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Translation

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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

TRANSLATION.

THERE are two kinds of translation: one is an art, an end in itself; the other is a test, or a method of explanation, a means to another end. These are very commonly confused.

Of the first kind are the translations of a great literary work into a foreign language: Homer, Virgil, or Dante in English, Shakespeare in German, Russian, or Chinese. It is obvious that these must stand or fall by the appreciation of those who do not know the originals. If the Chinese version of Shakespeare offend against Chinese canons of good taste, or if it be unintelligible to the educated Chinese, it is a failure. So with Homer and Virgil and Dante in English. Success in this, the art of translation, can at best only be partial, because no word in any language covers exactly the same ground as a word in another language, and the associations of words are so different. With simple thoughts there is often very little difficulty; but the chief difficulty lies in association, and especially in literary association. Take for example two words, both which might be used in English books by an English speaker, *merci* and *gramercy*. If we were told no more of a book than that some English speakers used either of these, we might fairly infer the one to be a certain type

of society novel, the other antique or mock-antique, Sir Thomas Malory or William Morris. Take again the word *cynosure*: what did that mean to Thucydides? and what would it mean to us but for one passage of Milton? I need not labour the point: every scholar knows the importance of association.

But how did he learn it? Look at the English style of young men fresh from the university: have they learnt the importance of association? Have schoolboys learnt it? What journalists or members of parliament have learnt it? All these, as classes, are ignorant of much, and what knowledge they have they always overdo. If one hits on a neat phrase, the others all copy it, until it has a new set of associations, and becomes for the man of letters detestable: still they go on, for years. One of these phrases is, 'to do yeoman service,' which came into existence for the people just as the yeoman went out, killed by Cobden, and it is used by thousands of persons who have never seen a yeoman. If any of us have learnt the associations of words, we have learnt by reading our national literature, and by talking with persons who know. All this takes time, and it is not to be had in any other way. We cannot learn it from Roget's

Thesaurus, or else all the Bengalee baboos would have it. The great man of letters learns it quicker than we do, but he learns it in the same way: Shakespeare we know was a great reader, and he was also a great talker, and lived amidst a people who talked well, had moreover the advantage of seeing scores of excellent plays performed. Our method of learning, if we are to learn, must be similar, although it will not be so quick.

But if the mind is to be alive to all the delicacies of association, it must not be preoccupied. No one, I venture to say, can learn to appreciate these whilst he is learning something else: he cannot, for instance, learn the associations of English words while he is grappling with the grammar and vocabulary of a strange language; nor can he learn the associations of Latin words while he is still ignorant of the elementary words and constructions of Latin. One thing at a time: English at one time, Latin at one time, not both together. And if any one wants to understand the literary associations of Latin words and phrases, he must do it by reading Latin, not by doing something else.

It follows that we must separate the reading of English authors and the writing of English from the reading of Latin authors and the writing of Latin, if we are to learn to understand both literatures and to compose in both languages. When we have learnt how to understand and to compose in English, and how to understand and to compose in Latin, we shall be then ready to transfer a literary piece from one to the other. The more subdivision there is, the more effective is the teaching in each stage. So if we wish to enlarge the knowledge of words, we must have texts that contain only familiar syntax; and if we wish to enlarge the knowledge of syntax, we must have texts that contain only familiar words. When both words and syntax are familiar, we may use both freely together.

But there is another thing called by the same name of translation, which is not an art nor an end in itself, but a test, or a method of explanation; that is a means to an end. In the early stages of learn-

ing a foreign language, very often the shortest way to test knowledge of a new word or construction is to ask the learner to express in English what he takes it to mean. Sometimes also it is the best way to teach the meaning of a new word. This is often the most convenient way, but it is not the only way. We had once to learn, for example, the meaning of words and constructions in our own language; we learnt them by hearing others use them in many connexions, and by observing their byplay of look or gesture. If this were not enough, if the speaker could not point to a thing that he named, or act a verb, or suggest association by a tone, he could describe it, or show a picture: and if none of these things were enough, the act or thing must have remained unexplained, to be learnt by experience if at all. In learning a foreign language, we have the advantage of a superior knowledge of our own, and here a word of translation may often save the description or the action. But observe, the help we thus gain is only gained if we already understand the English word and its associations. Suppose both English and foreign word to be equally unknown, or the English known but imperfectly, translation here is no help. It will be necessary to explain the English before the foreign word can be understood; and however useful this may be for English, it is so much time wasted for the foreign language. There is the further disadvantage that the continuity of thought is broken, whilst we pass from one language to the other and back again.

