

THE VALUE OF THE MEDICEAN CODEX OF  
VERGIL<sup>1</sup> (WITH AN APPENDIX ON THE CHRONOLOGY  
OF THE CAPITAL MANUSCRIPTS).

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THE chief object of this lecture is to illustrate the unique value to the study of Vergil which must be claimed for the famous manuscript at Florence known as the Medicean (*codex Mediceus*, or *M*). But I want also to submit some evidence on a scientific question, which is sure to be new to most people, and which at first may seem, perhaps, unduly remote from general interest.

In approaching what is sure to be the heaviest task that I shall attempt in what working time my life may yet give me, namely the editing of Vergil, I have begun by studying this codex, which every scholar knows to be one of the most important manuscripts of Vergil's acknowledged work; and I have found the study very interesting. The problems which it involves can be easily indicated without dwelling on details which only specialists would welcome.

The manuscripts of Vergil fall into two great classes, the later class separated from the earlier by at least three centuries, that is by the gap between the fifth and the eighth, the Dark Ages as we call them, in which the recopying and multiplication of the works of Classical authors was almost unknown. The earlier class we call the Capital manuscripts, because they are written in large letters, each letter separate from those that follow and precede. The second class we call Minuscule, because they are written in a smaller continuous hand, like our own writing when we are writing carefully. Now since these Capital manuscripts are all known to be not later than the fifth or sixth century, they are much nearer to Vergil than any others. We

<sup>1</sup> An amplification of the lecture delivered at the John Rylands Library, on the 18th of March, 1931.



should very much like to know their actual dates, so that when they differ we could say definitely : “ the earliest reading is so and so, and the later reading so and so.” Not of course that the earlier reading is always the right one ; only it has a better chance of being right, or being near what is right, because it has not had to undergo the chance of being corrupted in so many different processes of copying.

Now the total number of Capital manuscripts that we possess of all authors is not very large, and the number that we can date precisely is very small indeed. We do know however, roughly, which forms of the letters are earlier and which are later ; and by a careful study of the writing we can sometimes arrive at a relative order of date. The essential thing is to compare the writing of the different manuscripts ; and since some of the oldest of these in the case of Vergil have only recently come to be known, that study has hardly yet been made ; and if the deductions from this comparison, which are printed as an appendix to this lecture, win the acceptance of more experienced scholars and palæographers, then some fraction will have been added to our knowledge of the dates of the manuscripts, and consequently to our means of judging what Vergil wrote in cases where there is a doubt.

The photographs which have been taken for me, some with the kind help of Dr. Guppy, show specimens of the script of five of these Capital manuscripts. They are printed at the end of this paper ; and they may serve to give, so to speak, just a whiff of the flowers of knowledge which the labour of scholars has to cultivate in this part of their garden. Any one who may think them not so much flowers as somewhat dusty and forbidding puzzles, can read the rest of this lecture, if he will, without suffering anything from the Appendix.

But let us consider at once a page of the *Medicean* (Fig. 1). It is not at all difficult to read and gives us part of the story from the Fifth Book of the *Aeneid* (ll. 668-696), of Ascanius rushing away from the games to save the fleet, which the old ladies of the party had set on fire so as to escape from any more sea-sickness. The third line of the page begins the speech of Ascanius, and I transcribe five lines to show how easy it is to read :—

quis furor iste nouus ? quo nunc, quo tenditis inquit,  
heu, miserae ciues ? non hostem inimicaque castra  
Argiuum ; uestras spes uritis. en, ego uester  
Ascanius. galeam ante pedes proiecit inanem,  
qua ludo indutus belli simulacra ciebat.

The only remarks to be added<sup>1</sup> are that the manuscript knows no signs of punctuation except a dot in the middle of the line, which has to do duty for comma, full-stop, and note of interrogation. And in the third line the *i* of *Argiūum* was at first left out, and then inserted above the line.

Turn to another page (Fig. 2) which has the end of the Eclogues. On the lower half of it you see a 'subscriptio' or tail-piece, in large capitals (red in the original), which states that here is the conclusion of the Bucolics, and the beginning of the Georgics.

P VERGILI MARONIS

BVCOLICON LIBER EXPLICIT(VS)

INCIPIT GEORGICON LIB(ER) I FELICITER.

But something else is written in smaller letters and different ink, and this is an addition of great interest, though we value it for rather different reasons from those which its author expected us to feel. It is written all round about the capital letters in smaller capitals; and these are of a different and, we know, later style.<sup>2</sup>

The addition is partly in prose and partly in verse, and I transcribe it, writing in full the words which are abbreviated in the original.

The *SUBSCRIPTIO* of Apronianus.

Turcius Rufus Apronianus Asterius, u(ir)c(larissimus) et inl(ustris), ex comite domest(icorum) protect(orum), ex com(ite)

<sup>1</sup> Except that perhaps some students will be interested to know further that the curious curling up of the right-hand ends of the lines in the photograph is a mark of the straightjacket in which the codex was confined by Napoleon, who carried it off to Paris in 1797 and had it tightly bound up in heavy calf, which made it impossible even to open the volume wide! Every lover of Vergil must be grateful for the enlightened generosity of the present Italian Government, by which, under the direction of Professor E. Rostagno, the distinguished scholar now in charge of the Laurentian library, Napoleon's binding has been removed—and preserved as a curiosity of barbarism;—every page will now be reset bodily, embedded between large modern margins, and the whole reproduced, at great cost, in a beautiful photographic facsimile. This will be far easier to read than the original, because through the untiring efforts of Prof. Rostagno, spread over several years, no sheet has been passed until, by the re-arrangement of light and background, every mark on every page has been brought out to the best advantage.

