Review

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Keble's Lectures on Poetry, 1832—1841. Translated by EDWARD KERSHAW FRANCIS. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1912. 8vo. 434, 534 pp.

It need not be doubted that Keble's *Prælectiones Academicæ* have been less widely read than they ought to be, or that this has been partly owing to the fact that they are written in Latin. It is not likely indeed that any except those who have some classical scholarship would be attracted by them, nor indeed could any others read them very profitably: but after all a Latin book is less easy to read than an English one, and requires more time; so that we are naturally disposed to welcome this translation, though we cannot without loss lay aside in favour of it the graceful and beautiful Latin of the original.

It may be said at once that the version is a good one, easy and idiomatic for the most part and not too much suggesting the idea of a translation. There are lapses, it is true. Thus 'they are more habituated to daily avocations in the full light of publicity' cannot be regarded as an ideal rendering of the simple 'ut qui in luce oculisque multorum magis sint versati' (I, p. 36), 'somewhat unelastic' is hardly a good rendering for 'præfractioni' (I, p. 41), and 'much, not to say a great deal' will never do for 'multa, ne dicam plura' (II, p. 232). In the following sentence, 'I hardly know whether it is justifiable to associate with such important considerations as these, the exquisite clearness of Lucretius' style, which like a clear atmosphere, makes all his theories stand out in such clear sequence and proportion' (II, p. 366), there is an awkward repetition of the words 'clear' and 'clearness' which (it is almost needless to say) is not found in the original, 'exquisitum illum styli Lucretiani nitorem, quo velut puro aere pellucet rationum junctura et series,' and after all 'clearness' does not exactly represent 'nitorem.' There is a similar or rather worse instance of the same kind in the very next sentence, 'since its peculiar power consists less in illuminating particular passages than in its power of filling the whole' etc. But these occasional infelicities are balanced by many examples of peculiarly happy renderings—'soothe deep-rooted and vital yearning' (I, p. 90), '[she] will wistfully gaze back on the well-known charms which have delighted her from her birth' (p. 92), 'we must trace by what special impulse, by what unrest (quo desiderio) he was led to draw together, as by a magician's wand, all the undiscovered resources of poetry' (p. 93),—these are examples gathered within a few pages, and it would be easy to find many more, while the general style is such as the author might well have approved, if a translation had been executed in his life-time, as was apparently at one time intended.

Yet, while noting and appreciating the merits of his work, we feel bound to say that the translator, in planning it, has made one very serious mistake. The lectures are concerned with the Greek and Latin classical poets, and they are naturally full of quotation. The argument

is everywhere illustrated, and the criticism justified, by passages from Homer, Æschylus, Pindar, Lucretius or Virgil, and these passages are here in almost every case represented by English metrical translations. The originals are not given even in footnotes. Now it is obviously impossible that critical remarks upon poetry can be properly illustrated by translated quotations, and even where it is the substance and not the style of the passage that is referred to, the badness, for the most part, of these particular versions goes far to destroy the reader's pleasure, so that it may fairly be said that without constant reference to the *Prælectiones* or to the original authors from whom the quotations are taken, no real satisfaction is to be got from these volumes. The lectures on the *Iliad* are made almost intolerable by the combination of Chapman and Pope to which we are treated: it is difficult to say which represents Homer worse. In those on the *Odyssey* for the most part we have Cowper, who is far less irritating, because at least he reproduces with simplicity the sense of the original. For Virgil we have to put up with Dryden, and Lucretius we see for the most part through the medium of Creech. A particular protest must be made against Chapman, who is often grotesquely bad; but in fact the whole thing is a mistake: the original passages ought of course to stand in the text, and if translations are thought to be needed, they should be in prose¹. Numberless examples might be quoted of the ruinous effect produced by the system adopted. Keble compares Virgil, *Æn.* VIII, 407 ff., with Homer, *Il.* XII, 432 ff., and the former passage is represented by Dryden's version, the latter by Chapman's (I, p. 185). Between the two it may fairly be said that all the points that are relevant to the comparison have been dropped out. Again, the author points out how Lucretius in a certain passage (II, 629 ff.) appeals to common sympathies by a reference to childhood and the games of children, but the passage as quoted from Creech has no such reference and contains nothing that corresponds to the words 'pueri circum puerum' (II, p. 320). Sometimes the translation is inconsistent with Keble's interpretation of the passage, as in II, p. 183; more often, of course, it merely fails to illustrate in any degree the lecturer's remarks about the features of style in the original. For example, Keble quotes Lucretius, III, 1060 ff., and asks his reader to note especially the restrained simplicity of the passage. But what Mr Francis gives us is not Lucretius but Creech, and in his version there is no restrained simplicity. The translator found Lucretius too simple for his taste, and he took good care that there should be a sufficiency of ornament added (II, p. 352). In quoting the well-known passage about the horse from *Iliad*, VI, 506 ff., Keble remarks upon the appropriateness of the broken rhythm in the line,

