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THE TRAGEDIES OF SENECA.

The Tragedies of Seneca. Translated into English verse by FRANK JUSTUS MILLER. Chicago: The University Press; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1 Adelphi Terrace. 1907.

CONSIDERING the remarkable influence, both direct and indirect, that Seneca has exerted upon the English drama, it is rather surprising that there should be so few English translations of his tragedies. The first, and until the present century the only translation which included all the plays, was the 'Tenne Tragedies,' published at London in 1581. A number of scholars contributed to this work: the *Hercules Furens*, the *Thyestes*, and the *Troades* were from the pen of Jasper Heywood, the *Oedipus* was by Alexander Nevyle, the *Hippolytus*, the *Medea*, the *Agamemnon*, and the *Hercules Oetaeus* by John Studley, the *Octavia* by Thomas Nuce, and the *Thebais* (or *Phoenissae*) by Thomas Newton. To this translation the great Elizabethan playwrights had recourse whenever, wishing to borrow from Seneca, they lacked either the leisure or the ability to consult the original Latin. In 1702 Sir Edward Sherburne published a volume containing versions of the *Medea*, the *Phaedra*, and the *Troades*, but it was not until 1902 that a complete translation again appeared. This was the prose rendering of Watson Bradshaw, a book most fearfully and wonderfully made. The verse-translation of Miss Ella Harris (1904) supplied a long-felt want, and has great merit in spite of the fact that the lyrical as well as the dramatic portions are turned into blank verse and that errors of interpretation are not infrequent.

Perhaps the greatest danger to which the translator of a Latin or Greek writer is exposed is that of falling into a dry, formal monotony of expression which will plunge even the conscientious reader, after a dozen or so pages, into a slough of drowsy inattention. Mr. Miller, recognizing this peril, has avoided it with wonderful skill. His translation is, above all else, eminently readable. Various means contribute to this

end: the large page with its ample margins; the breaking up of some of the longer speeches into 'paragraphs,' as it were; the illuminating stage-directions; the explanatory character-lists and arguments which precede each play, both exceedingly helpful to one who has forgotten his mythology, although it must be confessed that the arguments betray a painful straining after poetic atmosphere. A still more important aid in retaining the reader's attention is Mr. Miller's practice of casting the choruses into metres other than blank verse. Very often he attains to a high degree of success in manipulating these lyric measures, while at other times the effect is somewhat pedestrian; in general, however, the introduction of these rhythms adds greatly to the lightness and beauty of the whole. For the spoken parts Mr. Miller naturally uses blank verse, generally closing each act with a rhymed couplet. In the *Medea* he tries to reproduce the iambic trimeter of the original, not altogether happily, as he himself admits. The fundamental cause, however, of the readableness of Mr. Miller's translation is its exceedingly praiseworthy virtue of lucidity. The thought is presented vividly yet simply: each sentence is so written that its grammatical structure is obvious at the first reading; with rare exceptions no words are used which are purely poetic, stilted, or archaic; great care is taken not only to make Seneca's meaning clear, but also to give each idea its proper emphasis.

In general Mr. Miller is exceedingly faithful to his original; occasionally, however, presumably to meet the exigencies of the metre, he omits a word or two of the Latin, or adds a phrase of his own to fill out the line. In handling the choruses, he even goes so far at times as to reject and insert entire verses, but the happy effect attained by varying the metre more than compensates for this freedom. A few details seemed to be passed over in silence because of aesthetic reasons, as *Troad.* 1115 f., part of *Agam.* 903, and one word in *Thy* 911. Here and there one comes upon an infelicitous or inadequate rendering. 'I'd