<sup>2</sup> Take only as examples the letters G and Q with their tails running down below the line.



priu(atarum) largit(ionum), ex prae(ecto) urbi, patricius et consul ordin(arius), legi et distincxi codicem fratris Macharii u(iri) c(larissimi), non mei fiducia set eius, cui si et ad omnia sum devotus, arbitrio, XI Kal. Mai. Romae.

distincxi emendans; gratum mihi munus amicis  
 suscipiens operi sedulus incubui,  
 tempore quo penaces circo subiuncimus atq(ue)  
 scenam Euripo extulimus subitam,  
 ut ludos currusque simul uariumq(ue) ferarum  
 certamen iunctim Roma teneret ouans.  
 ternum quippe sofes merui, terna agmina uolgi  
 per caueas plausus concinuere meos.  
 in quaestum famae census iactura cucurrit,  
 nam laudis fructum talia damna serunt.  
 sic tot consumptas seruant spectacula gazas  
 festorumq(ue) trium permanet una dies;  
 Asteriumq(ue) suum uiuax transmittit in aeuum  
 qui parcas trabeis tam bene donat opes.  
 quisq(ue) legis, relegas felix, parcasque benigne  
 si qua minus uacuu praeteriit a(nimu)s.

It tells us that a certain senator called Turcius Rufus Apronianus Asterius, who held, or had held, various high offices at Rome, punctuated and corrected this manuscript which belonged to his brother Macharius, in the year in which he, Apronianus, was consul. He modestly remarks that he would not have ventured to do it, but for the confidence which his brother had in him, his brother to whom, he adds, 'I am utterly devoted, even if it were for a matter of life and death.'<sup>1</sup> Now luckily we know the date in which Apronianus was consul, 494 A.D.; so that was when he undertook to correct this manuscript, which must have been written a good long while before then, if one judges by the difference of the writing.

But the good Apronianus was not content with recording in prose what he did; he is moved to poetic composition, and gives us an elegiac effusion in sixteen lines, of which two are devoted to what he did for Vergil, and the other fourteen relate all the other things he did in his consulship, and pleads them as an excuse for any mistakes he has made. Let me attempt a version of his lines.

<sup>1</sup>This bad sense of *omnia* is insufficiently recognised; one eminent German scholar condemned the passage as corrupt because he did not understand it. Verg., *Culex*, 166; Juv., v. 170; Livy, 29. 32. 14. and 30. 12. 12. may serve as examples.

*Verses subscribed to the Cod. Med. Vergilii by Turcius Rufius  
Asterius Apronianus (consul 494 A.D.).*

These poems I corrected, and put in the punctuation—  
My friends will prize the fruit of my devoted application—  
Just when the circus-enclave I had neatly boarded round  
And across the ditch a brand new stage erected from the ground,  
So that proud Rome might triumph in a simultaneous view  
Of plays, and various wild-beast-fights, and chariot races too.  
Indeed I earned three separate cheers "Bravo, Bravo, Bravo;"  
Three separate crowds called out my name, applauding row on row.  
How much the poorer I was left, to reckon isn't nice;  
For popularity of course one has to pay a price!  
In grateful memories three shows my vanished wealth enshrined,  
Three exhibitions in one day leave lasting fame behind;  
To celebrate all down the years Asterius as the donor  
Of splendid games, from modest means of which he was the owner.  
So good luck to you, reader; read, and if mistakes you find  
Forgive the man who left them; he'd so much upon his mind.

I must remark in passing that in spite of the ingenious attempts of some German scholars to avoid believing the obvious, it appears to me quite impossible to doubt that these lines were actually written by Apronianus, where they stand on this parchment; there are many reasons, yet I need only state two: namely that no one but the author of this doggerel would want to inscribe it on a valuable manuscript of Vergil and spoil an important page by doing so; and that it is quite impossible to suppose that the whole manuscript with Apronianus' addition was recopied at a date later than Apronianus. No later scribe could have reproduced the earlier writing, if he had wanted to; and that was the last thing which would have occurred to his mind to attempt.<sup>1</sup> Yet at the end of the nineteenth century Oxonian scholarship stood in such awe of believing anything that any German scholar, even the erratic Ribbeck, had ever denied, that the author of the judicious and most serviceable edition of the text of Vergil in the *Bibliotheca Oxoniensis*, in his Preface humbly warns the reader not to suppose that we have the writing of Apronianus before us on this

<sup>1</sup> I am very glad to be supported by the opinion of Professor E. H. Minns in this matter, who writes to me on April 18th, 1931: "I do not see why Mediceus should not be a good deal older than Asterius: such books must have been kept, valued, used and even corrected for a long time after they were written."

page, though he gives no reason for the warning, and had, apparently, never thought of looking at the manuscript himself !

Since this addition, then, dates from 494 A.D., and is in writing and ink considerably younger than that of the codex itself, it follows that the codex must have been first written considerably earlier. How far earlier I am myself tempted to put it, I will confess in the appendix to this lecture.

Now that we have glanced at the Codex, and satisfied ourselves provisionally on the question of its date, let us turn to what is really a harder matter, but one rather nearer to our ordinary interests. It may at least claim the attention of all students of Vergil, even if they regard the topics we have been considering as too lofty, or too lowly, to deserve their notice. I can well imagine that many people who may cast an eye on the appendix, will be asking why scholars should take so much trouble about these ancient matters. Why does this Codex in particular deserve so much study ? What in fact is its special value ?

Well, we have to estimate the value of any one manuscript by comparing it with its competitors. Has the scribe of that manuscript had such good predecessors, and has he copied the last of them so faithfully, that he gives us a truer account of what Vergil really wrote than the other manuscripts do ?

This question is often very difficult to settle in the case of two or more manuscripts, both of which we find to possess both merits and defects, and very often it is impossible to frame any general judgment. We have to be content with taking what seems to us to be good from one manuscript, and where it is less good, taking what we find to be better in another, provided we can find a reasonable explanation of the corruption. But we have to remember about anything which may seem to us better, or pleasanter to read, or more like what we could ourselves wish the author to have written, that we may nevertheless be wrong in concluding that he did write just that. Again and again scholars have chosen a reading which was easier, as they thought, to translate, or more like their own way of thinking ; and then it has been found afterwards by clear evidence that what they preferred was quite certainly not what the author wrote.

