R. M. DAWKINS, M.A., late Director of the British School at Athens. With a chapter on the subject-matter of the folk-tales by W. R. HALLIDAY, B.A., B.Litt., Cambridge University Press.

THIS is a book of real importance for the student of Modern Greek. Mr. Dawkins has an extraordinarily acute ear, and he takes the most minute care in his transcriptions; probably no one has ever recorded Modern Greek sounds with such exactitude. He has also chosen a district of which very little was known, at a time when the dialects were dying out from natural causes, and it is not likely that many of them or those who speak them will survive this war. In the summer of 1914 the Turks were already persecuting their Greek subjects and driving them from their homes by the thousand, with murder and robbery, as I happen to know from reading hundreds of captured letters; and what they have done since we may easily guess. Very little has been printed before about these dialects; what there is, Mr. Dawkins has used.

Besides the linguistic matter, the book contains a good deal of information as to population, local buildings, and the way the people live, with several photographs. There are most extraordinary underground houses and even churches; the practice of living under-

ground is mentioned by Xenophon. One is reminded by such a sketch as Fig. 2, p. 16, of the tomb of Christ, with a stone rolled along for a door.

The forms of these dialects are all carefully tabulated and critically examined. The dialects are in themselves less attractive to the literary student than those of the Greek mainland or the islands: they are degraded and corrupt, and contain an unusual number of Turkish and Latin loan-words. The Turkish influence, as one might expect, is very strong, and here, as elsewhere, the influence of the local schools is very bad. I have found in my own travels that the schoolmaster is generally a pedant, whose literary style is dreadful; but providence gives us a compensation in the schoolmaster's wife, who is delightfully primitive, speaks a good dialect Greek, and knows the local tales and superstitions. Mr. Dawkins sums up the characteristics of the dialects in a special section (p. 192). One remarkable feature is the borrowing of Turkish verbs, for verbs are not borrowed until dialects begin to fuse.

More than half the book is occupied by the text and translation of folk-tales, and this alone would give it a permanent value. As stories, the tales are disappointing; they are told in a bald style, and are not in that respect equal to those we already know. But they are full of interest, not only for the student of folk-tales, but still more for the student of life and manners. They are a fairly representative collection, and the largest collection yet published