have thee dare the law' (*Med.* 515) is weak in comparison with the fierce *vel scelus* of the original; in *Phaed.* 20-22, 'where . . . Acharnae melts his snows' rings strange; *solemne sacrum* (*Phaed.* 424) is hardly 'yearly rites,' nor is *hodierna pietas* (*Thy.* 515) 'faithful piety'; in *Med.* 802, *funereo de more iacens* agrees with *vitta*, yet the translation reads 'Corpselike upon the bier I lie'; *ungue cantato* (*Med.* 730) is not 'sickle magic-edged' but 'charmed finger-nail'; *maria committat duo* (*Med.* 36) does not mean 'shall light two seas with flame'; in *Agam.* 170, 'with blood we soothe the winds, with blood we war' loses much by not retaining the metaphor in *emimus*; and lastly, in *Troad.* 46-50, we wonder why Pyrrhus, after seizing Priam by the hair, and so bending back his head, should proceed, as Miller claims, to thrust his sword 'Hilt-buried in his unresisting side,' for not only this attitude, but the Latin itself (*v.* 50) shows clearly that it is Priam's throat that receives the murderous weapon.

Interpretations that are decidedly erroneous are found, but they are comparatively few in number. In *Med.* 40 we have a forecast of the slaying of the children:

per viscera ipsa quaere supplicio viam,

which surely can not be rendered 'Thyself inspect the entrails, and seek there the way by prayer'; in verses 570-574 of the same play are enumerated the three gifts which Medea sends to Creusa,—the *palla*, the *monile*, and the *aurum quod solent cingi comae*,—but Miller without reason considers the last two as the same; again, the Messenger, in telling of the vain attempts to quench the fire which is destroying the palace, says (*v.* 889 f.):

alit unda flammas, quoque prohibetur magis,
magis ardet ignis: ipsa praesidia occupat.

Miller translates these last words by 'The very bulwarks feel their power,' whereas the meaning clearly is that the flames subvert to their own ends the water which is ordinarily used as a defence against them. In *Herc. Fur.* 134 f. Miller transforms *dumeta* into 'vineyards.' In lines 813 and 825 of his translation of the *Agamemnon* the

word 'birth' should not be used: the 'long night' was not the night on which Hercules was born, but that on which he was begotten. Finally, in *Oed.* 138-141, Miller says that the plague-stricken bull which sinks to the ground while the axe is still raised in the air breaks open his neck by the 'shock of his huge weight,' whereas *ictu* refers to the blow of the axe, which descends after the animal has fallen. This is clear from Leo's punctuation of verse 140, and his reading of *profusa* (*v.* 141).

In the preface Mr. Miller states that except in the instances noted he has followed Leo's text (Weidmann, Berlin, 1878), yet as a matter of fact he often differs from Leo without making any statement to that effect. Sometimes he assigns certain lines to one character while Leo gives them to another (see *Oed.* 103-105, 202-204; *Med.* 521; *Herc. Fur.* 205-278, 634-636, 1032-1034, 1301; *Phaed.* 239 f.; *Herc. Oet.* 1831-1835, 1838 f.; *Oet.* 195); sometimes the two differ as to verse-order (see *Med.* 329 f., *Herc. Fur.* 1130, 1135 f.; *Phaed.* 475-480); sometimes they adopt different readings of doubtful words or phrases (in *Med.* 713 Miller is evidently translating *Suevi*, whereas Leo's text has *Suebae*; in *Herc. Fur.* 490 Miller reads *dabis*, Leo *dabit*; in *v.* 834 of the same play Miller chooses *ausus est*, Leo *ausus es*; in *Phaed.* 336 Miller translates *cerulus undis grex*, but Leo prints *pervius undis rex*). Now in most, if not all, of these instances Miller is following the manuscripts known as A, upon which the text of the older editions was principally based. Consequently one is inclined to suspect that although Miller may have used Leo in revising his work, originally he made his translation from one of these earlier editions.