With this warning let us now consider a few typical examples of the Medicean text. Since on the whole I am rather in love with this



codex, it will be well to begin with passages in which I must admit that the scribe or his predecessor has been, to put it simply, rather naughty. The text has been changed (for reasons which we can guess at) from what Vergil really wrote, as shown by the other manuscripts; and in each of these cases it will be clear, I think, why our verdict must be given against the Medicean reading. The list might be made a long one,<sup>1</sup> but I will be content with one or two typical examples. In Georg. iv. 73 all the other good manuscripts have these lines:

*quam multa in foliis auium se milia condunt,  
uesper ubi aut hibernus agit de montibus imber.*

Now here instead of *in foliis* *M* writes *in siluis*. Why does he do this? Because he, or his predecessor, remembered quite a different simile (to illustrate the same conception, the multitude of the dead) in a famous passage of the Aeneid (vi. 309):

*quam multa in siluis auctumni frigore primo  
lapsa cadunt folia.*

Now here it is plain that *siluis* is right in Book vi., because *folia* comes as the subject in the next line. That does not of course prove that it is wrong in the Georgics; but there are two questions we have to ask. First, which of the two words suits the passage in the Georgics better? Now there is nothing wrong with *siluis*; birds do hide themselves in forests; they also spend a good deal of the day time in forests; but it is only at night or in a heavy shower of rain, which are the circumstances Vergil mentions, that they take care to hide 'under the leaves.' *In foliis* therefore gives us a much more precise description of what the birds are doing in the picture; and we know how carefully Vergil loved to watch all their movements. Secondly we have to ask if it is more likely that Vergil wrote *in siluis* in the Georgics, and that a great number of good scribes should go wrong and alter it into *in foliis* without what would seem to them any urgent reason—although, as we have seen, *in foliis* is more appropriate. Or on the other hand whether it is not more likely that the scribe of the Medicean, being, as he certainly was, an excellent scholar, should have, almost unconsciously, allowed the recollection of the *quam multa in siluis*

<sup>1</sup> See R. Sabbadini (in *Historia* 1929) for a more severe judgement.

passage to run into the text, instead of copying, as he ought to have done, what was before him.<sup>1</sup>

On these two counts, therefore, I am afraid we must give the verdict against the Medicean in this case.

Now take a more subtle question. In *Georgics*, iv. 348, the other good manuscripts have :

. . . . . *dum fusis mollia pensa deuoluunt*

describing the nymphs at their spinning while they are listening to Clymene's pretty stories. The operation of spinning, here described, without a wheel, simply by twisting the spindle with one's fingers, is not very rapid, and it would not be quickened by the interest the fair spinstresses took in the stories they were hearing. Here *M* has made no change in the meaning, but has simply altered the order of the words into *fusis dum*. Now every schoolboy will much prefer the other writing because it does not give him the trouble of discovering that the conjunction *dum*, which in prose regularly begins its clause, has for some poetical purpose been put second word ; so on this score we might perhaps think that the Medicean was right, and that all the others had simply changed Vergil's order to make the sentence more like simple prose. Well, that is rather a serious charge. Let us ask our two questions again. First, which order is more likely to have been Vergil's ? On this opinions may differ. Everyone who has studied the structure of Vergil's verse knows that one of the ways in which he refined upon the work of his predecessor Lucretius was by avoiding an arrangement of which Lucretius seems to have been either fond or at least entirely tolerant, namely having for the fourth foot of the line a spondee, consisting of a single word. This, as a rule, Vergil avoids because it makes the line "go slow," tending to break it up into separate pieces. Now there is another case of the same variation in the Medicean,<sup>2</sup> which may show that the scribe felt this. I am therefore inclined to believe that in these cases he deliberately changed the order of the words before him, and wrote here *fusis dum*

<sup>1</sup> He did just the same in *Aen.* viii. 583, changing *dicta* before *supremo* into *maesta* (which is not here appropriate) from a memory of iii. 482.

<sup>2</sup> *Aen.* iv. 187 *magnas et for et magnas* is closely similar ; *Aen.* i. 333 *et uastis* instead of *uastis et* gives us the converse change, but in the same point of the line, a point at which it would seem perhaps as if our scribe felt a certain temptation to play with the text.

instead of *dum fusis*; but that Vergil had preferred the unusual rhythm in this line in order to picture in sound the coyness and occasional resistance of the wool to being pulled out of its clump at the end of the distaff and being turned into smooth thread. Of course you may think this is too fanciful, and you may prefer to take the reading of *M*; but then you must believe that the other manuscripts altered it wilfully; or rejecting that reading you may, perhaps justly, prefer not to attribute to *M* any metrical motive, but to class these variations with other variations of order,<sup>1</sup> generally, if not always, involving no injury to the metre, which must be laid to the account of *M*.

Now turn to some interesting cases where it is difficult to be sure whether *M* is right or wrong.

. . . *vatum responsa priorum*

is the reading of the other manuscripts,<sup>2</sup> and it makes excellent sense. Dido in her feverish meditations turns over in her mind 'things that ancient prophets had foretold.' Now the Medicean alone reads *piorum*. That would be equally effective so far as Dido was concerned, 'the predictions of pious seers,' and it would give us in addition just a hint of Vergil's well-known attitude towards professional prophets like Tolumnius in Book xii. or Calchas in Book ii. The supposed piety of the prophets was one of the things that helped to betray Dido. *M* may be right. But seeing the likeness of the letters R and P it is also quite possible that the R may have been omitted by mere oversight.

