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MINOR LATIN POETS

VOLUME I

Translated by

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WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY

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MINOR LATIN POETS

I

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PREFACE

To select for a single edition in the Loeb Classical Library a series of works representing the minor poetry of Rome has been a task of much interest but of no little difficulty. The mere choice of poets and poems could hardly be thought easy by anyone acquainted with the massive volumes issued in turn by Burman senior and his nephew, the *Poetae Latini Minores* by the former (1731) and the *Anthologia Latina* by the latter (1759—1773). But a more serious difficulty confronted the editors; for, in spite of the labours of scholars since the days of Scaliger and Pithou on the minor poems collected from various sources, the text of many of them continues to present troublesome and sometimes irremediable *cruces*. This is notably true of *Aetna* and of Grattius; but even for the majority of the poems there cannot be said to be a *textus receptus* to be taken over for translation without more ado. Consequently the editors have had in most cases to decide upon their own text and to supply a fuller *apparatus criticus* than is needful for authors with a text better established. Certainly, the texts given by Baehrens in his *Poetae Latini Minores* could not be adopted wholesale; for his *scripsi* is usually ominous of alterations so arbitrary as to amount to a rewriting of the Latin.

At the same time, a great debt is due to Baehrens in his five volumes and to those who before him, like the Burmans and Wernsdorf, or after him, like

Vollmer, have devoted scholarly study to the *poetae Latini minores*. Two excellent reminders of the labours of the past in this field can be found in Burman's own elaborate account of his predecessors in the *Epistola Dedicatoria* prefixed to his *Anthologia*, and in the businesslike sketch which Baehrens' *Praefatio* contains. The editors' main obligations in connection with many problems of authorship and date may be gauged from the bibliographies prefixed to the various authors.

In making this selection it had to be borne in mind that considerable portions of Baehrens' work had been already included in earlier Loeb volumes—*e.g.* the *Appendix Vergiliana* (apart from *Aetna*) and the poems ascribed to Petronius. Also, the *Consolatio ad Liviam* and the *Nux*, both of which some scholars pronounce to be by Ovid, were translated in the Loeb volume containing *The Art of Love*. Other parts such as the *Aratea* of Germanicus were considered but rejected, inasmuch as an English translation of a Latin translation from the Greek would appear to be a scarcely suitable illustration of the genuine minor poetry of Rome. It was felt appropriate, besides accepting a few short poems from Buecheler and Riese, to add one considerable author excluded by Baehrens as dramatic, the mime-writer Publilius Syrus. He is the earliest of those here represented, so that the range in time runs from the days of Caesar's dictatorship up to the early part of the fifth century A.D., when Rutilius had realised, and can still make readers realise, the destructive powers of the Goths as levelled against Italy and Rome in their invasions. This anthology, therefore, may be regarded as one of minor imperial poetry

extending over four and a half centuries. The arrangement is broadly chronological, though some poems, like the *Aetna*, remain of unsettled date and authorship.

While, then, the range in time is considerable, a correspondingly wide variety of theme lends interest to the poems. There is the didactic element—always typical of Roman genius—pervading not only the crisp moral saws of Publilius Syrus and the *Dicta Catonis*, but also the inquiry into volcanic action by the author of *Aetna* and the expositions of hunting-craft by Grattius and by Nemesianus; there is polished eulogy in the *Laus Pisonis*, and eulogy coupled with a plaintive note in the elegies on Maecenas; there is a lyric ring in such shorter pieces as those on roses ascribed to Florus. A taste for the description of nature colours the *Phoenix* and some of the brief poems by Tiberianus, while a pleasant play of fancy animates the work of Reposianus, Modestinus and Pentadius and the vignette by an unknown writer on *Cupid in Love*. Religious paganism appears in two *Precationes* and in the fourth poem of Tiberianus. Pastoral poetry under Virgil's influence is represented by Calpurnius Siculus, by the Einsiedeln Eclogues and by Nemesianus, the fable by Avianus, and autobiographic experiences on a coastal voyage by the elegiacs of Rutilius Namatianus. Although Rutilius is legitimately reckoned the last of the pagan classic poets and bears an obvious grudge against Judaism and Christianity alike, it should be noted, as symptomatic of the fourth century, that already among his predecessors traces of Christian thought and feeling tinge the sayings of the so-called " Cato " and the allegorical teaching of the *Phoenix* on immortality.

