

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.

Out of them came, before the appearance of Saturn, the men of his land; and the most famous of all the woods of which he ever sang was inhabited by an unknown god.

It was, therefore, a happy idea to commemorate Vergil by the planting of a wood. Not a new idea, however. At various times projects have been put forward for a Vergilian wood. Mantua fell into the hands of the French in 1796. General Bonaparte, after paying a night visit to Pietole (the great man was rather pressed for time), issued a decree exonerating the village where Vergil was born from all taxes (justice at last to the late descendants of poor Meliboeus!) and ordered that those inhabitants who had suffered from the siege should be compensated.

General Miollis, who, after the departure of Napoleon, remained as Governor of Mantua, became a fervent Vergilian. First of all he baptized with the name of the poet the local academy (which dated from the sixteenth century and had devoted much of its time to learned discussions about the slippers of Homer and the lantern of Diogenes). Then he had erected a pyramid in Pietole, and unveiled it on October 15, 1797, the birthday of the poet. There were great festivities. All the brides of Mantua and its suburbs cast lots, and to a fortunate fifty a dowry was given from the funds of the national treasury. A great banquet was offered in the Piazza delle Erbe, after which there was a pageant down the river, a ball and all sorts of games. The architect Pozzo submitted to General Miollis the project for a *lucus Vergilianus*.

#### *A Great Park Project*

Pozzo wanted to construct a great park with, in the middle, a "laurel-scented grove" surrounded by cypresses, myrtles, roses, violets, narcissi, and hyacinths. Great avenues flanked by Vergilian trees were to lead to the lake, to the ruins of

Troy, to the Grotto of the Sibyl, to the temples of Apollo and Janus, to the country cottages and to the tomb of Ocnus. The whole grove was to be surrounded by a ditch, with the boat of Charon on one bank and the Elysian plains on the other. Here and there were to be statues of the most celebrated men.

The project was approved by Miollis, but there was no money, and Pozzo began by transforming the statues and busts of saints which had been stolen by the French from the churches and convents into statues and busts of great men of classical antiquity! Then, some money having been collected, work was begun on the wood. But in 1801 the Austrians and Russians came and destroyed everything. The Russians left and the Austrians remained. It does not seem that they thought any more of the wood or of anything else about Vergil. Their horses were quartered in the rooms of the Gonzaga Palace transformed into stables, while on the land outside the city the gallows were kept busy.

Nearly a century afterward the idea was taken up again by Giacomo Boni. The *Academia Vergiliana* supported it and appealed for the necessary funds to all the sister academies of Italy and abroad; but the appeal brought in only 1,200 lire (about \$240 at the pre-war value of the lira). Naturally nothing could be done with such a sum. Soon afterward came the great war. Now, at last, the idea has been carried into effect. The Vergilian wood is not finished, but undoubtedly it will be ready by September next, the date fixed for its solemn opening.

It covers fourteen and one-half acres south of Mantua, starting outside the *Porta Vergilio*. The wood is entered by a great walk, 700 yards long and 30 yards wide, flanked by a double row of poplars. A pretty flower bed runs along the middle. The walk ends in a big, circular space to be used for meetings, pageants, dramatic performances, concerts, and festivals. A num-

ber of avenues leave this space and cross the wood in all directions. At the south-eastern end the labyrinth (maze) is being constructed, and near by are the pomarium (orchard) and the vinea (vineyard) with a long pergola. For the general scheme of the lucus the architect has faithfully followed the descriptions of Nietner, Tuckermann, and other scholars who wrote about old Roman gardens.

Beeches, oaks, chestnuts, ash trees, pines, firs, and laurels rise everywhere. There are flowers and fruit trees, and then, immediately beyond the lucus, over another nine and a half acres, a marsh full of reeds, and pastures and fields. Thus it is hoped that specimens of all the trees, flowers, fruits, and cereals mentioned in the works of Vergil (which are said to be 190) will be collected in the wood and in the adjoining stretch of land. Here are his "herbs sweeter than sleep," the "pale violets," and the hyacinths now "gloomy," now "purple-colored," now "so suavely reddish." Here are his "black mountainous cypresses destined to challenge the perils of the sea," and the "keen holm-oak with its indented leaves and black trunk."

#### *The Poet's Birthplace*

The lucus Vergilianus ends where once rose Andes (old Pietole), the birthplace of Vergil. But was Andes really there and was the poet born three Roman miles from Mantua? Nobody ever doubted it until 1762, when the poet Scipione Maffei, basing his argument on the epithet "Venetian" given by Macrobius to Vergil, identified Andes with Bande, a small village twenty miles from Mantua on the hills of Lake Garda. Others later advanced the theory that Andes was Rivalta. Recently Professor R. S. Conway put the birthplace of Vergil in Calvisano, in the province of Brescia, where he conducted a few days ago a pilgrimage organized by the Hellenic Travelers' Club. Returning from Calvi-

sano, Professor Conway and his English pilgrims visited also Mantua. Professor Bruno Nardi, who has just published an essay to confute the theory of Professor Conway and vindicate the Mantuan origin of Vergil, accompanied him and his party to the spot where old Pietole stood. There, pointing out to him certain undulations of the ground and showing down below the marshes formed by the Mincius, he endeavored to convince Professor Conway that that could very well have been the scenery described in the ninth Eclogue, where Vergil speaks of the hills sloping down "usque ad aquam." His eloquence was apparently not successful. But the two scholars, like the two knights of Ariosto, shook hands over their difference and Professor Nardi made a present of his recent essay to his English opponent with a graceful dedication.

#### MON VOYAGE EN CORSE

I HAD been in Europe for more than a month, when I was given a week's vacation, early in September. The hot days of August had found me plunged deep in my books—*Grammaire, Composition, Explication de textes*, and several *Histoires de la littérature française*—and the vacation which the *Université de Nancy* now saw fit to offer came none too soon.

It was going to be such fun, a vacation in Europe—traveling by myself in a foreign land, feeling the flush of independence which being alone and unknown brings, and which is only augmented by being forced to use a foreign tongue as one's weapon of defence and of aggression. But Europe offers so vast a choice of vacation lands that it is almost a hopeless task to make a decision. Close at hand lay Germany, smilingly clean and blond, with shining porcelain stoves and the beautiful Rhine and Schlosses galore; and a bit further was Austria, with Vienna beckoning to the