Take another interesting case where *M* is not alone—in fact several of the good manuscripts of the later, that is the cursive, class agree with *M*, three assigned to the ninth century in particular. A little later in Dido's story (l. 564) when she has resolved upon suicide, Mercury visits Aeneas in a dream, and warns him that Dido may be plotting some violent deed to destroy his fleet. In the description of Dido's state of mind the very early Vatican fragments and the Palatinus give us *uariosque irarum concitat aestus* ('she wakens (all) the different surges of wrath within her'); whereas the Medicean and some others give *uarioque irarum fluctuat aestu* ('she is tossed to and fro upon the shifting surge of her wrath'). Both ex-

<sup>1</sup> Such as e.g., *sonitum flammae* for *fl. son.*, G. iv. 409; *iam cum* for *cum iam*, Aen. ii. 112; *secum nostrae* for *nostrae secum*, Aen. iv. 662.

<sup>2</sup> In Aen. iv. 464.

pressions are perfectly Vergilian, indeed *fluctuat* has been used of Dido only thirty lines before : *magnoque irarum fluctuat aestu* ; and the last two words are used again by Vergil in the Eighth Book with *curarum*. Yet *M* can hardly be right here, because it is not Vergil's way to repeat himself in the Homeric fashion, and *concitat* suggests better the half-conscious resolve of Dido to keep her passionate anger alive. The corruption is of course easy to explain. The scribe who had written *fluctuat* after *irarum* only half an hour before would very naturally fall into it again.

One more example, from the Seventh Eclogue (l. 25). The young Thyrsis is claiming rank as a verse-writer who one day hopes to be a real poet. The Palatinus and the Veronese give us :

*pastores, hедера crescentem ornate poetam,*

which of course is quite good Latin,—‘shepherds, crown with ivy the growing composer,’ and the idea is carried out in the following lines, where he says he does not want to be praised too much for fear some jealous tongue may injure, that is by some curse, ‘the poet that is to be’ (*uati futuro*).

Now the reading of *M* has been wrongly reported as *nascentem*,—‘the composer at his birth,’ which of course is nonsense. Thyrsis has been born long ago. But the real reading of *M*, as I found with interest, is *nascente*, an ablative agreeing with *hederam*. That is quite a different thing. We all know how lovely the young shoots of ivy are when the leaves are just unfolding, how different from the dank and dusty leaves of the full-grown plant. Of course the meaning in prose would be the same. The infant ivy would be a symbol of the budding, but immature, genius of the poet, and it would prepare the way, just as well as *crescentem* does, for the later lines, but prepare it with a pretty image, instead of a straightforward, ordinary epithet. Here I have very little doubt that *M* is right. The ordinary scribe, not seeing the playful suggestion of the image, would alter *nascente* into *nascentem* to agree with *poetam* ; and then a correction to the more truthful *crescentem* would be easy.

Now let us turn to a few passages in which *M*, as I think you will agree, has quite certainly preserved the real text. First a very simple case in the Sixth Book (l. 231). After Aeneas has done the last rites to honour Misenus, he concludes by sprinkling his companions

with the lustral water (*lustravitque viros*). Here both the Palatinus and the Romanus have the absurd corruption *domos* instead of *uiros*. There were no houses on the shore. So in Book x. (l. 657), *M* alone gives us what Vergil wrote, *dia Camilla*, 'goddess-like Camilla'; Romanus has sadly corrupted it into *dura*, and the others into *aiua*. She was not 'a goddess,' but she was 'like a goddess.' And again in the famous passage at the end of Book i. of the Georgics we have to thank the source from which the good Apronianus drew his corrections for giving us what Vergil certainly wrote: *inclusas auro uestes*—'garments made foolish with gold embroidery,' whereas *P*, *R* and *M* himself give us *inclusas*, which could only mean 'shut up in a golden box.'

One more passage where I feel sure, with Bentley, that *M* is right, though the reading of the others affords quite a possible meaning, is Aen. x. 291, where Tarchon is looking out for a good place to land: *qua uada non sperat*—'where he does not expect any shoals.' But that phrase would certainly suggest that his hopes were going to be disappointed, which they were not. He makes a successful landing. The Medicean reading is far more like Vergil: *qua uada non spirant*—'where no shoals breathe foam,' like a splendid line in the First Book of the Georgics: *feruetque fretis spirantibus aequor*, where it is interesting to note that *R* has altered what he thought was a strange word (*spirantibus*) into *spumantibus*.

But finally, our greatest debt of all to the Medicean is its completeness. It contains far more of Vergil than any other of the Capital manuscripts. For example, this is the only one of them that records the temptation of Camilla (xi. 757-782), where the maiden warrior is led into an incautious pursuit of a particular enemy by the splendour of the robe he is wearing, and exposes herself to attack from behind. The lines are of course genuine, and the whole story of Camilla would be spoilt without them. More important still is the fact that the first hundred and thirty-nine lines of the Second Book of the Georgics are completely lost in *P* and *R*, and all but twenty-seven of them lost in *V*, so that the Medicean is our only early authority.

Now I know by experience that the schoolboy, and even a first-year-student, would feel no great pang at the loss of these lines, which are not easy. But I venture to ask you now just to notice how much

there is of the real Vergil which these lines make very clear to us, some things perhaps even more clear than they are anywhere else.

If among you there are any who happen to have read this passage with me, I must ask their pardon for taking them over old ground, though perhaps, if they share my feelings about it, it will not be less pleasant for that. Bacchus is first invoked by a Greek name (*Lenæe*, 'god of the wine-press'), and the schoolboy wonders why he should be required to learn that too; and he is still more puzzled to know why in the eighth line this same deity is told that he must 'throw off his buskins,' *dereptis cothurnis*; and with difficulty he suppresses a sigh at having to learn what a buskin means—a high shoe worn by the actors in Greek tragedy. He cannot think what Greek tragedy has to do with Italian farmers, and none of the commentaries enlighten him; indeed some of them join him in grumbling.

Well, as usual, the things that strike us as most difficult in Vergil at first sight are those most richly worth study.