ρίμφα ἔ γούνα φέρει μετά τ' ἦθεα καὶ νομὸν ἵππων.

We have noticed a very few cases in which this is done. A quotation from Virgil is once given in the original, with the prose translation by Conington (I, p. 77); and in another place a few lines from Lucretius are cited in Latin, with Munro's translation (II, p. 809).

But in the translation, as given from Pope, all is smooth enough,

And springs exulting to his fields again (I, p. 168).

Again, in one place we are asked to note the sound of the verse in a passage from Pindar, and are presented with Moore's rendering of it,—fairly good, but of course not in the least reproducing the sound. In a few cases, no doubt, the versions are successful and serve their purpose. Some of Cowper's from the *Odyssey* are, for translations, all that can be desired, e.g. I, p. 290,

Shout not, be still. Unholy is the voice
Of loud thanksgiving over slaughtered men.

Dryden occasionally contributes a fine rendering, as in the passage quoted in I, p. 460, and a few jewels from Conington are scattered here and there. On the whole, however, this large collection of examples serves chiefly to remind us of the general rule that poetry cannot be translated.

Other matters are of less importance; but it would have been well to distinguish the footnotes of the translator in some way from those of the author, and the method adopted sometimes of rendering an echo of some Latin poet by a quotation of a somewhat similar tendency from an English poet, is rather misleading. When we find (I, p. 92) 'the "cool, sequestered vale of life,"' we naturally think that Keble quoted from Gray. It is only when we turn to the original that we perceive his expression to have been a reminiscence of the 'fallentis semita vitæ' of Horace. Again, the quotation from Mr Mallock's poem which appears on II, p. 365 surely ought not to have been introduced into the text.

This is not the place to say much of the lectures themselves, but I am unwilling to pass them by without a few words of appreciation, and I gladly make use of the translation provided by Mr Francis to illustrate what has to be said. The lectures are remarkable first for their theory of poetry generally, then for their classification of poets as primary and secondary, and finally for the critical judgment shown in dealing with the poetical work of those whom the author selects as preeminent. It is not (as has sometimes been stated) by the criterion of pleasure that he appraises poetry, but by its function of healing. 'De Poeticæ Vi Medica' are the words on the title-page of the *Prælectiones* which indicate their subject. Poetry is 'a kind of medicine divinely bestowed upon men: which gives healing relief to secret mental emotion, yet without detriment to modest reserve: and, while giving scope to enthusiasm, yet rules it with order and due control' (I, p. 22). It is interesting to note the relation of this view of poetry to the Aristotelian doctrine of *κάθαρσις* as applied to tragedy, though Keble himself perhaps did not fully appreciate the relation, for he probably did not take the *κάθαρσις* of the *Poetics* in a medical sense. Indeed it is noticeable that Keble finds some difficulty in bringing the more objective forms of poetry, the Epic and the Drama, under the terms of his theory

