

found in the church. In the south wall is an early English sedile (or seat for bishops), which has a border of Roman tiles.

A brief account of St. Martin himself might not here be out of place, since he was a genuine Roman. St. Martin of Tours was born at Sabaria in Pannonia, Southern Hungary, in the year 321 A. D. His parents were pagans, but St. Martin became a Christian when quite a young man, being baptized at the age of eighteen. Some three years earlier he had been enrolled in the Roman army.

St. Martin became a tribune or commander of a legion when only twenty years old, and saw much service under the brilliant general, Julian, who was proclaimed emperor in the year 360. The following beautiful legend is usually associated with the name of the warrior-saint:

When riding past the gate of Amiens one bitter day in winter, St. Martin saw a beggar clad in rags and shivering with the cold. The kind-hearted young soldier was filled with pity. Taking off his cloak, he cut the garment in two with his sword and gave half to the beggar. The following night as he lay asleep, St. Martin beheld the Saviour on His throne in heaven, wearing the half-mantle given to the beggar. In his vision he heard Jesus say that the gift had been made unto Him.

In the year 355, when fighting under Julian against the Allemanni, a great change took place in the life of St. Martin. He begged to be released from military duties, saying that he could never draw sword again; being now a soldier of Christ, he had other battles to fight.

Julian called St. Martin a coward and placed him under arrest, but soon afterwards allowed him to depart, as the enemy had sued for terms of peace. Martin became a pupil of St. Hilary of Poitiers and was given the minor office of exorcist. He quickly established a wide reputation for piety, good work, and missionary zeal, and

became Bishop of Tours on the death of Lidorius in 370. At Marmoutier the saint established a monastery, which was notable for the valuable Christian workers it produced.

On the ninth of November, 401, St. Martin died at Candes. Although he was eighty years old, his last prayer was, "Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy people, I would not draw back from the work." With great state and ceremony the aged prelate was laid to rest at Tours.

JOHN A. SAWHILL

### NEW HONORS FOR AN ANCIENT BARD

THIS modern, not to say modernistic, age which so easily takes up anything that is new and so casually discards the old, still finds time in its headlong pace to give a thought to the great moments of the past. The last few years have seen a long procession of celebrations in commemoration of the anniversary of some important event. Sometimes they have been purely local in their nature; sometimes they have been national or international in scope. Few, if any, of them have had the world-wide significance of the celebration which is taking place this year on the occasion of the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Publius Vergilius Maro.

Vergil's name is familiar today in every nation that traces the origin of its civilization, either directly or indirectly, to Greece and Rome. Yet it is no better known than it has been for twenty centuries. Vergil is one of the few great men of the past whose light has shone unceasingly up to our own times. Others suffered periods of oblivion or disrepute; the works of other poets and writers have been treated harshly by the ages or lost entirely—but Vergil's fame rose above the provincial prejudices or the blind

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superstitions of succeeding ages and has come down to us with scarcely a blemish. Indeed, his influence in the world has increased steadily as succeeding generations of poets have found in his works a veritable fountain of inspiration for their own peculiar geniuses.

Although Vergil's biography essentially encompasses twenty centuries, it is worth while to go back to its beginning for a glimpse of the fifty years during which he actually lived and wrote. The actual date of his birth was October 15 in the year 70 B. C., and few will object to the mathematical computation which fixes the present year as the bimillennium. Others, however, point out that the anniversary has been fixed by adding a year which had no existence on the assumption that a whole year intervened between 1 B. C. and 1 A. D., a year which, in the computation, would be designated simply as zero. Of course there was no zero year, and so 1931 may, in a sense, be considered the proper date for the Vergilian celebration. Since both the Julian and Gregorian calendar reforms have taken place since 70 B. C. to complicate the issue still further, it would seem just as well, in the interest of simplicity, that 1930 has been recognized as the bimillennium.

Quite in keeping with the conventions that seem to govern the early days of important personages, Vergil was born upon a farm near the tiny village of Andes, not far from Mantua. His father was prosperous and a citizen of Rome either by right of birth or as a result of Cæsar's edict granting citizenship to all inhabitants of the cisalpine region wherein he lived. At any rate, he was able to send his son to the best schools and to give him the advantage of sitting under the best tutors of the day. His station was such that the youth was able even to undertake the training necessary to qualify him for admission to the courts and, ultimately, the forum, the goal of every high-born citizen of Rome.