Not Bacchus only, but many other deities, Vergil loves to call by their Greek names; and not in this way only, but in many others, Vergil is always trying to bring in aspects of life, familiar to the Greeks, less familiar to the Italians; and he does this deliberately, because he wants to infuse the humdrum work, and the still more humdrum religion, of the Italian farmer with the lively spirit of Greek fancy and Greek story. So that, for instance, he will not think of Ceres merely as the power which makes the corn grow and has no other interest in the world and nothing else interesting about her; but as the beautiful, bereaved, divine Mother, who goes mourning half the year because her lovely daughter has been snatched away below ground to be the bride all the winter of the dusky Lord of the Dead. I must not dwell on this now, but only ask you to remember that in this Vergil felt he had a sort of mission, to enliven and enlighten all the farmer's days.

But what about the buskins? "Why," asks the schoolboy, "why when I have learnt that Bacchus is the god of wine, need I have to be taught also that he was the patron of Greek tragedy where the actors wore that kind of shoe?" What has Vergil done? He has called Bacchus in this picture away from the stately drama and music of the Lenæan festival at Athens and the solemn performance of some great tragedy by an Aeschylus or a Sophocles,

plays, whose magnificent poetry touched all the problems of life and probed the depths of the human soul, to the vats in which the new plucked grapes are to be trodden and the workers' knees are to be stained deep in the red juice ; away out to the sunny Italian autumn on some fragrant hillside. And why does he do it ? Might not a critic say that to conjure up these two contrasted pictures delays, rather than helps, the reader's progress ? But it was worth while to give the space of a line to a picture which compels us to realise how dear and how great Vergil thought his subject to be. He makes no claim as to his own powers ; he feels that he needs all the inspiration that ancient poets have enjoyed if he is to do justice to his subject. But what he alleges with fervour in this beautiful image, is that the subject deserves such inspiration ; that a poem which will celebrate worthily the glory of the farmer's work should deserve to be read side by side with the great tragedies of the Greeks.

All that side of Vergil's thought the Medicean has made clear to us by preserving these lines.

A little further on (ll. 45-76) we find that Vergil, as he has done elsewhere, tells us what he will not do. He will not involve the reader in a roundabout preface and invented stories ! Again the poor schoolboy shakes his head. Why on earth should Vergil have thought of doing such things, and spend time in telling us he will not ? But the answer is clear. The Alexandrine school of poets, under whose influence, especially that of Catullus, Vergil had begun to write, made it a point of honour never to approach their subject directly. When Gallus wanted to tell the tragic story of Scylla, the daughter of Nisus, he felt it would be wrong to begin it without first explaining in a parenthesis of thirty-four lines that he is not going to talk about quite a different Scylla, the daughter of Crataeis, who was turned into a monster, inhabiting the cave by the Sicilian Straits. Vergil's schoolboy poem about the underworld, the *Culex*, is wrapped up, as you know, in the pretty story of the gnat who saved the shepherd's life at the cost of her own. These tricks of the poetic trade Vergil henceforward renounces. He looks now for his model to the old Greek poets of the greatest period, not to those of Alexandria.

Another note which these lines strike is of course not new,

though here Vergil has put it, in line 61, into words which make a rhythm unique in all the thousands of lines which he wrote :

*scilicet omnibus est labor impendendus, et omnes  
cogendae in sulcum.*

The hammer of the three separated dactyls comes down with a crash upon the spondee of the fourth foot, and we feel the force with which all the plants, yes, every one, must be brought into military discipline, must be 'made to toe the line,' to stand straight in their rank. Hard work is the first condition of farming, but it is work in which he will take delight :

*iuuat Ismara Baccho  
conserere,*

'it is a delight to cover the Balkan valleys with the vine.' That word *iuuat*, especially at the beginning of a sentence, occurs again and again in Vergil's poetry ; in spite of all its sadness life is full of things good to see and to do.

Come now to quite a different note in a passage which strikes us as full of strange names (ll. 83-108), for which indeed Vergil himself apologises at the end. After he has told us a score of different species, he breaks off and says that we might as well try to count the sands of the desert or the waves of the sea ! Yes, but how has he done it ? Every one of the species has some picturesque quality attached, and some are described, not exactly by visible, but (what shall we say ?), by their spiritual characteristics. The Laguean wine 'one day is going to try the steadiness of your feet and the sureness of your tongue' ; the Raetic wine (that is the still famous wine of the Val Tellina) is told 'not to be proud and think it can rival the Falernian.' Or the wine of Tmolus, 'to which the golden royal wine of Chios rises to show respect,' or as we should say 'lifts his hat.' How many generations of solemn commentators have failed to see the fun which breathes through these lines ! And not these only. Even within the limits of this passage we find the tree, which has had another kind of shoot grafted upon it, 'wondering at the strange leaves and fruits that it cannot call its own' (l. 82). And the young plant, that has grown up from what gardeners call a sucker, grumbling 'at its mother's big shadow' (l. 56). There are of course certain people who can never see any trace of a jest that is not printed in capital letters ; but those who are willing to receive the pleasure



which Vergil's gentle humour is there to give them will find it continually in the Georgics.

And this humour is closely associated in all the examples I have mentioned with another feature of the poem, which is often regarded as a mere mechanical device, but which in fact has a significance of its own—namely Vergil's continual habit of attributing personality, not merely to animate creatures, but to plants, large and small, as well as to rivers and winds, countries and stars, and 'glad Mother Earth' herself (l. 327). Just as the young shoot feels its mother's shadow too large, so on the other hand some trees 'wait' to produce young shoots, 'a living family within their own ground' (l. 27), until 'their branches are bent down into the arch of the layer,' and so pinned in the soil. Others, again, if you treat them kindly and educate them, will consent to 'put off their savage temper and follow you obediently into any line of growth you will' (l. 51).

