NOTE ON THE USE OF GLOSSARIES
FOR THE
DICTIONARY OF MEDIEVAL LATIN
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Anyone who has handled many Latin mss. is acquainted with glossae collectae. He has perhaps found at the end of a text some pages filled with words and brief explanations of them, in this style:
Molossus : canis.

At the head of the list there is perhaps the title Glossae Collectae ex Virgilio. How did they come there? The explanation is very simple. A monastery-librarian had borrowed from another monastery a ms. of Virgil which had marginal glosses, marginal explanations of the difficult words of the text. He wished that his own monastery-students should get the benefit of them. So he transcribed these marginalia one after another, without any specification of the line to which each referred, using for the transcription any blank pages at the end of some ms. in his own library.

In the glossed Virgil which he had borrowed the words Molossus canis stood in the margin of Georgic III 405 : acremque Molossum. But the monastery-librarian who hastily transcribed all these marginalia which he found in a borrowed ms. of Virgil, did not add a reference to this line. He was content with transcribing merely Virgil's word Molossus with its meaning canis. Its meaning — that is to say — in this line of Virgil. For in other passages of other authors the word Molossus might indicate a man, not a dog. The monastery-librarian did not trouble himself with that. His only concern was to provide his own monastery-students with an explanation of the difficult words in Virgil, a clavis Vergiliana.

Soon it was found inconvenient to use blank leaves here and there, for glossae collectae. One did not know where to put one's hand on them. The fashion came in of making one volume in the
monastery-library a receptacle for *all* the *glossae collectae* which a zealous monastery-librarian could transcribe: *glossae collectae* from a borrowed ms. of Virgil, *glossae collectae* from a borrowed ms. of Terence, *glossae collectae* from a borrowed ms. of Orosius, and so on. And finally some monastery-librarian issued a command to his librarii: Arrange alphabetically all the contents of this receptacle-volume; throw all these different collections of *glossae collectae* into one mass, and then arrange this mass in alphabetical order, first the words beginning with A, then the words beginning with B, then the words beginning with C, and so on. It was this command that called the first monastery-dictionary into being, these early dictionaries of the 7th and 8th centuries which we call Glossaries. In the Glossary which were are imagining, the M-section would show the item:

Molossus: canis.

This is the new and true account of Latin Glossaries. The key to glossary-construction has been supplied by the famous glossary in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, the «Corpus Glossary», as it is called, which I edited in 1921.

An edition of any Glossary must henceforth seek to discover the source from which each item in the glossary has come; the editor must state that this item comes from a marginal note on such and such a line of Virgil, that item from a marginal note on such and such a line of Terence, and so on. At least, that is the ideal he must try to attain.

In fact, a modern editor must know far more about these monastery-dictionaries than the worthy monks who used them. A monk who found in his monastery-dictionary *Molossus: canis* did not trouble himself with the enquiry how that item had come there, or what were the limitations of the item. It was enough for him that *Molossus* meant *canis*, that *Molossus* was an equivalent of *canis*. And so Aldhelm, who loves to dazzle his readers with unusual words and has a contempt for the *trivialis moneta*, when he has occasion to cite the homely proverb of Scripture (Prov. 26, 11; 2 Pet., 2, 22) «the dog returns to his vomit», astonishes us by substituting *Molossus* for *canis* (Laud. Virg., 67, 30g.) velut Molossi ad vomitum.

In the prolegomena to my edition of the Corpus Glossary (prolegomena published in the English Philological Society Publica-
tion VIII "The Corpus, Epinal, Erfurt and Leyden Glossaries") I have shewn (p. 100) that Aldhelm's Latin is (mainly) glossary-Latin; he took his words from a monastery-dictionary, rather than from his own reading of the classics. He would not have used *Molossus* like this if he had learned the word from his reading of Virgil. No; all that he knew of the word was this dictionary-item *Molossus* : *canis*.

Aldhelm was not alone in his predilection for Glossary-Latin. And in the depouillement of all the authors who shared this strange predilection, we must avoid the error of regarding these glossary-words of theirs as words of current usage. *Molossus* was not really current Latin for « dog » in Aldhelm's time. This use of it was a mere freak which left no permanent trace on the language. In the Classical Quarterly (17, 197) I have called the attention of the workers engaged on our Dictionary of Medieval Latin to this intimate connexion between glossaries and the Latin of Aldhelm and of writers like him, and have illustrated it by a strange word of Aethicus Ister, *herma*. If the Cosmographia (65) Aethicus writes the puzzling phrase *hermasque et omnem ignominiam*. What are *hermae*? In a classical author the word would mean « busts of Hermes ». But that cannot be the meaning in this passage of Aethicus:

Habitatores quoque crudelissimos necopinatos, omne opere vel vita spurcissimos ... hermasque et omnem ignominiam ultra quam credi autumandum esse potest, etc.

There is glossary which we call the Abstrusa Glossary, because it begins with the item Abstrusa : abscondita, an item which was originally a marginal note at the seventh line of the sixth book of Virgil's Aeneid:

\[
\text{quaerit pars semina flammae} \\
\text{Abstrusa in venis silicis.}
\]

This glossary had a wide vogue as a monastery-dictionary. And in the course of time it was made more convenient for monastery-students by the shortening of its longer items. The item

*Hermaphroditus* : *castratus vel sexum utrumque habens* had been corrupted by transcribers to

*Herma* : *proditus, castratus vel sexum utrumque habens*. It now became merely

*Herma* : *castratus*

or (in a corrupt form) *Herma* : *castratio*. Aethicus' copy of this
glossary had either Herma : castratus or else Herma : castratio.

And so we perceive one use of glossaries for the Dictionary of Medieval Latin. They can explain how these extraordinary words, like herma, or extraordinary meanings of words, like Molossus as equivalent of canis, found a way into the pages of Aethicus, Aldhelm and such writers. Glossaries shew us words that were not current words.

But there is another use of glossaries. Glossaries can shew us words that were actually current, and they can do this far better than most Latin texts of the time. For the writers of these texts were often under the influence of tradition. Remembering a passage of a classic author, they might use a word he had used in that passage, even though it had become obsolete in their own time. Or they might give to a word the sense he had given to it, although it had in their own time acquired a different sense. The Latin of the seventh and eighth century books is therefore under suspicion. But we need have no suspicion of the Latin used to explain difficult words to monastery-students. We may be sure that the explanations written first in the margins of texts, and transferred from there to a list of glossae collectae and ultimately to a monastery-dictionary, a glossarium or liber glossarum, were real explanations; they would be couched in the most familiar, the most natural, language, the language most intelligible to the monastery-students for whose benefit they were written.

These two uses of a glossary correspond to the two parts of its items. To the lemma, the difficult word explained (for example, the word Molossus in the item Molossus : canis) we look for the first use. It is to the explanation-half of the item that we look for the second use. The word serere had different senses in Latin. In Virgil Geo. 2, 433, it means 'to sow seed in the ground'. The marginal annotator did not put his explanation in any form like serere, id est semen serere. In his time, serere was not current Latin for sowing seed. The current word was derivative from the noun semen. So the marginal note took the form Serere : seminare. These explanations in glossaries, the second half (not the first half) of each item, reveal to us the actual Latin of the time, Latin in its passage from classical Latin to Romance Latin. French 'semer' is Latin seminare.

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