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THE DRAMAS OF SOPHOCLES.

The Dramas of Sophocles. Rendered in English Verse. By Sir GEORGE YOUNG. Cambridge: Deighton and Bell. London: Bell and Sons. 12s. 6d.

SIR GEORGE YOUNG'S Preface is nothing less than admirable. Of course he can be speaking of himself only when he says that 'of the principal authors of Greek and Roman antiquity Sophocles perhaps offers the most tempting field to a translator.' As a matter of fact Homer has tempted twenty where Sophocles has tempted one. But all Sir George's criticisms of those who have anticipated him in the task, the canons that he lays down for the translator in general, especially the precedence which he assigns to 'the hard and yet self-rewarding duty of taking pains,' the ideal that he sets before himself in the special work of translating Sophocles—all these will meet with almost unmixed approbation from the judicious reader. Especially deserving of praise is his remark, which sounds like a truism when it is stated but yet has been much neglected, that the verse which represents a dramatist must be dramatic, not idyllic, as some previous translators have made it, still less, it may be added, prosaic, after the fashion of others. Altogether these twenty-seven pages of Preface are exceptionally full of sound criticism and good sense.

How then has the translator done his work, how far can he be said to have come up to his ideal? A reviewer who gives what is necessarily too brief a time to an estimate of the work of fourteen years, revised during a further period of ten (Preface, p. xv.), is at least bound to express his opinion with reserve. But he may say, without hesitation, that the first and foremost duty of accuracy has been amply discharged. One may differ here and there from the translator—and indeed there will always be open questions in the rendering of Sophocles—but one sees very soon that it is an accurate scholar that is at work, and that he has been at great pains to use all the appliances that would make his version as correct as possible. Then we come to its literary merit. 'My hope is that at worst my rendering may be found more readable, while not less accurate than any other.' This is a modest aspiration, and we may say generally that it seems to have been fulfilled. Where the poet is at his highest the translator

expresses himself with a force that is not unworthy of his original. Take for instance the great speech of Ajax before he falls upon his sword.

'Now he stands fast, my executioner;
Most trenchant so—if there were leisure left
To reason about it; being, first, Hector's gift,
The most unwelcome foeman to my sight—
And worse detested; he is fixed, besides,
In hostile soil, the Troad; newly edged
Upon the whetting-stone that feeds on steel;
And I myself fixed him, and set him well,
Of my quick death a most kind instrument!
So we are ready; and in due course thou first,
Zeus, as is right, befriend me! I shall demand
No mighty boon of thee; send us some herald
To carry the ill news to Teucer's ear,
That he may raise me, first, where I have fallen
Upon this sword, while my blood reeks on it,
Lest I be seen first by some enemy,
And be cast out, a prey for dogs and fowl,
Headlong.
. O Death, Death,
Come, look me in the face! And yet with thee
I can hold converse when I meet thee, there;
But you, the instant beams of shining day
And the careering Sun, once more I name,
And ye shall never hear my voice again.
O Light! O sacred soil of Salamis
My native land! O altar of my home!
Thou glorious Athens! and thy sons, my playmates,
You springs, you rivers here, and plains of Troy—
You I address—Comrades of mine, farewell!
This his last word Ajax bestows on you;
The next is greeting to the Shades below.'

Now this is good, one may say, very good. It is vigorous, it is eminently dramatic. There is a certain ruggedness about it which exactly suits the speaker and the occasion. And this doubtless is one of the passages which the translator tells us it has been his habit to carry about with him. And there are many such. In fact excellence of this kind is the rule. But I think that now and then Sir George Young has failed to remember his own admirable maxim that 'it is not enough to make careful versions of favourite passages, and to fill up the intervals with a rapidly-written sketch.' Here, for instance, is his rendering of the burst of rage with which Oedipus, fresh from his interview with Tiresias, meets the man whom he believes to have suborned the prophet.

'Fellow, how cam'st thou hither? Dost thou boast
So great a front of daring as to come
Under my roof, the assassin clear of me
And manifest pirate of my royalty?
Tell me, by heaven, did you detect in me
The bearing of a craven, or a fool,
That you laid plans to do it? or suppose
I should not recognise your hand in this

With craft approaching and defend myself?
Is it not folly this attempt of yours,
Without a following, without friends, to hunt
After a throne, a thing which is achieved
By aid of followers and much revenue?'