(I, p. 86), which seems to have been framed first with a view to lyric poetry, perhaps more particularly with a view to the work of the poet to whom he dedicated these lectures, and whom he repeatedly refers to as the greatest of his time, namely Wordsworth. How can Epic poetry or Tragedy be regarded as an outlet of individual emotion, a remedy for the unrest of a passionate spirit? The answer is given in the distinction of *ἦθος* and *πάθος*, and the twofold division of poetry in accordance with this distinction. There are those whose poetical expression serves to calm the tumult of momentary passion, in themselves and in others, those who compose 'at a white heat' as Shelley expresses it, though they may afterwards add laborious finish; but there are also poets in whom some life-long yearning, some deep-seated unrest can satisfy itself only by tasks of a different kind, by presentation of human life and destiny in forms which correspond to the feeling which disturbs them, a feeling which is not indeed tumultuous but none the less powerful and compelling. Thus Homer was moved by an intense yearning for those heroic times which when his poems were composed had passed or were rapidly passing away; Æschylus was disturbed by his overpowering sense of the working of a Supreme Power, combined with his doubts as to the divine righteousness; Euripides was moved by his deep sense of common humanity; Lucretius by his passion for mystery and infinity; Virgil by his longing for the peace and simplicity of country life. In a certain sense, then, all poets are lyrical (II, p. 93). And the distinction of primary and secondary poets is made upon the basis of the same principle. Those are primary who are dominated by a single, sincere and consistent feeling. 'The central point of our theory is that the essence of all poetry is to be found, not in high-wrought subtlety of thought, nor in pointed cleverness of phrase, but in the depth of the heart and the most sacred feelings of the men who write' (II, p. 201). It is because there seems to the lecturer to be no such genuine spring of inspiration visible in the work of Sophocles, that he places him in the second rank, as one who has become a poet in virtue of consummate skill and culture. Keble holds that he has a want of true religious feeling and of pity. He is conscious that by such a case as this his theory is tested severely, but he holds that he must not shrink from the test, and on similar grounds he excludes Horace also from primary rank. Whatever may be our opinion about these cases, we must all agree that the theory is to some extent insufficient, that some further test than that of consistency and sincerity is required: yet we must allow that as expounded and illustrated by Keble, it is extremely interesting and suggestive. And here we come to the detailed criticism of particular works, to which the greater number of the lectures are devoted. Nothing can be better than the fine appreciation of the character of Achilles in the *Iliad*, or the charming estimate of the story of the *Odyssey*. With Æschylus the lecturer is in deep religious sympathy, and his discussion of the *Prometheus Vincitus* and of the *Oresteia* is profoundly illuminating. His defence

of Euripides as the champion and protector of common human feeling, no woman-hater, but something of an ascetic, with a special love of religious purity, as shown in the characters of Ion and Hippolytus, is one of the most interesting things in the lectures; and his treatment of Lucretius is distinguished by true poetical appreciation, triumphantly prevailing over his natural aversion to the religious theories which it is the chief aim of Lucretius to drive home. In spite of these, he finds in him a constant testimony to the highest and purest ideals, and a feeling for the mystery and infinity of Nature, by which, all unknown to himself, the poet wonderfully supports and communicates to those who read him the religious sense which in terms he seeks to abolish. 'Infinita cōtemplari, religio quædam.' Finally in Virgil, perhaps the dearest to him of all the Classical poets, he finds not primarily the Epic poet¹, but the lover of the calm tranquillity of Nature, delighted ever to recognise the vestiges of a power higher than human, and rightly recognised by the Middle Ages as a true precursor of Christianity.

