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## Ibant Obscuri *Ibant Obscuri*. An Experiment in the Classical Hexameter, by Robert Bridges. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916. 12s. 6d. net.

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the name is found in Athen. IV. 173 B: in the same epigram, l. 5, *πολύπυρον ἀνοίς* 'mayest thou make' (Passow) is preferable. In vi. 173, 1, *Ἀρχυλῖς* of P. should be rejected in favour of Meineke's *Ἀρχυλῖς*; Fick gives names from the stem *Ἀρχυλο-*, and Archylis appears in Terence, *And.* i. 4, 1, where see Bentley's note.

If some suggestions may be added: in Asclepiades V. 185, 5, the word which has fallen out after *ἐξ πρόσλαβε* may perhaps be *θαλλούς*. In V. 101, 4 the dialogue may perhaps be written thus: A. *χρυσίον*. B. *εὐθύμει*. A. *τῆ*.

B. *τόσον*; *οὐ δύνασαι* = A. (pulling out his purse), 'Voilà.' B. (sarcastically) 'All *that*? You cannot.' Both Pal. and Plan. give *τόσον*, and Plan. adds the mark of the question.

Enough has been said to show that the appearance of the remaining volumes will be awaited with interest.

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### IBANT OBSCURI.

*Ibant Obscuri.* An Experiment in the Classical Hexameter, by ROBERT BRIDGES. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916. 12s. 6d. net.

MR. BRIDGES was led to make this experiment by observing the principle of the Latin hexameter, which is generally overlooked. It is this: that in the first four feet of the verse, the word-accent tends not to fall on the first syllable of the foot (commonly called the ictus), but in the last two feet it does so fall.<sup>1</sup> There is always (with perhaps one exception in the *Aeneid*) at least one ictus which has no accent, usually more; sometimes all the first four ictus are without accent. The rhythm thus depends partly on quantity, partly on the interplay of accent, and the general effect is of a series of slight discords followed by a harmony.

Most people are quite unaware of this; they read verse with a heavy emphasis on the ictus (which is unfortunately named, for it had no stress upon it, being merely a translation of *θέσις*, the foot-beat in the dance), and in reading they neglect quantity almost entirely. But it is difficult to convince them that they do so; they will continue to declare that they make certain syllables long, when all they do is to make them loud. Anyone who wishes to test himself can do so by marching in quick step (about the rate of the 'light infantry' march), and

reciting at the same time, one long syllable or two short syllables to a step. When he has accustomed his ear and his tongue to the rhythm, he can get it without marching, but I doubt if he will learn it without either march or metronome, if he has once got into the current habit. The hexameter is a march rhythm; it is usually read as a valse.

Now the current habit spoils the rhythm of the hexameter altogether, because it makes it monotonous: the lines are almost exactly alike. It was this fault that first disclosed the principle to me. Nobody ever taught me how Virgil ought to be read; I heard him read like Longfellow's *Evangeline*, the rank but-terwoman's jog to market—and I venture to aver that no man has ever read *Evangeline* straight through, aloud. I learnt the truth when we began to read Virgil through, in Latin, following out the principles of the Direct Method. I have heard him read through five times now, and the rhythm gives me the same pleasure as *Paradise Lost*. But I could not endure a hundred lines of the jog-trot style, nor, I venture to think, could anyone whose ear had not been spoilt by habit. Perhaps not even they: for no one does read Virgil, in Latin, except a few lines at a time, while his mind is on the difficulties of translation.

English and Latin are alike, in that they have both stress-accent and quantity; they differ from Greek, which had no stress, but a pitch-accent that had no effect on the metre. Hence if the hexameter is to be Englished, it must be treated something in the same way as in Latin, by recognising and using the stress. Ennius, who made it Latin, had

<sup>1</sup> In the pentameter these two concur in the first two feet of the latter half, but they are balanced by a word-accent on the third (rarely the second) syllable of the latter foot. That is, the line ends in an iambic word or a quadri-syllable.

not discovered how to deal with it: hence we often find in him such lines as:

poëte recumbite véstraque péctora péllite tónsis :  
and Virgil's rule for the length of words at the end, which arose out of the main principle, he did not observe. Hence his verses sound rude and rough. Catullus and Lucretius carried the verse a step further, but Virgil alone fully understood and fully used the principle we have been discussing.

The monotony of English hexameters was felt by Clough, whose own attempt rough as it is, deserves closer examination than I can give here; and Tennyson noticed it in the German hexameters, which are even worse than *Evangeline*. Tennyson's 'experiment' in elegiacs (except in one line) carefully follows Virgil's rule:

Thése láme hexámeters the stróng-wíng'd músic of  
Hómer!

But Kingsley's *Andromeda* shows no inkling of the truth. I know of only one work which attempts to carry out the Latin compromise at length, and that is Richard Stanyhurst's translation of the first four books of the *Aeneid*, published in 1582.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately this real merit is obscured by the language he uses, which is so harsh and uncouth that the book is most comic. If he had had as good an ear for sound as he had for rhythm, and any sense of style, he might have added a new metre to English verse. I quote the first lines:

Í that in óld seáson with reéds óten hármoney  
whístled

My rúral sónnét; from fórrest flitted, I fórced  
Thee súlking swínker thee soól, tho' crággie, to  
sónder.

I keep his spelling *thee* for *the*, as a hint of his pronunciation.

