THE AENEID in the Unwin Critical Library

THE AENEID. By R.D. Williams. London, Allen & Unwin, 1987. Hardback, £22.00, typeset in 10 on 12 point Trump. Pp.171. ISBN 0-04-80042-6.

Over two years have passed since the grievous death on 9 July 1986 of one of the Virgil Society's best-loved Presidents, Robert Deryck Williams, Emeritus Professor in the University of Reading. His close friends will know that even before the severe stroke which finally incapacitated him he had suffered for years from a spinal condition for which surgery was not advisable. Indeed we owe the appearance of this volume to the unselfish labours of his close friend and valued colleague Mr. Fred Robertson who stepped in at a time when the author, having just submitted the manuscript to the publishers, was too ill to give the book its final revision.

The contents comprise eight chapters (pp. 1–161), a Bibliography and Brief Critical Survey (pp. 162–166) and an Index (pp. 167–171). The plan of the book is most easily illustrated by a list of the chapter headings and sub-headings (the latter I give in abbreviated form—(1) Virgil's Life and Works, (2) The Political and Literary Background of Virgil's Times, (3) The Literary sources of the *Aeneid* (i. Homer, ii. Post-Homeric Greek Lit., iii. Latin Lit.), (4) The Composition of the *Aeneid* (choice of subject, method of composition, structure), (5) The Main Themes of the *Aeneid* (Opening scenes; Optimistic Vision of Rome's Greatness; Pathos and Sorrow), (6) The Characters (Aeneas, Anchises, Dido, Turnus), (7) Religion and the Gods, (8) The Influence of the *Aeneid* (Roman Empire, Middle Ages, Renaissance to Milton, Dryden to Present Day, Epilogue). There are numerous quotations from Virgil and from other authors (e.g. Horace, Tibullus, Propertius, Ennius) each of which is accompanied by R.D.W.'s own prose translation.

It follows inevitably from the particulars I have supplied that the arguments are fairly concentrated; in a survey of this length no words can be wasted. Deryck, however, no mean Horatian scholar, knows how

to be *brevis* without being *obscurus*. Though some of today's scholars, too young to have served as he did in the R.A.F., may be unsympathetic to his interpretation of *pius Aeneas* and the epic's final scene, no-one can read this book without being convinced of the author's astuteness, soundness and sensitivity. After all Virgil has been his constant companion from boyhood. Professor Robert Lloyd (in *Vergilius*, No. 32, 1986, p.7) has expressed perfectly what so many of us feel—'In an age which is much given to faddism and gimmickry his scholarship is marked by the ultimate in sound judgement and good sense.'

Members of the Virgil Society, its N. American cousin the Vergilian Society, active Latinists, teachers at school and university, undergraduates and research students will profit from reading this book. But it also has much to offer those who teach and learn about classical civilisation, not to speak of the general reader. I hope we can look forward to a cheaper paperback edition.

In the expectation of such a publication I submit the following *corrigenda* (numerals refer to pages: 23. 1900 years (*must* be in letters); 27. *Virgilianae* (*bis*); 37. *tremefercerit*!; 57. (top) wrong spacing (so too 63, 64, 74, 127, 131 & 134); 69. *audit* (for *audiit*); 88. *volvuntar*!; 97. *exanimus* (for *exanimis*); 119. mindful (for unmindful); 129. *pereqi*! ; 152. Ennuis!; 160. accompianed!; 165. orde (for ordre); 167. Augustine (Octavian) for Augustus; finally, though Mr. Robertson's prefatory note gives the day of Deryck's death, in the 'Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data' the author is listed (i.e. 1917–) as though still with us.

R.D.W.'s references in this volume to his own critical articles are so modest that this reviewer suggests that in a second edition some of the half-dozen blank pages might profitably be filled with a selection from his valuable *Vergiliana*.

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