Vergil's early schooling was obtained at Cremona and Milan, provincial towns which boasted excellent centers of learning and in which some of the finest of the Greek instructors conducted their classes. Students of the period believe that this provincial study must have been a very fortunate circumstance in Vergil's life, for he came into contact with scholars deeply grounded in philosophy and the classical literature of Greece and Rome; had he gone immediately to Rome for his training he would have been pointed directly toward a public career, with its emphasis on rhetoric and its comparative neglect of the finer arts. When he did at last go to Rome to complete his education, Vergil was able, by reason of his early training, to follow his natural bent for poetry and to pursue with the assurance his background provided the life work he had already chosen.

He was about 16 or 18 when he arrived in the Latin capital, and from that time until the publication of his first poems little is known of his life. We do know that he studied under eminent scholars and that he became the leader of a small group destined to become famous for its part in the rejuvenation of Latin literature. He traveled widely, it is evident, for his poems reveal an intimate and studied knowledge of the Italy which he glorified. This much and a bit more we know or may assume from a study of Vergil's own poems, from casual references of contemporaries, or from the more or less accurate biographies which were written in the centuries after his death. So far as biography in the modern manner is concerned, with its mass of detail, its psychological analysis and its intimate revelations, we must either accept conjecture or go without it. Perhaps it is better to do the latter, for the evidence we have leads to the belief that Vergil's life was a placid one, free at once from the economic worries and restless desire for philosophical and sociological readjustment that have marked the

lives of so many poets. Persons with axes to grind have read mysterious symbolic meanings into his simplest pastoral poems; they have endowed the *Æneid* with remote philosophical and religious significances. These efforts have been the accompaniments of various ages and various stages of human enlightenment, and in spite of them all Vergil has remained, essentially, what he himself aimed to be—a great poet.

During the years he spent in Rome, and even before, Vergil had begun to write poetry. Very few of these early works are known today, and it is doubtful that at the time any of them were published. Nevertheless, the young poet had gathered quite a following, and his friends included not only the younger literary set but a number of important public men as well. Their support stood him in good stead more than once and particularly after the confiscation of his estates near Mantua to provide bounties for loyal soldiers at the close of the civil wars. To repay him for this loss, he was given a new estate in Campania, with lands and an income sufficient to enable him to continue his work.

The *Eclogues*, the first poems which we can attribute to Vergil without question, were published in 37 B. C., when the poet was 33 years old. The following which he had built up won for them instant recognition which never could have been accorded an unknown. He rose to great heights in popular esteem; his poems came to the attention of the rulers of Rome and found favor in their eyes. The quiet, retiring Vergil, who sought only leisure and solitude for carrying on his work, became an idol of Rome. Unofficially, he won recognition almost overnight as the poet laureate of the Latin Empire.

As if to make the appointment official, he was urged by Mæcenus, a statesman and patron of the arts, to undertake a new series of poems, which, employing the pastoral form which Vergil had introduced into

Latin verse, should glorify the agrarian life. Mæcenus, no doubt, was motivated by the immediate need in the new Italian Empire for a "back-to-the-farm" movement. For years Rome had been engaged in almost constant warfare. Cæsar's campaigns of aggression and his assassination had been followed by a series of internal conflicts resulting at last in the establishment of the new empire under Augustus. The man power of Rome had been under arms for so long that the new rulers were having a difficult time persuading them back to peacetime pursuits. So Mæcenus suggested to Vergil that he compose the *Georgics*.

Perhaps the suggestion had almost the force of an order, delivered to the newly crowned laureate of the empire. If it was, he took his time filling it, for it was seven years before the poems were ready for publication. In their creation Vergil employed the same painstaking care, the same meticulous regard for form, beauty, and fitness that characterized his other works. The needs of the empire were forced to wait the poet's inspiration, but the *Georgics*, once they were completed, served their purpose admirably, and once more won for Vergil the acclaim of all Rome.

Then he turned his attention to the work which he had looked forward to for years—the creation of a great epic poem which should glorify the history of Rome from its founding by *Æneas* up to his own time, when, he fondly believed, she had reached the zenith of her power under the benign and peaceful reign of Augustus. The ensuing years were spent in writing, in study, in travel and then in revising, altering, and polishing. By 19 B. C. Vergil believed that the *Æneid* had reached such a stage that only three years more would be required to complete it.