Now the schoolboy is imperfect both in English and in foreign languages: it is obvious economy that he should learn and practise each of these subjects apart. His power of transferring thoughts from one language to another is limited by his knowledge of either language apart. He is not fit to transfer from one language to another anything that he has not learnt already to understand in both: that is, the standard of his translation must be within the stage of his knowledge of the idioms of both languages. In other words, he cannot learn the idiom of either language by translation, he can only

practise what he has in some other way learnt.

But in what way?

The idiom of a language is the usage of its best authors; and this can only be learnt by reading those authors, or hearing them read, in the original. I hope enough has been said to show that familiarity with (say) Latin idiom cannot be gained by translating it into English, only by reading or hearing it in Latin. The same may be said of vocabulary: the Latin word and its associations are learnt by reading as many as possible of the passages where it occurs, not by looking at it with the eye and saying or thinking of an English word. It follows that more Latin may be learnt from reading a book of Livy than from translating it; and more Latin from reading six books of Livy once, than from reading one book of Livy six times. After the learner has read these six books, making occasional compositions out of his own head on similar themes, he is then ready to translate a piece of Livy into English, provided that he has already shown himself capable of writing English on political and military themes. He is also ready to translate a piece of Napier or Gibbon into Latin, but this will come later than the power to translate Livy into English in proportion as he knows English better than he knows Latin. I do not mean to imply that he translates nothing until he has read six books, for he must practise occasionally, but that after having read six books, he will be ready to do the translation either way, to a certain degree, without violating the idiom of either language.

The question now recurs, what part is to be played by translation in the course of teaching? *Ex hypothesi*, the pupil will be reading his six books of Livy in Latin; and the only way to make sure of this, is actually to hear the whole six books read aloud in class. How are we to make sure that he has prepared his work, or that he understands what he reads? We will assume, for the present, that he was supposed to prepare at least part of the lesson with his dictionary at hand, and that we desire to test whether he has done so. The answer is, that the reading itself is

generally a sufficient test. Neither Latin nor any other language can be properly read aloud, with due emphasis and proper phrasing, unless it is understood; and the master will at once stop his reader if he does not read aright, and will ask him what he means or will correct the reading himself. Moreover, the master knows, or ought to know, what words and phrases are new, or likely to be misunderstood; and these he will ask about or explain, whether the reader read properly or not. If we are right in desiring to concentrate attention on one thing at a time, and in avoiding breaks of continuity, as I have argued above, these questions and these explanations will all be in Latin. Every now and then will come something which the master cannot make sure of, and here he will ask for or give an English rendering of a word or a difficult sentence, or better still, an English paraphrase in explanation; but the fewer these breaks the better for the purpose of learning Latin, and in any case the English given in explanation must be already familiar. By this means every moment of the lesson is given to learning or practising Latin, and the pace and thoroughness of the work is enormously increased. Reasonable care and preparation on the master's part will enable him to bring in day by day one or other of the difficult constructions and idioms of the language, until all become quite familiar. By the same means the common accident becomes quite familiar, with a minimum of the learning of paradigms by heart.

What I have just described is suitable for a sixth form; and it is, indeed, remarkable how easy it is to dispense with English altogether in the reading lesson. I do not speak of technical grammar, notes, and questions, which are best given in English; but they may be kept by themselves; I speak of the reading, that which is commonly treated as a basis for English construing. With the lower forms, a more rigid test is needed. Here my own experience recommends that new work be treated in form as above, paraphrased and explained by means of Latin or Greek words already familiar, as a preparation, and that the home work

consist partly in writing out the translation of the piece so prepared. Here the ground covered will be less, the explanations longer and oftener; but still no time is lost, everything, or almost everything, being in Latin or Greek. With care, each preparation lesson may be made a lesson both in accidence and syntax, the explanations being partly dictated, or taken down summarily, for use at home. In the earliest stages, again, the bed-rock vocabulary of simple words, and a good deal of accidence as well, may be taught along with action. But in the early stages, more English explanations will be necessary of new words, until the pupils have material to go on with. Yet it is possible to do a great deal even then without English, if the master makes up his mind to do without it as far as possible. This subject, however, is too large to deal with here; and I must refer to Mr. W. H. S. Jones's *First Latin Book* (Macmillan), where a system is worked out for the earlier lessons.