PREFACE

The English versions composed by the editors for this volume are mostly in prose; but verse translations have been written for the poems of Florus and Hadrian, for two of Tiberianus and one of Pentadius. Cato's *Disticha* have been rendered into heroic couplets and the *Monosticha* into the English iambic pentameter, while continuous blank verse has been employed for the pieces on the actor Vitalis and the two on the nine Muses, as well as for the *Cupid Asleep* of Modestinus. A lyric measure has been used for the lines by Servasius on *The Work of Time*. Some of the poems have not, so far as the editors are aware, ever before been translated into English.

The comparative unfamiliarity of certain of the contents in the miscellany ought to exercise the appeal of novelty. While *Aetna* fortunately engaged the interest of both H. A. J. Munro and Robinson Ellis, while the latter also did excellent service to the text of Avianus' *Fables*, and while there are competent editions in English of Publilius Syrus, Calpurnius Siculus and Rutilius Namatianus, there are yet left openings for scholarly work on the minor poetry of Rome. It possesses at least the merit of being unhackneyed: and the hope may be expressed that the present collection will direct closer attention towards the interesting problems involved.

Both editors are deeply grateful for the valuable help in copying and typing rendered by Mrs. Wight Duff.

July, 1934.

J. W. D.
A. M. D.

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PUBLILIUS SYRUS

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TO PUBLILIUS SYRUS

To the Caesarian age belonged two prominent writers of mimes with both of whom the great Julius came into contact—Decimus Laberius (105–43 B.C.) and Publilius Syrus. Publilius reached Rome, we are told by the elder Pliny,[a] in the same ship as Manilius, the astronomical poet, and Staberius Eros, the grammarian. As a dramatic performance the mime[b] had imported from the Greek cities of Southern Italy a tradition of ridiculing social life in tones of outspoken mockery; it represented or travestied domestic scandals with ribald language and coarse gestures. At times it made excursions into mythological subjects: at times it threw out allusions which bore or seemed to bear audaciously on politics. Audiences who were tiring of more regular comedy found its free-and-easy licence vastly amusing, though Cicero's critical taste made it hard for him to sit through a performance of pieces by Laberius and Publilius.[c]

[a] Plin. *N.H.* xxxv. 58 (199). The correct form of his name, instead of the erroneous "Publius," was established by Woelfflin, *Phil.* 22 (1865), 439.

[b] See Hermann Reich, *Der Mimus, ein litterarentwickelungsgeschichtlicher Versuch*, Berlin, 1903. For brief account, J. Wight Duff, *Lit. Hist. of Rome*, 1909, pp. 222–23; Klotz, *Gesch. der röm. Lit.*, 1930, p. 77.

[c] *Ad Fam.* XII. 18. 2.

INTRODUCTION

There came a day in 45 B.C. when Caesar forced the veteran knight Laberius—he was then sixty—to play in one of his own mimes as a competitor against the alien Publilius, who had thrown down a dramatic challenge to all comers. The dictator, while he awarded the prize to the foreigner, restored to the Roman, with ostentatious condescension, the ring which outwardly confirmed the equestrian rank sullied by his appearance on the stage. This eclipse of Laberius marked for Publilius an opportunity which he knew how to use. Some fresh invention, some originality in treatment capable of catching the popular favour, may be conjectured as the reason why the elder Pliny calls him " the founder of the mimic stage." Of Syrian origin, he had come to Rome as a slave, most likely from Antioch.[a] His wit secured his manumission, and the gift of understanding Roman psychology was a factor in his dramatic success. And yet, in contrast with forty-four known titles of plays by his vanquished rival Laberius, only two of Publilius' titles have come down to us in uncertain form—" The Pruners," *Putatores* (or, it has even been suggested, *Potatores*, " The Tipplers "), and one conjecturally amended to *Murmidon*.[b] Perhaps his improvisations were too precariously entrusted to actors' copies to guarantee literary immortality; and, in any case, though pieces of his were still staged under Nero, the mime gradually lost its vogue in favour of pantomime. The didactic element in him, however, was destined to survive. The elder Seneca praises him for

