Amedeo John Engel Terzi

1872-1956

When asked for a biography of Terzi I was somewhat at a loss. Despite his eminence as an illustrator almost nothing has, to my knowledge, appeared about him in print, not even an obituary. I thought I should have to rely on personal recollections and things he told me about himself. In the event, however, some biographical notes compiled by Terzi himself come to light in our departmental files. They were requested by a Dr. Claris Nissen of Mainz-Gonsenheim in 1948 and may have been published in Germany though I have no record of this. By his own account he was born in Palermo in 1872. His father Chevalier Andrea Terzi, who died in 1931 (Benezit[1] says 1918) is remembered by him mainly as a lithographer, illustrator in part of Gravina's Duomo di Monreale and author of a major work in folio, La Capella di San Pietro nella Regione di Palermo, and a lifetime student of mosaics. Benezit gives a rather different account, describing him as "Peintre d'architecture.. Il a participé à tous les salons italiens et a exposé fréquemment à l'étranger notamment à Vienne et à Paris".

Terzi's elder brother Aleardo was a book illustrator and poster artist. He executed, among other things, the colour plates of insects for the Italian national encyclopaedia[2] of which Terzi showed me some proofs and of which he thought highly. Terzi himself had a son and a daughter but he told me nothing about them nor anything at all about his wife.

The germinal event in his life was undoubtedly the experiment planned by Manson to prove the correctness of the theory of malaria transmission by mosquitos. This was conducted by Sambon and Low at Ostia in the Roman Campagna in 1900. Its origins and progress are described in a series of short notes and one longer paper in the British Medical Journal for 1900[3-8]. A fuller account was subsequently published by Sambon and Low in the following year[9] and this was illustrated by Terzi with drawings of equipment, some small monochrome landscapes, two monochrome plates of "*Anopheles maculipennis*" and other insects and a colour plate of ticks. These are possibly the earliest illustrations of his which can now be traced.

Terzi was officially engaged "in order to secure good drawings of mosquitoes, malaria parasites and other objects of research" but he also served as the third guinea pig, spending every night with Sambon and Low in a screened hut manufactured in England, shipped to Italy and erected at a spot chosen by the leading Italian malariologists as especially malarious. During their period of residence, from early July to mid October, the area was largely abandoned except for a few melon growers who had to remain through the fever season in order to harvest their crops. An unexpected bonus in the way of controls was, however, provided by 15 or 16 police agents who visited Ostia in search of anarchists following the assassination of Umberto I. They stayed there for only a part of one night but according to Celli the whole lot developed malaria. The guinea pigs escaped.

This experiment was backed by another, also successful, involving the sending of infected mosquitos by Bastianelli from Italy to London where they were fed on two volunteers. The first of these was Manson's son, chosen it seems, in answer to criticisms of the use of human volunteers for this type of experiment.

Terzi claims to have had no teachers and "by his own efforts, early in life," to have "trained in painting, modelling, architecture, perspective, lithography and engraving on stone, and afterwards, in England, in anatomy, zoology, entomology and medical science". I do not know how he came to be engaged as artist to the malaria experiment but it was almost certainly through the agency of Louis Sambon who, though a fellow lecturer of Manson's at the London School of Tropical Medicine, was himself an Italian and received his medical training in Naples. Terzi often expressed to me his great affection and esteem for Sambon who he regarded as having launched him on his career. He maintained his connection with the Sambon family to the end and was visited by one of them at the time of his death. His illustrations to Sambon and Low's paper were executed in Italy and sent to Manson who engaged him as illustrator at the London School. He landed in England on the 5th of November 1900 and joined the staff of the School in December of that year. He left the School, for unexplained reasons, in October 1901 and was invited to the British Museum (Natural History) by Austen on September 2nd, 1902. He remained here, apart from a short interval during the first world war, for the rest of his working life.

It will probably be generally agreed that his best work was executed during the early years in England when he produced the magnificent colour plates for Austen's British Bloodsucking Flies[10] (originally intended simply to be hung in the public galleries but deemed by Austen worthy of a special publication). To this period also belong the very fine colour plates for Austen's Monograph of the Tsetse-flies[11] and Handbook of the Tsetse-flies[12]. The colour plates of *Aedes aegypti* and *Culex fatigans*, familiar to all mosquito workers, were prepared for the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley in 1924 and only subsequently reproduced in Edwards' volume of Mosquitoes of the Ethiopian Region[13], Smart's Insects of Medical Importance[14] and, together with a plate of *Glossina morsitans* from the earlier period, in Insects and Other Arthropods of medical importance[15]. The additional colour plates to be found in Edwards, Oldroyd and Smart's British Bloodsucking Flies[16] and Marshall's British Mosquitoes[17], together with some of the earlier ones, were prepared in 1923 for a new edition of Austen's book which, however, he never completed.