This way of seeing in other parts of creation some portion of that same creative spirit from which our human personalities spring, is perhaps Vergil's deepest feeling about the natural world; and it is this that makes him think that the farmer's life is so divine, because he is everywhere in touch with

"the hands  
That reach through nature moulding men"

and beasts and plants.

But in that same stanza Tennyson reminds us of what is perhaps a still deeper part of Vergil's consciousness, which appears plainly even in this small part of the Georgics. "The hands" that Tennyson knew came, you remember, "out of darkness." Just so, behind and around all Vergil's thought, lay a sense of mystery. In the Aeneid we know it in its most powerful and dramatic shape; in the tragedies of Dido, of Pallas and Lausus and Euryalus; of the needless war in Latium against Aeneas; of the appalling century of civil war in the Roman Empire; of the Emperor's own bereavement in the death of Marcellus. And in the Georgics the Third Book in each of its halves is so planned as to lead up to a tragic climax. These things every student of Vergil knows or should know. But even in smaller touches there appears the same wistful temper.

A form of narrative, which Vergil loves, no doubt partly because it affords a variety from the prosaic course of exposition, but also

because it suggests the limits of our knowledge, appears three times in these lines which only *M* has saved ; I mean the habit of stating things in a negative way. 'The rule for grafting is not simple' (l. 73) ; 'the number of kinds of grape are not to be counted' (l. 104) ; 'nor do the rich olives all grow after one fashion' (l. 85). Plainer examples still of Vergil's sense of contradiction, of his wonder, merging into pathos, are not wanting even in this short passage. The virtues of the citron conclude with its potency as an antidote ; 'if some cruel stepmother has poisoned the cup.' And when we fail to count the waves of the sea, it is because a south-east wind 'has fallen too fiercely on the ships.' And the tree which the forester will cultivate by taking slips is described as 'destined one day to brave the disasters of the seas' (l. 68). Of course that tells us by implication of the strength and size of the pine tree ; but it hints also at the struggle which that stout timber and the human beings whom it will carry must endure.

Perhaps you will think that I am laying too much stress on small points, and that in many or all of the examples that I have given you Vergil meant less than I suggest. Well, no one can prevent your so thinking if you choose ; no one can make you grasp the hand of understanding and penetrating sympathy which Vergil holds out to his reader, in this way or that, in nearly every line. But the longer you live in the study of what Vergil wrote, the more clearly you will know that that hand is there.

## APPENDIX.

### *Specimens of Writing from other Capital Manuscripts of Vergil.*

These specimens are presented in what, so far as I can judge, is their chronological order, except in the case of the first, the Augustean, whose date is by no means certain. In this part I am deeply indebted to the kind advice of Professor E. H. Minns, F.B.A., of Cambridge, though he is not responsible for anything but the words I have explicitly quoted from his letters.

Fig. 3 is from what is called the Augustean fragment, now in the Vatican library (though a facsimile is in the Library here); and though it is far from certain, as scholars have generally supposed, that its hand is the earliest of all—since, as Professor Minns points out to me, it could be revived at any time from abundant examples of inscriptions in the grand style on stone—yet it gives us a sort of standard. Its value is just that the hand is so like the writing of inscriptions of the best period, what we call Lapidary style. Indeed it differs very little from the capital letters that we see in print every day, because the first printers very wisely went back to the finest type of the Latin alphabet, not to the forms into which it gradually had been degraded in handwriting in this or that country of Europe by the fifteenth century.

Let me call your attention just to the chief marks of this hand which is known as the Quadrate Capital. Notice that B and P and R are always open, that is, their curl does not come right in so as to touch the upright, and that C and D are always big, nearly as broad as long. Further that E has always a substantial middle bar, and that this bar is always in the middle; that the two strokes of H are equally long; that M has its first stroke slanting and its last stroke nearly vertical; and last and chiefly, that what we call the finials, that is the little tips which we put across the ends of straight strokes at the top and bottom, are always small and straight. Yet the style

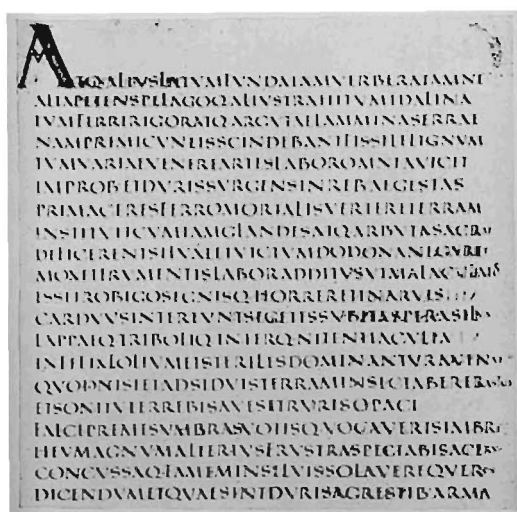


FIG. 3.—From Fragm. Augusteum (Georg. i. 141-160).

[To face page 352.]