[a] Plin. *N.H. loc. cit. Publilium* †*lochium* (*Antiochium*, O. Jahn, *Phil.* 26, 11) *mimicae scenae conditorem.*

[b] Nonius, 2, p. 133; Priscian, *Gramm. Lat.* (Keil), 2, 532, 25.

putting some thoughts better than any dramatist, Greek or Roman; Petronius gives a specimen of his style in a passage sixteen lines long, and in the second century Gellius recognises the neatness and quotability of his moral maxims, of which he cites fourteen examples, all but one to be found in our extant collections.[a] Roman educators soon saw practical advantage in excerpting from his mimes, for use in school, wise saws and modern instances, the inherited experience of human conduct brought up to date in pithy Latin. Similar anthologies had already been made from Menander in Greek and very possibly from Ennius in Latin.[b] Such a text-book had been available for generations before Jerome[c] as a schoolboy learned the line "aegre reprendas quod sinas consuescere." But if the earliest collection of the maxims in the first century A.D. was purely Publilian, it is now hard to decide how much proverbial philosophy has been foisted into later collections by free paraphrase of genuine verses and by insertion of thoughts from Seneca (or Pseudo-Seneca) and others. It is equally hard to decide how much has been spoiled or lost by such misreading and distortion of genuine verses (iambic senarii or trochaic septenarii) as led copyists to mistake them for prose. There is, however, good authority for the acceptance of over 700 lines as genuine survivals of what was once a considerably larger selection.

It will be appreciated that Publilius' lines, originally

[a] Sen. *Controv.* VII. 3. 8; Petron. *Sat.* 55; Gell. *N.A.* xvii. 14.

[b] Phaedrus, III. *Epil.* 33–35.

[c] Hieron. *Epist.* 107, 8 (I. 679, Vallarsi): cited again *Epist.* 128, 4: see F. A. Wright, *Select Letters of St. Jerome* (Loeb Cl. Lib.), pp. 356, 478.

spoken by different dramatic characters, could not constitute a uniform ethical standard. In contrast, therefore, with generous sentiments we meet such self-regarding maxims as " It mayn't be right, but if it pays think it so " (quamvis non rectum quod iuvat rectum putes), or the pernicious morality of " The end justifies the means " (honesta turpitudo est pro causa bona). As in the proverbs of all nations, there are contradictory ways of looking at the same thing: while " Deliberation teaches wisdom " (deliberando discitur sapientia), it is also true that " Deliberation often loses a good chance " (deliberando saepe perit occasio); for the sagacity of the ages has always to reckon with both the impetuous and the over-cautious.

Further, if not necessarily either moral or consistent, proverbs are not necessarily profound. So if a few aphorisms dare to be paradoxical, some are the sheerest of platitudes. But, though shallow sayings take us nowhere, the reader meets with pleasure even familiar thoughts in Latin guise like " Honour among thieves " (etiam in peccato recte praestatur fides); " Least said, soonest mended " or *Qui s'excuse s'accuse* (male dictum interpretando facias acrius); " No man is a hero to his valet " (inferior rescit quicquid peccat superior); and " Touch wood ! " (irritare est calamitatem cum te felicem voces).

A few remarks on the manuscript collections are needed to indicate how the text is composed.[a] To

[a] Cf. Schanz-Hosius, *Gesch. der röm. Lit.* ed. 4, 1927, pp. 261–62; W. Meyer, *Die Sammlungen der Spruchverse des Publilius Syrus*, Leipzig, 1877, and the introd. to his edition of the *Sententiae*, Leipzig, 1880. Friedrich (ed. 1880) testifies to Woelfflin's full discussion of Publilian MSS. in the Prolegomena to his edition of 1869, II. pp. 15–23.