The master must not be afraid of talking over the heads of his boys; that is the way we learn our own tongue, and, if used judiciously, it is most effective. There is no need, for example, to wait for the third declension before one can cry *O di immortales!* and there is no need to explain what it means when said, if said with appropriate look and tone. Many idioms not in the schedule may be made familiar long before the end of the first term, and when they are met with in books, a word or two will throw light on the accumulated associations, and fix them for ever. For example, the dependent question, *nescio quid dicas*, may be used by the master long before it is used by the pupils; and as soon as their curiosity is excited to ask the reason of the mood, all may be explained when the boys' minds are ready to receive it, eager to learn, and not passively resisting. So with the wish, *utinam tu eloquaris*, or *o si sapiens esses*—but enough. Thought, care, and system are wanted, but with these much can be done.

One point I must lay stress on, because it might not seem obvious: the less test-construing there is, the better is the English

style of the translations that are done. The average translation in schools is bad, there is no doubt of that: it is full of mistakes in idiom, dog-English in fact; it is mechanical, a machine-made product; worst of all, it abounds in nonsense. It is worse than the average Latin composition, because the makers of it ought to know that it is nonsense, and do see that as soon as the fact is pointed out. Read out A's rendering of a passage, and all the letters of the alphabet, including A himself, will be highly amused; yet others may be just as bad. Now there is absolutely no excuse for nonsense in English. For mistaking the sense of a word there may be excuse, but there is none for nonsense. But in the renderings of all stages, from top to bottom, when the work has been done in the way suggested above, there is practically no nonsense. I have before me all the written work of four forms for a term; and there is in it practically no nonsense, and very little unidiomatic English. Meanings are mistaken not infrequently, but the word given is then generally one that might have stood in its place without offence. There is no mechanical likeness at all: each version is the author's, often racy and characteristic, always his own. There is one exception: he is a boy who has elsewhere been learning Greek for three years on the usual plan, and he is placed with a form that has been learning Greek for four terms on the plan described. His papers are nearly all nonsense; yet he is not inferior to the others in ability. This is not a unique experience; we have found this strong aptitude for nonsense in nearly every case where boys have joined us after learning French, Latin, or Greek elsewhere. Let me take a short passage (Lucian, *Dial. Mort.* 10) as an example.

ἀκούσατε ὡς ἔχει ἡμῶν τὰ πράγματα. μικρὸν μὲν ἡμῶν, ὡς ὁράτε, τὸ σκαφίδιον καὶ ὑπόσαθρόν ἐστι καὶ διαρρεῖ τὰ πολλά, καὶ ἦν τραπῇ ἐπὶ θάτερα, οἰχθήσεται περιτραπέν, ὑμεῖς δ' ἅμα τοσοῦτοι ἤκετε πολλὰ ἐπιφερόμενοι ἕκαστος.

The spaced words and phrases were new and had to be explained; the rest was also explained by paraphrase, even when not necessary, to make sure. The only English used was to explain the intransitive use of

the verb in *ὡς ἔχει*, and the rest was as follows :

σκαφίδιον· σκάφος μικρόν, πλοῖον μικρόν, οὐ μέγα.
 ὑπόσθαρων· ὀλίγον σαθρόν· ὑπόσθαρὸν ἔστιν σκάφος
 ὅταν εἰσέλθῃ τὸ ὕδωρ· τούναντιον δ' ὕγιες.
 διαρρεῖ· τοῦτ' ἔστιν, εἰσρεῖ τὸ ὕδωρ· ὅταν εἰσρέῃ τὸ
 ὕδωρ, διαρρεῖ τὸ σκάφος τὰ πάντα, παντελῶς.
 οἰχέσεται. φροῦδον γενήσεται, διολεῖται.
 ἐπὶ θάτερα, ἢ τὰ ἕτερα· ἢ ἐπὶ τὸν ἕτερον τοῖχον ἢ
 ἐπὶ τὸν ἕτερον.

