The Holiness of Pascal by H. F. Stewart

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quite ignores the organic structure of the dialect and its development from earlier stages. In these respects Brilioth's *Grammar of the Dialect of Lorton* (also published by the Philological Society) is far superior, and might well have served as a model to Sir James Wilson. Could not the Philological Society secure uniformity of method in the studies of dialects which it publishes? In his Introduction Sir James Wilson has an interesting note on the process by which Strathearn attracts and assimilates adjacent Celtic speakers. The most incontrovertible statement in the book is that 'a Scotch accent is not a bad thing for a man to have, anywhere in the wide world.' Unfortunately the accent cannot be learnt from written symbols.

W. J. SEDGEFIELD.

MANCHESTER.

The Holiness of Pascal. By H. F. STEWART. Hulsean Lecture, 1914-15. Cambridge: University Press. 1915. 8vo. ix + 145 pp. (Lectures, 96, Notes, 49).

As an introduction to the study of Pascal these lectures, with their scholarly notes, should prove useful. From the title one would indeed have expected rather the biography of a Soul than a sketch of a busy life occupied chiefly with science and controversy. Through the brief lectures, packed full of facts, the spiritual experiences of the Mystic flit in and out like shy spectres, surprised to find themselves intruding into secular affairs. The most recent authorities come beneath the lecturer's eye, and as he is careful to give chapter and verse for what he says, the notes are of abiding value. He has not, it is true, gone far afield, perhaps the limits of time and space were too stringent, but what he gives is good, and his judgment is as sound as his method is scientific.

Blaise Pascal appears on the scene as a precocious boy of fourteen, when his parents had already joined the Jansenist party, and in its austere if somewhat narrow creed, he was brought up. But Jansenism, with its harsh Augustinian theology, was not the paramount influence of his early and most receptive years. In 1637 appeared Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode*, which probably about this time became known to Pascal's father and his literary and scientific circle. The book at once raised a violent controversy, for it assailed the foundation of Scholasticism, and with it, the whole of Scholastic Theology. The *Méthode* was a trumpet call to the world, and like the rams' horns that brought down the walls of Jericho it laid bare the whole citadel of orthodoxy. Truth, Descartes declared, did not rest, as Realism had thought, in general ideas inferred from mere words, nor (as prevailing Nominalism taught) in sense-perception, supplemented, where sense failed, by revelation and authority. The one criterion of truth, Descartes maintained, was that the idea of it, intuitively perceived by the reason, should be 'clear and distinct.' The *Méthode* showed how such truth could be discovered, and in the use of this new instrument young Pascal

was reared. From Jansenism he derived his life-long devotion to duty, and his clear perception of moral ideas, from Cartesianism his habit of clear thinking. Mr Stewart strangely overlooks Pascal's indebtedness to the Cartesian Philosophy, possibly because some of his authorities have misunderstood Pascal's saying, that the whole of it was not worth an hour's trouble. But the philosophy he meant was the only one that bore the name in his day, that of Aristotle and of the schoolmen. To this he was utterly opposed. How deeply ingrained was his Cartesianism is evident from such passages as this in which the main principles of the new philosophy are briefly summarised: '*Je sens que je peux n'avoir point été, car le moi consiste dans ma pensée; donc moi qui pense n'aurais pas été, si ma mère eût été tuée avant que j'eusse été animé. Donc je ne suis pas un être nécessaire. Je ne suis pas aussi éternel, ni infini; mais je vois bien qu'il y a dans la nature un être nécessaire, éternel, infini.*'

Jansenism as a doctrinal system was merely a particular form of Scholasticism, a fact realised with increasing distinctness by Pascal in the process of controversy. When first he took up arms it was in defence rather of his friends than of their theology, because he knew they were being attacked by an unscrupulous coalition of Jesuits and reactionaries, who had nothing in common but their hatred for a dangerous rival; and in the first of the Provincial Letters he satisfied his keen sense of justice by exposing this hypocritical compact. The Jansenists wanted him to follow on with a defence of their own particular doctrines of grace, but with excellent good sense he turned aside, in the letters that followed, to an exposure of the lax morality permitted to their converts by the Jesuit casuists in Spain and Flanders. If he was unfair, as Voltaire alleges, in assuming that the toleration of practices by a small minority of extremists expressed the mind of the whole society, it cannot be denied that the teaching of these men was not disowned, nor can it be admitted that the writers he attacked were all obscure, for Escobar has been reprinted many times, and is still one of their standard authorities.

Controversy, however, did not hold him long. He was by nature a Mystic, and his search for truth made him discard the trammels of sectarian dogma. He would not deny to all mankind that mercy which he had himself experienced. Truth forbade it, and thus even his Cartesian philosophy contributed to his growth in holiness.

Whatever view we take of this, no one can deny that his passionate love of the whole truth, and nothing but the truth gave to his prose style that simplicity and directness which are its peculiar charm, and made it a model for his countrymen. If French is pre-eminently the language of science and philosophy, it is because Pascal freed its prose from meretricious ornament, archaisms, long and involved sentences, inversions, classical imitations, and pedantry. The style of Descartes is simple and direct enough, but there is no denying that it is also flat and rather meagre. Pascal's genius gave to his own writing life, grace, and flexibility. Perhaps no literature owes more to a single author than

French to him. Romantic writers may claim or feel regret for the loss of ripe old crusted words and quaint symbols, put out of fashion by him, and may look back 'with fond affection and recollection' to the prose of Amyot and Montaigne, but even the best of them owe much of their grace and charm to the model of simple diction and phrase set by this consummate master.

E. A. WESLEY.

LIVERPOOL.

The Paradise of Dante Alighieri, an Experiment in Literal Verse Translation. By CHARLES LANCELOT SHADWELL. With an Introduction by JOHN WILLIAM MACKAIL. London: Macmillan. 1915. 8vo. xxxix + 509 pp.

It is twenty-four years since Dr Shadwell published his translation of Cantos I-XXVII of the *Purgatorio*, with an Introduction by Walter Pater. In the preface he explained the reasons which led him to adopt the metre of Marvell's *Horatian Ode on Cromwell's Return from Ireland* (1650). The ode is divided into quatrains:

'Tis time to leave the books in dust,
And oil the unused armour's rust,
Removing from the wall
The corselet of the hall.

Now Dante's verse is characterized not only by the triple rhyme but also by the division into stanzas, each of which is as a rule complete in itself, or which are so joined that the pause comes always at the end and not in the middle of a stanza. There are thirty-three syllables in Dante's *terzina* and twenty-eight in one of Marvell's quatrains, but many English words are short and the sense can be expressed without undue compression. The translation of *Purgatorio* XXVII-XXXIII (The Earthly Paradise) appeared in 1899 and this volume completes the work.

The difficulty of translating poetry into another language has never been put more plainly than by Dante himself (*Convito* I, 7): 'Sappia ciascuno che nulla cosa per legame musaico armonizzata si può della sua loquela in altra trasmutare senza rompere tutta sua dolcezza e armonia.' None the less the ambition to produce a worthy version and delight in the work have allured one after another of those who have felt the spell and charm of the poet to make the attempt. There have been several translations into *terza rima* and one of these by the late Dr Plumptre has great merits; but the metre, though most effective in Italian, is not English and never quite successful. Browning used it in *The Statue and the Bust* and one wishes that he had translated some part at least of the *Commedia*. Cary and Longfellow both made use of blank verse and, fine though their translations are, the effect is heavy and unrelieved. Dr Shadwell's version has plainly been a labour of love carried on through many years. It maintains a high level of careful work. The