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W. A. MERRILL'S LUCRETIVS.

T. Lucreti Cari De Rerum Natura libri sex, edited by WILLIAM AUGUSTUS MERRILL, Ph.D., Professor of Latin in the University of California. New York: American Book Company. No date. Pp. 806.

PROFESSOR MERRILL'S main object, he tells us, is to 'bring into compact form the results of critical work' on Lucretius since 1886, the date of Munro's last edition. Such an undertaking is thoroughly justified, as many passages of the poem have been cleared up in the last twenty years. But, though many scholars have worked at Lucretius, there is one name that throws all the rest into the shade. Giussani's edition is, as Professor Merrill says, indispensable. One may say more than this: if a student has mastered Munro and Giussani, he is really in a position to understand what can now be understood of Lucretius, and need not greatly care if he leaves all the rest unread. If this is true, an edition such as the present, which does not offer an original solution of the problems, must stand or fall according to the use made of the *praeclara reperta* of Giussani.

The introduction (pp. 11-56) deals with a variety of topics: the date of Lucretius and the traditions about his death, the subject of his poem, the Epicurean system, the sources of the poem, the style and metre, the MSS. and editions. The whole can be read with interest; but with the details it is impossible to express satisfaction. There is great disproportion in the treatment: the *vitae* of Lucretius are very fully discussed, but on the obscurer details of the philosophy nothing is said. Nor is the arrangement of topics clear: after four pages given to Epicurean ethics, the account of Epicurean logic is started in the same paragraph. The writer is not always consistent: on p. 15 he says 'it is hard to believe that a mind strong enough to conceive and work out a poem of such worth, could have suffered from intermittent insanity,' and on p. 16 'the belief in his intermittent insanity is not inconsistent with . . . the condition of the poem.' On p. 20 he writes in the text that Cicero 'once declared publicly that his time was always free for poets'; and it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that this is meant to represent a passage from the *pro Sestio* given in the foot-note, *neque poetae tempori meo defuerunt*. This introduction is in no way a substitute for Munro's introductions or for Giussani's prefatory volume.

The text which has no critical notes at the foot of the page, keeps closely

to the MS. tradition. Thus, in Book i. *efferre* is read (l. 141), *horum* (l. 450), *terris* with an obelus (l. 469); no lacuna is indicated before ll. 190, 600, 1085, 1115; ll. 334 and 454 are both retained. The editor in his preface agrees with Brieger and Giussani that Lachmann's theory of an *interpolator irrisor* is no longer tenable; yet he, like the other two, removes i. 44-49 from his text, and in his note attributes their presence to the interpolator whose existence he has denied. Lachmann's square brackets, Brieger's marks of double recension, Giussani's transpositions—all these have disappeared. The text seems not to contain any original emendations or re-arrangement of paragraphs.

In the commentary (pp. 259-789) the striking feature is the editor's knowledge of what has been written on the subject by others. The reader is referred to a multitude of papers in the different periodicals; no emendation or transposition that has ever got itself printed seems to be omitted here. Thus the editor does perform what he undertook in his preface to do; but he does it in such a way that the ordinary student will be puzzled and confused rather than helped. For instance—if there is anything certain about the text of Lucretius, it is that ll. 503-598 of Book i. do not, as they now stand, give a satisfactory sense. Munro, it is true, denied this, but he stands alone in doing so. Accordingly Professor Merrill has a note on l. 551 (it should have come earlier) in which he refers to the views of ten different scholars on the meaning and correct distribution of these paragraphs. In each case he gives only the reference and the conclusions; the ten distinct remedies are disposed of in one note of twenty lines. But it is the business of an editor to do more than this; he ought first to study what others have written and then to state, for the use of the student, what seems to him the true, or at least the most probable, solution of the puzzle. A *Jahresbericht* is one thing, and a commentary is another. Here, as elsewhere, Giussani goes to work in a different way: he points out clearly all the difficulties, notices briefly the conclusions of other scholars, and then states fully a proposal of his own. You may accept his conclusions or you may not; but at least you must recognise the insight with which he pounces on the real points at issue and the power he shows in dealing with the problem.

Lucretius requires so much explanation that an editor who proposes to limit his work to one volume should rigorously banish all superfluous matter from his notes. Much of what appears in the present commentary, though it may be interesting, is not essential to the learner. Thus Lucretius comes to discuss the existence of *tempus* (i. 450) and declares *tempus non esse per se*, but does not say what *tempus* is; so that editors very properly quote the definition of Epicurus, a definition which urgently needs explanation. Now Professor Merrill's note gives sixteen lines to the views of Kant, Spencer, Lewes, and Whewell, and four lines to the Epicurean definition. The student, after reading the note, is bound to ask: 'why is *tempus* an *euentum* and not a *coniunctum*?' But he will get no answer here. No hint is given him that Giussani

propounded a theory of *coniuncta* and *euenta* which does answer this question. Giussani's theory has not been universally accepted; but it holds the field, and no editor ought to pass it by in silence.

The same criticism may fairly be brought against the statistics with which these notes are packed. It is not possible, in a book of moderate compass, to include these without excluding matters of greater importance for the reader. We are told (p. 305) that *per* occurs 309 times in Lucretius; but we are not told of the double sense of *inane* which puzzled every attentive student until it was excellently explained by Giussani. On *alique* (p. 304) we have this note: 'this word in its different forms occurs, with elision of the vowel of the word preceding, in 229, where it is in the first foot, and in 812, 883; 2, 546; 3, 64 where it occurs in the fifth and sixth: it stands in the sixth foot with *que* in 1, 859; 5, 322, 1, 56; in the fifth and sixth without elision in 1, 816; 4, 630; in the fifth without elision in 2, 1156; 4, 1068; in the first in 5, 220; in the first and second in 1, 254.' If this note and others like it had been omitted, there would have been room for some remarks, quite indispensable there, on Lucretius' theory of nutrition on i. 196. In general there is not nearly enough explanation of the argument, and some of the explanations given are quite wrong: thus the *primordia* and the *minimae partes* of which they are composed are actually identified (i. 625 and 627). There are many notes on metre in which Lucretius is taken to task for his shortcomings: *sed mutarentur* and *cum tempestates* are 'inelegant metrically'; in *opera sine diuom* 'the rule, that when the last two words are disyllabic the word preceding should be monosyllabic, is broken.' But this severe critic in a note on *obtritum pondere terrae* (iii. 893) tells us that *obrutum* of MSS. 'may be right,' and again remarks (p. 299) that '*uolucre*s is used oftener than *alites* by Lucretius.'

In conclusion, it must be said that this book is of little value to those who wish to know what Lucretius really meant. To such students a complete translation of Giussani's Commentary with his *Studi Lucreziani* and *Note Lucreziane* would be a far greater boon.

J. D. DUFF.