The explanations were driven home by questions, so framed as to exact the use of the words by the pupils. It will be observed that the vocabulary is thus enlarged (the spaced words were new), the accidentence is practised (*μέγα, εἰσρέῃ, εἰσέλθῃ, γενήσεται, διολεῖται*), and the syntax also (*ὅταν εἰσρέῃ, ὅταν εἰσέλθῃ*): these are not new, but old work practised. Now take one or two renderings, as they come.

A. Listen what we have to do. We have only a very little boat, as you see, and a somewhat rotten one, also it leaks very much, and if it should turn either way it would turn and go down; but you who came all brought many things.

B. But listen what the trouble is. As you know, our boat is small and rather rotten, and leaks a great deal, and it will upset before it gets over, especially as you all have so much baggage.

C. Hear how things are going on with us. Our boat is small as you see, it is a bit rotten and leaking badly, and if it goes to the other side it will turn turtle, and here have all you people come together with a lot of luggage.

Z. Listen to what he has done to us. As you see he is small, with little sense and half rotten, and escapes the rest and had turned to the others and he will be going all round. Then you come each bringing many things.

It should be remembered that the passage was not translated into English; the above represents the independent work of each boy. Mistakes are made in *ὡς ἔχει*, *ἐπὶ θάτερα*, and *περιτραπέν*; and as these are repeated by several more, it is clear that they were not properly explained. To remedy this would be quite easy another time, and these particular mistakes may be expected to disappear. A is not very good in style, but B and C are, and none of them writes nonsense. All are typical examples, taken at random from the exercises. But the unhappy Z gives a complete hash of nonsense for all except the last few words; he is the boy referred to above, who has been learning Greek for

three years by means of paradigms and construing.¹

I will take now one or two examples to suggest the possibilities of the method. First, I copy a boy's notes from his notebook exactly, mistakes and all: the text is Theocr. xv. 1-4 and 27-32 atticized (No. 2 in my little *Greek Reader*).

Γοργῷ Γοργούς V. and D. Γοργοί.

ἀπληστε· ἔστι ὅς μηδέποτε πληρεῖς γίγνεται.

ἐγγέω = pour in.

δύστηνος κακοδαίμων, οὐκ εὐδαίμων.

νίπτω νίψω ἐνίψα· λούειν πόδας εἰ χεῖρας.

εἰλίσσω ἐλίσσω εἰλιξα εἰλιγμαί.

θάττον· ταχέως, θάττον, τάχιστα (μᾶλλον ταχέως).

ἵνα λούωμαι, φέρε ὕδωρ.

οὕτως λούονται οἱ Ἕλληνες. πρῶτον μὲν λεκάνην

τιθέασιν ἐπὶ τραπέζης κένην. μετὰ ταῦτα ἢ

δοῦλη φέρε τὸ ὕδωρ ἐν προχώῃ. ὁ μὲν ἐκτείνει

τὰς χεῖρας, ἢ δε δοῦλη πρὶν τοῦ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ τὰς

χεῖρας, ὁ δε τριβεῖ τὰς χεῖρας τῷ σμήματι.

ἔχει with the adverb expresses a state. ἔχει κάλλιστα, that's very nice.

The mistakes *πληρεῖς*, *εἰ* for *πλήρης*, ἢ were due to lack of care on the master's part, and can therefore be avoided by his taking more care to speak clearly. *ἐγγέω* was explained in English, and *προχώῃ* by means of a picture. A few definitions or explanations from the master's notes on other lessons may now be cited.

πρίων· ὄργανον σιδηροῦν, ἔχον ὀδόντας.

μετανοεῖν· ἀλλάττειν τὴν γνώμην, ἢ ἐθέλειν μὴ ἐμβεβηκέναι.