His health, never robust, had been failing more and more, and he determined on a long voyage, during which he hoped to recuperate. Taking his precious manuscript

with him, he set sail for Greece and the islands of the Ægean, believing that the inspiration of new scenes and a new climate might enable him to carry forward his work more easily. The trip was too much for his waning strength. In Athens he met Augustus, who was returning from a visit to the Eastern provinces, and the Emperor persuaded the poet to return to Rome. On the way back Vergil contracted a malarial fever, and a few days after his ship had docked at Brindisi he died. His body was taken to Naples and a great tomb erected to his memory near that city.

Almost with his last breath Vergil had begged the friends who watched at his bedside to bring to him the manuscript of the Æneid that he might destroy it with his own hands. They refused, of course, but it is probable that they were forced to promise that the poem never would be published, for Vergil was firm in his determination that the Æneid, in its incompleting form, should never be given to the public. It was rescued by direct order of the Emperor Augustus, who commissioned several of Vergil's friends to edit the manuscript and bring about its publication. To what extent the original was altered we have no way of knowing, but the Æneid today has some incompleting lines and some obvious rough spots which remain as mute testimony to the untimely death of the poet.

Almost imperceptibly, with the posthumous publication of the Æneid, Vergil's life merged into the Vergilian legend. Less than a century after his death he had become more a god than a man and a poet. His works had revealed, under the none too disinterested scrutiny to which they were subjected, hidden prophecies and profound philosophies of which, doubtless, the poet himself had never dreamed. Earnest disciples and outright imitators made pilgrimages to Vergil's tomb, hoping thus to acquire at least a spark of the flaming genius of the master. Statesmen consulted the

Æneid as an oracle and found therein the advice and prophecy which they sought. The pastoral poet had become a deity in pagan Rome; his birthday was inscribed in the calendar along with those of the other gods, a fortunate circumstance which resulted in the preservation of the date for posterity.

In the early days of Christianity the fathers of the church in Rome, eager to grasp at anything which might lend color to their new beliefs, discovered Vergil. In the Fourth Eclogue they found a prediction of the birth of a child who should grow up to rule the world in an unending era of peace and prosperity. It was, they believed, another prophecy of the birth of Christ, and the pagan deity was immediately elevated to the estate of a Christian prophet. No less an authority than Constantine, when he issued the proclamation making Christianity the official religion of Rome, gave sanction to Vergil's inclusion in the sacred family.

Then came the Dark Ages, the abyss of ignorance and superstition which proved the burial ground of so many of the worthwhile creations of the past. Poetry, especially pagan poetry, along with the other arts, was in disrepute—but Vergil survived. The Vergilian legend took on new and undignified forms, and the poet who had been both pagan god and Christian saint now became a sorcerer and magician. Strange tales were told of the marvelous feats of magic which he had accomplished; of how he had served the court of Augustus as Merlin served the court of Arthur, a master of the black arts. Unpleasant as the facts may be, the important facts are that the Dark Ages did not ignore Vergil or cast him into outer darkness; that they preserved his poems and passed them on to later and more enlightened generations.

And with the return of enlightenment Vergil, almost for the first time since his death, began to take on a natural form.

The *Æneid*, the *Eclogues*, and the *Georgics* were read, not with the distorted vision that comes of fanaticism and ignorance, but rather with the clear eye of understanding and appreciation. Vergil's reappearance as a mortal poet made doubly certain his immortality. Beginning with Dante and coming down through the centuries to modern times, we find a long succession of poets, in many lands and many tongues, who pay willing and genuine tribute to the inspiration they have derived from the Latin poet. In Italy, besides Dante, Tasso, Petrarch, and Boccaccio worshiped at the shrine of Vergil in a more real sense than did the misguided poets of an earlier age. Chaucer, venturing into the uncharted sea of English verse, set his course by Vergil's star. Coming closer to our own time, we find evidences of his influence in the works of Wordsworth, Shelly, and Keats. We see his guiding hand in the poems of the British laureate—Tennyson, who, in his famous ode written at the request of the citizens of Mantua on the occasion of the nineteenth century of Vergil's death, described him as

Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded  
by the lips of man.

This year the Italian Academy will award prizes for the best ode and the best hymn composed in honor of the twentieth centenary of the poet's birth. Practically every nation of the Western world will participate, but, quite naturally, most of the Vergilian celebration will center in Italy, where Vergilian lore and relics will be dusted off for public display and where the ground which the poet trod and which he made immortal in his poems will be visited by pilgrims from all over the earth.

