

The Treatment of Nature in the Poetry of the Roman Republic,
by **KATHARINE ALLEN.** (Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, Philology and Literature Series, vol. I, pp. 89-219.)

With this dissertation of Miss Allen's and Mr. H. R. Fairclough's suggestive monograph on the attitude of the Greek tragedians towards nature, it would seem as if the claims of the ancients in this particular sphere were in a fair way to being vindicated, and the Philistines who are prone to regard nature as a wholly modern discovery discomfited. While Miss Allen has not so rich a field as her predecessor on the Greek side, and perhaps not so skilful a hand, she has succeeded in getting together a very considerable amount of interesting and valuable material. She gives a detailed treatment of all the poets from Livius Andronicus to Varro Atacinus, with the exception of the writers of comedy. Her method is in the highest degree systematic. In the case of each poet, sky, sea, streams, mountains, etc., are treated in succession,

and under each one of these heads the artist's use of simile and metaphor, the special aspects that he represented, the epithets he used, the type of feeling and appreciation of nature that he manifested, are set forth with copious and for the most part happy illustrations. Especially striking are some of the passages quoted from the early dramatists, and students of Latin literature, to say nothing of the ever-increasing army of students of literature in English, will feel indebted to Miss Allen for drawing forth so many gems, albeit broken, from the dark unfathomed caves of the editions of *fragmenta*. Indeed, the number of good lines found among the *reliquiae* of these pioneers in Latin literature is surprisingly large, e. g. the verse cited from Ennius, p. 98:

lumine sic tremulo terra et cava caerula candent,

or the shepherd's description of the first ship in Accius, p. 116. Lucretius, naturally enough, forms the *pièce de résistance*, and some forty pages out of a total of one hundred and twenty are devoted to him, most of the passages being quoted in illustration of his appreciation—if so mild a word can be used of the Lucretian *μαρία*—of the grander aspects of nature. Among the quotations from Catullus, most noticeable perhaps are the lines in the Peleus and Thetis describing the waves of the sea increasing as the morning breeze freshens, p. 192:

post vento crescente magis magis increbescunt,
purpureaque procul nantes ab luce refulgent.

From Cinna is quoted the couplet

te matutinus flentem conspexit Eous
et flentem paulo vidit post Hesperus idem.

At the end of the treatment of each poet a summary and general view of his attitude towards nature is given, and the whole concludes with a survey of the period.

Miss Allen's work shows signs of an unusually sober judgment, and her estimates of the different poets considered are for the most part sound. Perhaps the only criticism that need be made is that she is disposed to exaggerate the difference between the ancient and the modern attitude towards nature. That there is a difference, a very great difference even, no one will deny; but it is going too far to say that while the Latin poets of this period appreciated the various aspects of nature objectively, they had not, except in rare instances, sympathy with nature. The subjective view of nature so frequently found in modern poetry is, to be sure, less prominent in ancient, but it is there. It is exemplified, for example, in the couplet cited above from Cinna, and can be easily established for Catullus by reference to the thirty-first, the address to Sirmio, and the forty-sixth: iam ver egelidos refert tepores etc. Miss Allen's soberness of judgment, indeed, has the faults of its virtues, and, what is certainly unusual in a doctor's

dissertation, she is inclined to be somewhat pessimistic about her subject and to insist upon her authors' limitations. The irreverent sometimes say that searching Latin authors for examples of syntactical phenomena tends not to enthusiasm, and so perhaps a pilgrimage through the Latin poets in search of purple patches may result in some weariness of spirit.

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