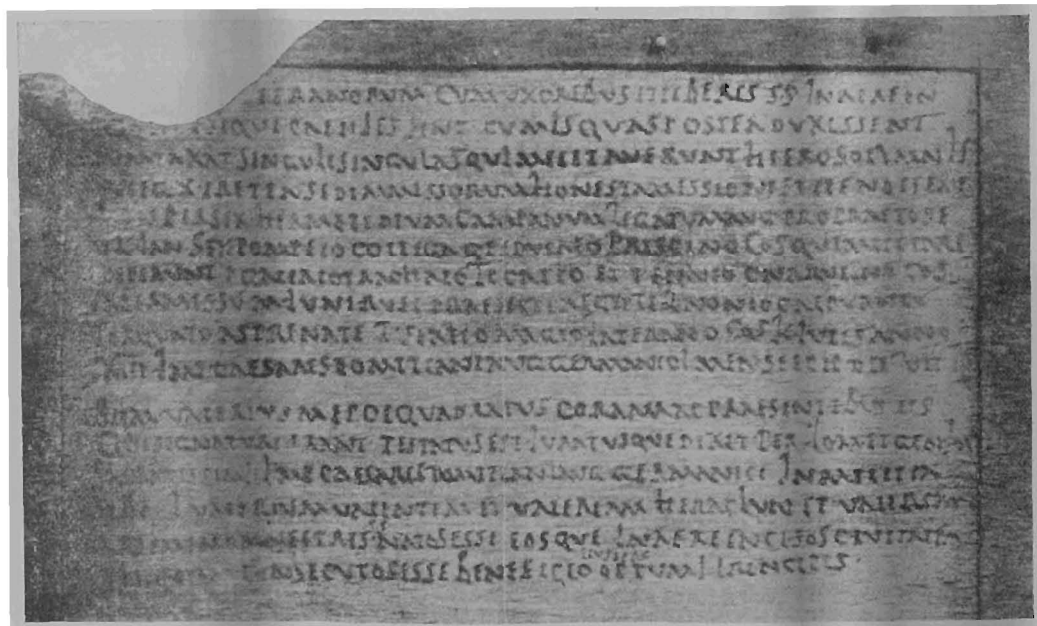


FIG. 4.—Part of Diploma of 94 A.D.

[See page 353.]

is not quite Lapidary, for the first letter has lost its middle bar and F has turned its top bar upwards, so as to be a little higher than the top of the next letter ; and T is just a little whimsical with its cross, not always equal on two sides of the upright, not always quite straight. [The exaggerated big letter at the beginning of the page reminds me of the Greek codex A of the Bible, almost certainly fifth century.—E. H. M.]. To this I may add from the linguistic point of view that the corruption of *b* into *v* in the word *solavere* in the last line but one is fatal to the supposition of any very early date.

Fig. 4 gives us a part of a Diploma<sup>1</sup> of Enfranchisement of a soldier who received his discharge and Roman citizenship by this document in A.D. 94. I transcribe a few portions (with the kind help of Mr. Schofield and Mr. Bell of the British Museum).

The last word of the ninth line and the tenth line give us the date of the document :

*Anno XIII Imp. Caesaris Domitiani Aug. Germanici mense epif. die VII* (the month named is roughly the Egyptian equivalent of July (June 25—July 24), the enfranchisement taking place in Alexandria). The next lines give us the name of the discharged soldier and introduce his sworn declaration before witnesses :

*M. Valerius M(arci) f(ilius) Pol(lia tribu) Quadratus, coram ac praesentibus eis qui signaturi erant testatus est iuratusque dixit.* The document ends by ascribing the boon to the emperor's grace : *beneficio optumi principis.*

In this rather ordinary, not to say vulgar, writing A has completely lost its cross bar ; B is tall and has its upper portion much smaller than the lower, as in line 1 ; C is broad, and so is D ; E has all its bars short and equal, but the top bar sometimes seems to point upward, as in *postea* in the second line ; F is beginning to be taller than E, as in *beneficio* in the last line, and G has its bar large but slanting, yet not below the line. H has lengthened its first stroke high above the line, and also above the second stroke, in the last line but three ; I, L and T are sadly alike. They happen to occur together in the phrase *et liberis* in the first line here shown. M has all its strokes slanting, and N slants too but tries to keep its third stroke upright. P sometimes

<sup>1</sup> I owe this interesting photograph to the kindness of Professor Minns, who took it from the *Bulletin de la Société Archéologique d'Alexandrie* reproduced in the *Illustrated London News*, 3rd September, 1910.

has its loop closed, as in the seventh line, but sometimes open as in *postea* in the second line and *optumi* in the last line. Q has a straight and limited tail, pointing below the line; R is generally closed as in the first and seventh lines, but sometimes open as in *principis*, the last word.

If we allow for the fact that this is a document written on wax with no particular care, since such Diplomas had to be prepared in great numbers, whereas our Medicean was written with great care, the two hands are remarkably alike. If the reader will glance back at the specimens given in Figures 1 and 2 of the Medicean, he will observe a somewhat earlier type in the forms of B, R and H, but a rather later type in F, E and L.

Notice also in the Medicean the forms of the letters A, T, P, C and G, and the regularity of the form of F though it has grown rather tall as L has done. Q is only allowed to flourish his tail when he is in the last line of a page. The hand of the Medicean seems to me so simple and straight-forward and business-like, and the finials so straight and limited that I cannot but think it distinctly older than that of the Palatinus to which we now come.

Fig. 5 is a specimen of the famous Palatinus, which has been

VILLAMORAAITECEARENIQVEAONIAIACANITTE  
 ILIVAEITIAALLAUREITIAMITEVEIREMYKICAE  
 EINFELIVAEITIAMASOLASVBRUPTIACENTEM  
 AAFAIAIVSEIGELIDIEVEAVNISAXALYCAEL  
 STANTIOVISCIAVCUMNOSTRINECPAENITAEITILLAS  
 NECTAEENITAEATECOAISDIVINEPOIA  
 ETICAMONSVSOVISADIVAMINARAVITADONIS

FIG. 5.—From Palatinus (Ecl. x. 12-18).

commonly supposed to be earlier than the Medicean. It is certainly earlier than the two we shall consider next. You see that M always has its first stroke inclined; and that F although it is rather curious through the smallness of its middle stroke and the largeness of its foot which make it very much like E, still does not flourish its upper stroke in the air. On the other hand, that I is distressingly like L; and T has a foot which sometimes might deceive us into thinking it an I, though in fact there is rarely any doubt in this manuscript. P has a tiny curl and a large foot, and V is beginning to be round, though the junction of its two halves is nearly always perfect. The finials also (in *a, u, i, m, f, y, p*) and the cross of *t* and the feet of *e* and *l* all