An introductory essay, brief but interesting, on the influence of the tragedies of Seneca upon early English drama is contributed by John Matthews Manley. To the *Octavia* is prefixed a review of the little we know about Roman historical drama, and at the end of the book are found a mythological index and comparative analyses of Seneca's plays and of the corresponding Greek dramas. There are a few errors in

printing ('acocunt' *Oed.* 709, 'breats' *Oed.* 1053, 'lossened' *Phaed.* 1085, 'whate're' *Herc. Oet.* 1354, 'all my, myself' *Med.* 176, 'Crysippus' in the argument to the *Thyestes*, incorrect punctuation in *Phaed.* 215 and

Med. 727). The paper and binding are hardly in keeping with the worth of the book.

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THE LANGUAGE OF ARISTOPHANIC PARODY.

The Language of Parody: a Study in the Diction of Aristophanes. By E. W. HOPE. Baltimore: J. H. Furst Company, 1906. Pp. 62.

THE aim of this interesting study is to collect, and to present in alphabetical order, those poetical or non-Attic words which Aristophanes uses in humorous contrast with the current language of his own day. The task is arduous, since it is not easy to determine what the ordinary Attic prose of, or near, Aristophanes' time really was. Greek prose is a very different thing, according as it is written by Thucydides or Xenophon, Antiphon or Andocides, Plato or Aristotle. Good guidance, however, is to be had from Lysias, and also from Aristophanes himself if he be read with constant care and discrimination.

In the present dissertation the words collected are marked with numbers denoting that they fall under one or more of the following divisions: *epic, lyric, tragic, poetic, Ionic, old-Attic, Doric, doubtful, obsolete, un-Attic*. The following words, chosen almost at random from the large number here brought together, may serve to suggest the nature of the work undertaken by Mr. Hope, who in each case gives an interesting note: *ἀγανός, ἀγνιά, αἰδέομαι, ἄλκιμος, ἄλοχος, ἄσσον, βαίός, βέλος, βλέφαρον, γαῦρος, δόμος, δρασείω, δύστηνος, δυσχείμερος, δῶμα, ἔδραι, ἔμολον, ἐξώπιος, ἐσθλός, ἐφεξίς, ἥπύω, θέλω, θήγω, ἰνδάλλομαι, καταδοκέω, κάρτα, κέλευθος, κλύω, κραδαίνω, λῆμα, λίσσομαι, μέριμνα, μυθίζω, ναίω, νείκος, νέφος, ξυρέω, δῖς, ὀργή (= τρόπος), πάπαι, πάρος (= πρὸ τοῦ), πάτρα (= πατρίς), παῦρος, πῆληξ, πλάτη, ποθεινός, πόσις, σκάφος, στυγερός, τέκνον, τηλοῦ (= πόρρω), τλήμων,*

τύμβος, φάος, φρήν, φροῦδος, φώς, χθόνιος, χρήζω.

Such a list as this will help to show the industry of the writer, and the variety of the matter which he presents with much intelligence and skill and with but few errors of detail. He rightly lays stress (pp. 3, 42) on the fact that, after some Aristophanic character has used a poetical word, another within the next few lines will use the prose equivalent for it, or the Attic equivalent, if an Ionic or otherwise non-Attic word has preceded: e.g. *οἷς . . . πρόβατον* (*Pax* 929-937). In the list of helpful books, one misses any mention of Dunbar's *Concordance to the Comedies and Fragments of Aristophanes* and of Beatson's *Indices in Tragicos Graecos*. On p. 11 *ἄλγος* should hardly be given as distinctively a prose word. More might perhaps have been said about certain tragic usages of the particles. Good use has, however, been made of some interesting points offered by the Fragments. The line *οὕτως αὐτοῖς ἀταλαιπώρως ἢ ποίησις διέκειτο* in the *Danaides* does not fall within the scope of Mr. Hope's dissertation, but its close resemblance to Thucydides' well-known phrase is very curious.

Any scholar who has worked systematically through all the Plays and Fragments of Aristophanes and has noted down all the literary references contained in them will know how copious is the material. Mr. Hope's dissertation does not take so wide a range as this. But modest as its compass is, it serves to bring into strong relief the fact that Aristophanes was not only a caricaturist but a critic,—a literary critic possessed of literary genius.

W. RHYS ROBERTS.