Now this seems to me wanting in dramatic energy. That eleven lines should be expanded into thirteen is a trifle—and indeed I quite agree with Sir George Young that it is a 'superstition' to make a point of rendering a line by a line. But the passage has a certain air of verbosity about it. It is not the speech of a furious man. Dryden describes some one whose name I forget as the most honest of critics because he always tried to show how a thing ought to be done. Let me try to earn the same praise. Sir George's first line I appropriate.

'Fellow, how cam'st thou hither? Dost thou boast
A front so bold that after proved intent
To slay me, filch my kingship, thou hast dared
To pass these doors? Come say, by all the gods,
Didst find me fool or coward that thy heart
Such plot contrived? Didst think I should not
note
Its stealthy coming on, or noting fail
To strike it down? Art thou not fool thyself
To seek, thus bare of followers and friends,
The power which followers and wealth must win?'

We have not space to deal at any length with the translator's theory and practice in

dealing with the choral odes and lyrical passages. It must suffice to give as a specimen his rendering of the famous *Εὐίπρου, ξένε, τάρδε χόρας*.

'Stranger, thou art come to rest
Where the pasturing folds are best
Of this land of goodly steeds,
In Colonos' glistening meads,
Where the clear-voiced nightingale
Oftenest in green valley-glades
Loves to hide her and bewail;

Under wine-dark ivy shades,
Or the leafy ways, untrod,
Pierced by sun or tempest never,
Myriad-fruited, of a god;
Where in Bacchanalian trim
Dionysus ranges ever
With the nymphs who fostered him;

2.

'And with bloom each morning there
Sky-bedewed, in clusters fair
Without ceasing flourishes
The narcissus, from of old
Crown of mighty goddesses,
And the crocus, rayed with gold;
Nor do sleepless fountains fail,
Wandering down Cephissus' streams;
But with moisture pure return,
Quickening day by day the plains
In the bosom of the vale;
Which nor choirs of Muses spurn,
Nor the Queen with golden reins,
Aphrodita, light-esteem.''

A. J. CHURCH.

FLAVIUS JOSEPHI OPERA.

Flavii Josephi Opera. Edidit et apparatus critico instruxit BENEDICTUS NIESE. Vol. I. *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum Libri i.-v.*, 1887. Vol. II. *Antiquitatum Iudaicarum Libri vi.-x.*, 1886. Berolini: Weidmann. Vol. I. 14 Mk. Vol. II. 12 Mk.

Editio Minor. Vol. I. II. (ditto). 3 Mk. each.

SCHOLARS who have long felt the need of a good text of the works of Josephus cannot fail to give a very hearty welcome to these two volumes, which form the first instalment of Benedict Niese's long promised edition.

It is now more than one hundred and sixty years since Hudson's celebrated edition of Josephus first appeared (Oxford 1720), to which Havercamp's edition (Amsterdam 1726), so widely known and quoted, contributed no fresh material. Since that date, with the exception of Cardwell's edition of *The Jewish War* (*De Bello Judaico*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1837), practically no real

advance has been made in our knowledge of the text of Josephus. The editions of Oberthür (3 vols. Leipsic, 1782-5) and of Richter (6 vols. Leipsic, 1826-7) are little better than reprints, while the texts of Dindorf (2 vols. Paris, 1845-7) and of Bekker (6 vols. Teubner: Leipsic, 1855-6), though contributing certain corrections and improvements, make no claim to be the fruit of thorough and scientific editing.

Professor Niese first applied himself to his laborious task in 1873. Since then he has made it his business to collate in person all the chief MSS. of Josephus, and to subject to a careful examination all the subsidiary material furnished by the Latin version, by the so-called *Epitome*, and by the works of Zonaras, &c. &c. The two volumes which have already appeared contain Books I.—X. of the *Antiquities* in an improved text with an 'apparatus criticus' at the foot of the page. A Latin preface (pp. i.-lxxxiv.), prefixed to Vol. I., describes