νεῖν· νέουσιν ἐν τῷ ὕδατι, προφέροντες μὲν τὰς χεῖρας, λακτίζοντες δὲ τοῖς σκέλεσιν.

διαγίγνωσκε· διάταττε τοὺς μὲν ἐνθάδε, τοὺς δ' ἐκεῖ.

οὐκ ἐκόμισα εὖ ποιῶν· εὖ ἐποίησα οὐ κομίσας.

κόραξ· μέλας ὄρνις ὅς κρῶζει καὶ καῦ.

κύων· ὁ κύων βαῦζει αὐτῷ.

I make no apology for offering these details: in no other way can an unfamiliar process be explained. It would be easy to show by further examples how any words or constructions that the master wishes to use

¹The following details may be of interest. Form V: 4th year of Latin, 2nd year of Greek. Average age 15.9. Average mark on term's translations (done without construe, in the manner described): Latin, Tacitus' *Agricola*; upper division 71%, lower division 55.5%. Greek, Lucian, Select Dialogues and passages from Reader, 58%. Best mark: Latin 90.5%, Greek 88%. Worst mark: Latin 42.5%, Greek 57.2%. A full report has been sent to the Board of Education. (Z is not included in this reckoning.)

may be brought into a lesson. My opinion has of course not been based on the above examples only, but upon prolonged experiment with sixth form work, and upon a carefully planned experiment with two lower forms. It has been fortified, and indeed the experiment was partly suggested, by the brilliant success of the same principles as applied to French and German; and I wish to express my hearty admiration for the ability and insight shown in the methods of modern language teachers. There is no department of classical teaching which we may not improve by sitting at their feet.

The line of reasoning sketched above, and the experiments based on it, have led me to the conclusion that there is an enormous waste of time and energy in our classical work. Some claim that classics are useful because they teach English; I think I have shown that if English be taught, classics cannot be taught at the same time, and that

the proper economy is to take English by itself and Latin and Greek each by itself. I am also convinced that the use of construing in the classical lesson is a danger to English, because it encourages the misuse of words and idiom, and implants and fosters the habit of writing nonsense. Further, that a true understanding of Latin and Greek can only be got by reading widely in those languages; and that translation as an art can only be taught after both English and Latin or Greek have been made familiar. The material of our work will be got by reading aloud, and its use taught by constant question and answer, summarizing, and imitation, in the same language, English or other; whilst translation first into English and later from English will form the last stages, to be practised occasionally, and only after other means have been taken to forestall and prevent probable mistakes.

W. H. D. ROUSE.

THE PAEANS OF PINDAR AND OTHER NEW LITERATURE.

(*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, Part V.)¹

IN the latest gift from Oxyrhynchus, lovers of great literature, and especially of poetry, have no contemptible portion. The recovered MS. of Pindar, comprising poems to be classed more or less certainly as paeans, has indeed sustained such damage that, in what the editors have made legible, much must be regarded as material for the student rather than as food for the reader. But there remain several passages which display the author (whose identity is established beyond question) in an aspect both characteristic and novel.

The impression we receive is that in this class of poem, composed for public ceremonies and upon public commission, Pindar must have been at least as successful as in the *Epinicia*, where (it is possible to think) the magnificence and the enthusiasm are

sometimes imperfectly supported by the importance of the occasion, as it would be estimated by the average standards of human sentiment. No such objection, at all events, can be laid against a hymn composed for the citizens of Abdera, to celebrate their gratitude for the successful labour of past generations, which had carved out a home of Hellenic life in the rich but inhospitable barbarism of Thrace, their loyalty to the federal bond, which, under the mighty direction of Athens, had given new security and opened new prospects to their enterprise, and their common resolve to be worthy of such a tradition and such opportunities.

The remains of this Ode, the second in order among the seven of which comprehensible portions have been recovered, exhibit at least one passage, which is a notable addition to our store of Greek poetry, and not less interesting as a document of Greek religion. A careful examination of this will perhaps be more profitable

¹ Edited, with translations and notes, by Bernard P. Grenfell, D.Litt., etc., and Arthur S. Hunt, D.Litt., etc. London: Egyptian Exploration Fund, 1908.