The lectures are concerned entirely with Classical literature, but they have very numerous references to the English poets, and especially to Shakespeare and Spenser. Keble repeatedly speaks of Wordsworth as the greatest poet of his own time, but he highly praises Scott, for whom he evidently has a genuine affection. Byron is mentioned with sufficient acknowledgment of his poetical power, but with reprobation of the tendency of his work; while Shelley, who to some extent comes under the same condemnation, is recognised as a poet of finer feeling and higher powers of rhythmical expression. We feel that if Keble had known him better, he might have been saved in company with Lucretius. Neither Coleridge nor Keats is mentioned. To Burns there are several references, and he is evidently a favourite, though the inequality of his work is deplored. Milton is four or five times referred to, and *Lycidas* is particularly appreciated. But Keble thought it beneath the dignity of his Chair to quote modern poets in modern languages, and when he has occasion to cite passages, he turns them into Greek or Latin², thus lending some colour, it must be admitted, to the practice of Mr Francis, who quotes the Greek and Latin poets in English. But Keble's quotations from the English poets are rather ornamental than necessary to the argument; and moreover the translations are made, and very exquisitely made, for the occasion by the author himself. They increase in fact the sense that we have throughout, of

¹ Some parts of Keble's criticism of the *Æneid* are amusing in their severity, as for example his remarks on the character of Æneas, and his observation that the plea of God's command is 'the customary cloak of fraud throughout the *Æneid*.' He makes the very true remark that Virgil's men and women move our sympathies not so much for their own sakes as on account of their fates and fortunes, while Homer's characters 'are so hit off that each of them exhibits characteristic and peculiar individuality' (II, p. 383).

² Thus Burns is quoted in Greek elegiacs (*Prælect.*, p. 20) and in a Latin lyric metre (p. 238), Milton's Sonnet on his blindness in Greek iambs (p. 243), *Paradise Lost* in Latin hexameters (p. 226) and Spenser's *Astrophel* in Latin sapphics (p. 523). Rather strangely, the quotations from the Bible are given in Greek, not in Latin.

being in contact with a very attractive personality and one of true poetical taste and feeling; and in spite of the faults to which we have referred, we heartily welcome the present translation, which is certain at least to make the circle of contact wider.

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Poems of Adam Lindsay Gordon. Edited by FRANK MALDON ROBB.
Oxford: H. Frowde. 1912. 8vo. cxxiv + 390 pp.

The irritating brevity of human life is never brought home to us with greater force than when some new and promising development of science or literature or art seems to open before our eyes, and we know that the historian of the future will alone be able to appreciate it at its proper value, or see whither it is tending. Such a development is what we may roughly term 'Colonial Poetry,' which has a quality of its own, difficult to define but quite distinct from our own modern lyrics. The pioneers who go out to hew a path for civilization, to ranch and mine and build, are usually men of action rather than of culture, but contact with the forces of Nature stirs the poetry which lies buried in the heart of most of us, and the lumber-man and the squatter understand, perhaps better than their brethren in the Old World, the feeling that inspired the song of pre-Conquest Wanderer or Seafarer. Theirs is a hard life enough, but though it may be brutal it is never vulgar, and not even the rise of occasional big cities has as yet been able to reduce it to the conventionality to which we are accustomed, or to rob it of the reality which a spice of physical danger always implies.

No game was ever yet worth a rap
For a rational man to play,
Into which no accident, no mishap
Could possibly find its way,

is not poetry, but its frank enjoyment of adventure is akin to the spirit which has inspired some of the most poetic ages of history. The Elizabethans too were mighty men of their hands, pioneers and explorers and it is curious and interesting that in their poetry, as in that of their Anglo-Saxon forbears, we find the same mixture of exhilaration and bitter depression that marks the poems of the greatest lyric poet of Australia. Gordon's physical delight in anything daring has inspired some of his finest passages. The ride in *The Romance of Britomarte*, though it echoes Browning a little too obviously, is full of vigour and life, *The Roll of the Kettledrum* has in it something of the thrill of battle as *Hippodramia* has the thrill of the race-course. It is a pity that a touch of Byronic sentimentality so often spoils the effect. Gordon is more at home among horses than among men. He has not the reticence and restraint needed for dramatic effect, and when he does not, as is too often the case, intrude his own personal emotion, he is apt to expatiate upon the sentiments of his characters. Mr Robb, in his interesting