The celebration in Italy has begun. On Easter Monday in dozens of towns and cities orations were delivered by eminent Italian scholars, who dwelt chiefly on Vergil's position as the poet of Italy's rustic life and of Rome's Empire. The Vergilian

Academy at Mantua, where the most notable ceremonies will be held, is preparing an elaborate illustrated edition of all of the undisputed works of the poet, and it has also arranged to publish a complete account of the bimillenary fêtes and orations to be held in the vicinity. Naples is planning special ceremonies at Vergil's tomb, and at the Capitol at Rome fitting observances will be held. Just before the culminating events at Mantua and at Rome, which will take place on October 15, hundreds of admirers of the poet from all parts of the world are expected to take part in several extensive cruises on the Mediterranean, touching many ports in Italy and Sicily mentioned by Vergil in his *Æneid*.

While all this is going on in Italy the celebration will be extended to other nations as well. The British and French Academies have held and will hold meetings at which noted Vergilian scholars will recount the fruits of recent researches into the poet's life and works. In this country the American Classical League is sponsoring a program of observance extending into all of the secondary schools of the land as well as the colleges, universities, and learned societies. The honorary scholastic fraternity of Phi Beta Kappa has undertaken to provide speakers on Vergilian topics in a thousand secondary schools during the year, and the various chapters of the fraternity will sponsor celebrations in their colleges.

The classical league, aside from its work in the schools and colleges, is endeavoring to gather together all available data on the location of Vergilian relics and objects of art. Persons knowing of the existence of rare or out-of-the-way books, manuscripts, coins, pictures, tapestries, mosaics, statues, or other objects relating to Vergil or reflecting in any way his life or works have been urged to communicate with the league. When all of this material is assembled, it will be published as a sort of Vergilian di-

rectory. The league also is encouraging local exhibitions of Vergiliana throughout the country, centering usually in the public libraries or other institutions of learning.

The usual result of such a celebration as this is to bring about a renewed interest in the subject. In Vergil's case, of course, the universal esteem in which he is held scarcely needs such artificial stimulation. While he was still alive Roman school children were reading the Eclogues as a regular part of their course, and there has never been a time since then that a knowledge of his poems has not been considered essential to a well-rounded education. However, to many persons long past school age, the mention of Vergil may bring back only vague and perhaps painful memories of early struggles with the *Æneid*. If the bimillennium serves to bring about a renewal of these youthful contacts on a more friendly and sympathetic basis, something will have been accomplished.

P. STEWART MACAULAY

### MANTUA PLANTS GROVE AS SHRINE TO VERGIL

A correspondent to the *New York Times*, writing from Mantua, tells in the issue of May 25, 1930, of the park opened in celebration of Vergil's birth as follows:

THE bi-millenary of the birth of Vergil, on the Ides of October, 70 B. C., is being celebrated in various ways throughout the world. So universal, indeed, and, apparently, so sincere is the celebration, that one cannot help think that there must be some special reasons for the popularity of Vergil at this particular moment of history, besides just that profound humanism which has always made of him the poet of all ages and of all peoples. Perhaps the longings of our generation find a more congenial expression in his art than in that of any other poet, for it was he who

sang, after the "belli rabies," the noble joys of peace and, after the tragedy of ambitions, the innocence of the man of the fields. Perhaps we feel a vague, superstitious, unconfessed faith in Vergil the magician, who in the Middle Ages worked so many wonders and might even now miraculously restore order in a world of which we have made such a glorious mess.

Above all, the bi-millenary will be an Italian celebration, and the Vergilian Year was opened officially in Italy on April 21st, the birthday of Rome. The culminating point of all the Italian and foreign celebrations will be the opening of the *Lucus Vergilianus*—the great park at the gates of Mantua containing all the plants and flowers named in the works of the poet.

The idea was a happy one. Woods dominate the whole Vergilian landscape. The life-long wish of the poet was "to live obscure amid woods and rivers." There is something grand about woods: they "are worthy of a consul"; nay, "holy" are their shades. He sees them everywhere, and seems always attracted to them by a sort of mysterious fascination. In his youth he knew the woods by the *Mincius* and the *Po*, and faithfully pictured them in after life, their colors and moods, their "cool shades" and their "perfumes."

#### *Sacred Trees*

The brown reeds, from the muddy shallows, slowly mount up the banks of the river, and there seem to rest and lean against the "glaucous silver-leafed" poplars. The fourth legend mentioned by Donatus tells that on the place where Vergil was born a poplar was planted, which immediately grew up very high, and was called the *arbor Vergili*. If the poplar was "very dear to Hercules" it was surely dearer to Vergil; it was the tree of the *Mincius* and *Po*, where it is still to be seen in long, gray, melancholy rows. Woods seem always to have inspired Vergil with awe.