CUNCTA VIDENS MAGNO CURARUM FLUCTUATA EST  
 ADQUE ANIMAM NUNC HUC ILLI TAM NON DIVIDITUR  
 IN PARTIS QUAE PARTIVAS PER OMNIA VERSAT  
 SICUT AQUA ET REA IN VALLABRIS SUBIUVIA ENITIS:  
 SOLI REPERCUSSUMA TRADANTIS IMAGINE LUMINAE  
 OMNIA PER VOLTAT LALOCUM AQVE SUB AVRAS  
 ERIGITUR SUMMA QVE ERIT LAQUEARIATICTI . . .  
 NOXERAT TERRAS ANIMALIA FESSA PER OMNIS  
 ALITUVAT ECUMUM QVE GENUS SOPORALTVS HABEBAT  
 CUM PATER IN RIPA GELIDI QVE SUBAITHIRIS AXI  
 AENEASTRISTITURBATVS PICTORABELLO  
 PROCVBVLITER AQVE DEDITERRAM BRACVITEAM  
 HVICQVE SI SE LOCFVVIOTI BERINVS AMOENO  
 POTVLAS INTER SENIORE ATTOLLERE FRONDES  
 VISVSCVAM INVISGLAVCOVLATAM ICTV  
 CARBASVSETRINISVMBROSNTIGEBATARVNDQ  
 TVA SICADLABITCVRA SHISDEME RE DICTIS  
 OSATIGENTI DIVATROIANAM EXHOSTIBVS VRBE

FIG. 6.—From Romanus (Aen. viii. 19-36).

[To face page 355.

begin to fancy themselves : they have an air as if to say, "we too have a daintiness of our own." It is a pretty piece of writing, and the writer knew it. I must confess my own impression that these peculiarities on the whole point to a somewhat later date than that of the Medicean ; and I am greatly confirmed by the judgment of Professor E. H. Minns who writes to me on 13th April, 1931 : "I am inclined to put the Mediceus before the Palatinus which I regard as rather artificial, not altogether unlike the Romanus. . . . I think *P* and *R* with *A* the latest and most artificial."

Fig. 6 shows a page of the Romanus ; a glance at the last line will show most of its peculiarities. T has a very small top, B and R are closed, and R is inclined to wave his tail ; the first stroke of M is nearly upright, and H and F approach the forms they have in the Verona Palimpsest (Fig. 7). Even apart from other characteristics, such as the use of the Christian abbreviation  $\overline{DS}$  for *dominus*, there is no doubt that this codex is far later than those we have been considering, perhaps as late as the sixth century.

A	K K k	Q
G B	L L L	R
C C	L	S
D	M	I I I
E E E	N	U
F	O	
G G	P C	X

FIG. 7.—Signs used in the Veronese Palimpsest.

Fig. 7 gives specimens of the letters used in the Vergilian part of the Palimpsest of Verona. (A Palimpsest, of course, means a parchment or paper which has been used twice, in the way in which our grandmothers used to cross their letters). By the use of chemicals the later writing has been removed leaving the older writing just visible. But the signs are faint and so near the colour of the page that they are not easily photographed, as a glance at the (almost illegible) page of it given by Châtelain in his great *Paléographie des classiques Latins* (Vergil section) will show. Hence I can only give here a table of the alphabet



as I roughly transcribed it in April, 1930. See then what has happened by (say) the fifth century ; B has almost lost its top ; C and D have been narrowed, and C is developing a crest ; E has a large foot and a small head ; F flourishes its top stroke in the air ; G and H and P have been strangely modified ; I has become too much like L and T too much like I ; and R and Q have let their tails grow very long. Altogether it is a hand embellished and tricked out in a thoroughly fanciful way.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter so far as the Medicean is concerned ? Of the other manuscripts of Vergil in rustic Capitals the nearest to M are the Vatican Fragments (3225), generally known as F, of which the John Rylands Library possesses a facsimile. On both of them I cordially subscribe to the opinion of the able and learned collator of the Medicean, Dr. Max Hoffmann (*Codex Mediceus des Vergilius*, Berlin, 1889, p. xv.), though he only put it forward as an alternative which he did not regard as proved. His reason for hesitation was that he felt bound to leave open as a possibility the view of Ribbeck that the codex was not the actual manuscript on which Asterius entered his remarks. If, however, it could be shown (as I think has been shown above) that the codex was that which Asterius actually had in his hand, in that case Dr. Hoffmann admitted that the age must be judged by its writing. Of this and of that of the Vatican Fragments, he says that both seem to him 'not at all far from the writing of the papyri of the second or even the first century.'

Its resemblance to the Diploma, which we have studied, seems to me to justify us in referring it to a period, and not at all a late period, in the second century.

[After kindly glancing at the proof of this Appendix, Mr. B. Schofield suggested that I should compare the hand of the Medicean with that of two datable papyri in rustic capitals, both of the second century A.D. One is given in *New Palæog. Soc. Facsim.*, Series ii. 186, the register (*pridianum*) of a cohort in Moesia about 102 A.D. ; the other is given by H. J. M. Milne, *Catal. Literary Papyri in Br. Mus.* 184, plate XI, a fragment of a grammarian's treatise which is written on the back of a list of consuls including the year 153 A.D., and is therefore later than that date.

Both of these documents, in most of the test-letters (*b, e, h, i, m,*

*p*, *r*, *l*) show forms which are more sophisticated (in the later document considerably more) than the simple forms used by *M*; though the grammarian lengthens *f* by stretching its hasta far below the line.

In every respect the writing of *M* is nearer to that of the Diploma of 94 A.D. than it is to that of these papyri.

This appears to me to give strong support to the view of the date of *M* which I have stated above. All the comparisons I have made throw into clearer light the character of the scribe or scribes (probably two trained in the same school) who wrote the Medicean. They were thoughtful scholars, ready to adopt the reforms of their day, such as the heightened F and L which were manifest improvements, but yet in all other respects carefully following the best tradition they knew. And their attitude to the text they were copying or editing might, I think, be described in exactly the same words.]

R. S. C.

St. Albans, June, 1931.