It is also probably true to say that his early black and white drawings of mosquitos were never subsequently excelled, for example the illustrations to Edwards' first papers on African Culicidae[18,19]. In this connection he was particularly proud of the fact that when Edwards gave him a phallosome of "*Culex simpsoni*" to draw he recognised it as that of a new species, incorrectly associated with the accompanying basistyle and dististyle. Edwards was adamant and the two were figured together[20]. Years later he found that he had been mistaken and named the new species after Terzi[13]. Thus was *Culex terzii* born. There are other fine black and white drawings (as well as

colour plates) in the reports of the Wellcome Research Laboratories[21-23] but these do less than justice to the originals in the Wellcome Museum. Terzi told me he thought his best black and white drawings were those of scarabaeid beetles illustrating a paper by Baylis, Pan and Sambon's daughter Juliet[24]. The expedition which was the subject of this paper was organized by Sambon in connection with a supposed association between the nematode *Gongylonema*, with scarabaeid intermediate hosts, and an exceptional incidence of stomach cancer in parts of northern Italy. If these drawings do possess a special merit (as I think the originals certainly do), then it is probably due to the association with Sambon.

Ferris, in 1928, paid him the following memorable tribute; "In Fig. 10 (p. 99) are shown certain drawings selected to represent the simpler work of one of the most finished entomological illustrators of the present day. This illustrator is one who combines the qualifications of both the artist and the scientific investigator to such a degree that his illustrations are not only pleasing to the eye but technically impeccable as well. The writer would recommend that the student who is interested in the subject of entomological illustration should study the work of Mr. A. J. E. Terzi. It appears especially in the volumes of the Bulletin of Entomological Research. The student will find no better teacher."[25] He maintained a high standard right up to the outbreak of war as may be seen especially from the beautiful illustrations, in colour and black and white to Austen's Bombyliidae of 1937[26]. An attempt seems to have been made, in 1938, to persuade him to take British nationality with a view to obtaining for him some kind of government pension but this seems to have been unsuccessful, frustrated, perhaps, by the war. During the war it was difficult to find work for him and he suffered considerable hardship. He greatly resented the fact that he was not given a position on the museum staff though I think at that time this would have been administratively impossible.

When I was first asked to work with him in the latter part of 1947 he had a reputation for bloodymindedness which caused me some foreboding. I had hoped that my interest in italian painting would have helped to smooth the way but this proved not to be the case. He showed virtually no interest in the art of the past nor any disposition to engage in what are generally known as the creative arts. Occasional, ill-informed, criticisms to the effect that he was more interested in producing a work of art than an accurate drawing are far wide of the mark. With italian opera it was different and he frequently regaled me with snatches of this while I watched him draw. (He used a simple wooden penholder about a quarter of an inch wide and a large nib of much the same breadth and drew on a good quality cream laid paper. I never saw him use a mapping nib or any specialized type of pen). He had a great fondness for improper stories and I was compelled to maintain a stock of these for his benefit. With these enticements I was able to coax a small number of drawings from him for the new edition of Hopkins' volume on culicine larvae[27] but far fewer than were required. Eventually I was forced to hand over the task of completing them to Arthur Smith. I did not see Terzi again. Up to that point, however, we were good friends. He gave me his collection of reprints and wanted to give me the copy of Les Moustiques

presented to him by Blanchard but I persuaded him to sell this to the Museum whose own copy was stolen some time between the wars. It is said that after leaving the Museum he lost interest in life but there were already signs of this when I knew him. I am confident that his failure to produce the drawings I asked for was due more to the infirmities of age than to the cantankerousness with which he was generally credited.

He appears in two group photographs of the staff of the London School of Tropical Medicine, taken during his first year in England[28]. I know of no other photographs but there is a drawing by him in the commemorative number of the Journal of Tropical Medicine devoted to Manson[29]. It shows the famous hut at Ostia with the three "guinea pigs" standing outside it. The central figure is Sambon. Carmichael Low is to his left and the figure on his right is a self portrait of Terzi. (The same sketch was later republished as an illustration to a special cancer number of J. trop. Med.[30], devoted to Sambon's theories, with some fine drawings by Terzi of beetles, cockroaches, nematodes, etc. etc. which it seems he provided free of cost as "his mite towards the furtherance of Sambon's unpaid work on cancer"). The only other portrait by him which I know of is the splendid portrait of Manson in the same number[31]. These early portraits show Terzi with a mop of dark hair and a luxuriant moustache rivalling even Sambon's. When I knew him he had changed out of recognition. His hair was white and scanty (though always very trim). He was cleanshaven and had filled out greatly. He had a fine roman head which would have looked well atop a porphyry toga. I have been astonished to learn his age and would have thought him ten years younger.

In his notes he claims to have executed over 37 thousand drawings and to have illustrated nearly 55 books and more than 500 papers on "Tropical Diseases, Parasitology, Dermatology, Anatomy, Entomology, especially Diptera, Anoplura, Mallophaga, Siphonaptera, Coleoptera, Acari, Linguatulidae[32] and, in zoology, Osteology of Mammals[33-35]. In addition he executed coloured drawings and wax models for display in our galleries and those of the Wellcome Museum and, he says, Baron Gourgaud's Musée Africain, Ile d'Aix, France. A catalogue raisonné of his works would clearly be a formidable undertaking but I am hopeful that I might one day undertake it. I would welcome further information. Even without one printed word in his memory his place among the immortals would be assured.

Peter Mattingly
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Editor's Note. The group photograph reproduced here is of the staff of the London School of Tropical Medicine, 1901 and includes Mr. Terzi. I am grateful to Dr. Mattingly and the British Museum (Natural History) for the use of this photograph. Other individuals in this picture known to mosquito workers are Dr. Sambon and Mr. C. Daniels.

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