Mr. Bridges has not followed Virgil altogether; he has admitted more fully certain rhythms that are found, it is true, in Virgil, but rarely, on the ground that English words often have a final accent, while Latin words have not. That is a matter which cannot be decided offhand. If hexameters are to be Englished, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there may be differences between English and Latin; and the

longer the poem, the greater the danger of monotony: but Virgil succeeded in avoiding monotony through many thousands of verses, and he was most scrupulously careful how he used rhythms like *procumbit húmi bos*. His first one in the *Aeneid* is i. 65, when he borrows from Ennius *divum pater atque hominum rex*, which must have been familiar to every Roman reader; the variety could not have been introduced more delicately. In 105 he ventures a little more, *praeruptus aquae mons*, suiting sound to sense. In 151 there is no exception; for *quem* is enclitic, and the accent of the phrase was *virúm quem* like *virúmque*, and so *si quem* in 181, *priúsqvam* 473, *si quíd* 603. There is no other in the first book. Thus having given notice gently in 65, and repeated it in 105, that he intends to take a liberty now and then, he leaves it until a suitable occasion. But he very rarely uses it; and here I think (although I may be wrong) that Mr. Bridges makes a mistake in using the corresponding liberty so often. He may be right in using the line without discords occasionally: it certainly sounds better than in Latin.

Mr. Bridges has given us several hundred lines of hexameters, so it is really possible now to test what this rhythmical effect will be, and what variety he finds it possible to show. I am sure that critics will find it difficult to estimate this, because in the first place they will be confused by their own habit of reading, and secondly they will be confused by our habit of spelling. For example: a double letter in Latin makes position; but in English it is a sign of a short vowel. Thus *ditty* is *oo* exactly like *pity*, *folly* exactly like *bödy*, *intelligent man* is a rhythm like *ridiculus mus*, pronounced in four groups which take the same time to speak: *in-tél-l-gent-man*. Mr. Bridges helps us by printing *til, sed*, and the like, but he cannot quite avoid the confusion due to the eye. But it is lines like

Thús prófering me présents of wóρθ unknowñ to  
Achíllés.

which will cause most trouble, due to the confusion between stress and length; for *presents* is a true iambus *o* — and this particular rhythm is quite a favourite in Latin.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted by Arber, in the English Scholar's Library.

There is not time to speak of the rest of the book. An Introduction sets forth the principles followed; and opposite the versions of Virgil *Aen.* vi. 268-751 and Homer *Iliad* xxiv. 399-660, a cento of English versions is printed, from Gawin Douglas to Mackail. The study of these is both instructive and amusing. But

the hexameter experiment is worthy of serious consideration; and those who cannot see what he is driving at, as some have already said, might well ponder whether the fault lies in themselves and not in the verses.

W. H. D. ROUSE.

## SHORT NOTICES.

*Towns of Roman Britain.* By J. O. BEVAN. One vol. Pp. 67, with two maps. London: Chapman and Hall, 1917. 2s. 6d.

I REGRET to be unable to praise this booklet, all the more because, twenty years ago, I assisted Mr. Bevan, then a Herefordshire vicar, in preparing a small archaeological survey of that county, of which I have pleasant recollections, though I have not the honour of his personal acquaintance. Still, I am now compelled to say that Mr. Bevan has not properly achieved the interesting task which he set himself, and that, I think, largely because he has not availed himself of known material. Some eight years ago, I drew up a list of the few sites in Britain, which, as it seemed to me, could reasonably be declared to be Romano-British town-sites; at the same time I indicated some hitherto neglected evidence on which my list was based. This list has appeared in print several times. Mr. Bevan takes no heed of this. In doing so he may, of course, be wise; it is hardly for me to say. But I am disturbed at finding that his book suggests to me that he has no very clear conception of what an ordinary Romano-British town was in respect of size, municipal status, etc., and that, moreover, his lists of towns contains several places which pretty certainly were not Romano-British towns. For instance, Caerleon-on-Usk, though it contains ruins belonging to an important Roman military post, was not a Romano-British town; nor was Cardiff, nor Chester, nor Reculver in Kent, nor Lympne, nor Dover, nor Lancaster, nor Manchester, nor Portsmouth, nor even the Isle of

Wight, which, indeed, must have got in by some sort of slip. In all, about two-fifths of Mr. Bevan's 'towns' were not towns, so far as I can judge.

Nor does Mr. Bevan tell his readers much about the remains of those 'towns' which he mentions. Of Cirencester he says merely:

A flourishing Romano-British town, a cavalry post, also a civilian city. At Chedworth, seven miles north-east, there has been unearthed one of the most interesting Roman villas in England.

The entry also states—wrongly—that the Roman name of Cirencester was *Corinimum*. To put it plainly, this was not worth printing. It really tells nobody anything new, save for the obviously misprinted *Corinimum*. Of Lancaster Mr. Bevan gives no details at all. Caerwent he finishes off in two lines:

It was a military station, and important discoveries of Roman remains have been made here.

It was *not* a military station, and its remains throw so useful a light on Romano-British town-life, that they might well have been described beyond the single epithet 'important.' As it is, the entry is surely superfluous. The fact is, the job of describing the towns of Roman Britain is a bigger thing than Mr. Bevan has realised. It could not, I think, be compressed into the compass of sixty-five small pages which he has allowed himself; moreover, apart from two or three small maps, he has no plans or illustrations. I doubt also some of his identifications and etymologies. Chesterford can hardly be Iceanum, for, so far as I can discover, no such ancient name is known. Nor