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REVIEWS.

The Tragedies of Seneca translated into English Verse. By FRANK JUSTUS MILLER. Introduced by an essay on the influence of the tragedies of Seneca upon early English drama, by John Matthews Manly. Chicago: University Press. 1907. 8vo. ix + 534 pp.

So much attention has been directed in recent years to the influence of Seneca's tragedies on the Elizabethan drama by such works as Fischer's *Kunstentwicklung der englischen Tragödie* and Cunliffe's *Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy*, that any attempt to make the tragedies themselves familiar to the student of English literature is to be heartily welcomed. English translations of Seneca's plays are not numerous. The *Tenne Tragedies of Seneca* (1581) by Heywood, Neville, Newton, Nuce, and Studley; W. Bradshaw's prose rendering of the collected plays (1902); and Dr Ella Harris's verse translation (1904) exhaust the list, I believe¹. Of these the last-mentioned is the only one which gives any real help to the student of English literature whose Latin has grown rusty, and this translation by Mr Miller possesses certain valuable features, viz. the introductory essay by Prof. Manly, comparative analyses of plays and a mythological index, which are lacking to Dr Harris's excellent version.

Mr Miller has used blank verse for the dramatic portions of all the plays except the *Medea*, and on the whole he has handled it with skill, though there are some heavy and prosaic passages. The rendering of the speech of Hippolytus in praise of the simple life (*Hipp.* 484—564) may be taken as a favourable specimen of his powers. The experiment made in *Medea* of reproducing the iambic trimeter of the original is not attended with much success, as the translator himself admits in his preface. The lyric portions of the ten plays have been rendered in a variety of metres, and in these Mr Miller's touch is very uncertain. What is to be said of this chorus from *Medea*:

The fairest of girls is she,
The Athenian maids outshining,
Or the Spartan maiden with armor laden,
No burden of war declining.

Not by Alpheus' sacred stream,
Nor Boeotia's musical water,
Is there any fair who can compare
With our lovely Corinthian daughter.

(*Medea*, 75—82.)

¹ This list does not include versions of separate plays, of which several examples may be found in the seventeenth and succeeding centuries.

The famous prophecy in the same play :

Venient annis saecula seris,
quibus Oceanus vincula rerum
laxet et ingens pateat tellus.
Tethysque novos detegat orbes
nec sit terris ultima Thule

which ought to have peculiar interest for one of Mr Miller's nationality, is very tamely and ineffectively rendered. At times the translator's use of colloquialisms in the midst of speeches written otherwise in dignified English, jars somewhat on the ear; and there are a few annoying misprints, e.g. 'acocunt' for 'account' (*Æd.* 709), 'be' for 'he' (*Medea*, 652).

The translation is fairly accurate, though one or two blunders may be noted.

No sinner seeks to shirk his punishment
(*Herc. Æt.* 899.)

is a strange version of

Nemo nocens sibi ipse poenas abrogat,

which Dr Harris renders correctly as

He who sins
May not himself annul the punishment.

(The Elizabethan translation, following the reading 'inrogat' for 'abrogat,' renders the passage 'No gylty one doth use To take reuengement of themselves.')

The whole of the dialogue between Hyllus and Deianira is poorly translated by Mr Miller.

Whoe'er ignores his fate and spares himself,
Deservedly has erred, deserves to die
(*Herc. Æt.* 887—8.)

is not an adequate rendering of

Quicumque fato ignoscit et parcit sibi
errare meruit: morte damnari placet.

Sometimes Seneca's dialogue loses its point through the translator's failure to keep the Latin play upon words. Thus Mr Miller renders

Thes. Lacrimae nonne te nostrae movent?
Ph. Mors optima est perire lacrimandum suis
(*Hipp.* 880—1.)

by

Th. Will not my tears avail with thee?
Ph. That death is best which one's own friends lament.

Prof. Manly contributes an excellent introductory essay on the influence of Seneca's tragedies on early English drama, and at the end of the book there is a helpful table of comparison between Seneca's plays and their Greek originals.

Perhaps one suggestion for future editions may be added. Since the intrinsic literary value of Seneca's tragedies is so small, and it is certain that henceforth their importance will lie chiefly in their relation to the Elizabethan drama, would it not be useful to add foot-notes giving alternative renderings in those places where the Elizabethan editions of the text differ from Leo's, which Mr Miller has followed? It is true that the Elizabethan translators of Seneca made use of two or three Latin editions, as has been pointed out by E. Jockers in his dissertation *Die englischen Seneca-Übersetzer*, but the variations of text in these are generally unimportant, and Cunliffe's example might well be followed in taking the Aldine of Avantius (1517) as representing fairly the text of Seneca as known to the Elizabethans.

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CAMBRIDGE.

The Hexaplar Psalter, being the Book of Psalms in Six English Versions. Edited by WILLIAM ALDIS WRIGHT. Cambridge: University Press. 1911. 4to. vi + 390 pp.

The history of the English versions of the Psalms is particularly interesting, and the Cambridge University Press has conferred a benefit on the public by issuing this Hexapla as part of the commemoration of the Bible tercentenary. It is edited by Mr Aldis Wright, whose knowledge of the subject and scholarly accuracy are unsurpassed, and it contains in parallel columns the six principal translations of the Psalms which belong to the period of printing, viz. those of Coverdale's Bible, 1535, of the Great Bible, 1539, of Geneva, 1560, of the Bishops' Bible, 1568, of the Authorised Version, 1611, and of the Revised Version, 1885. Coverdale's original version, on which he evidently bestowed exceptional pains, was founded upon a combination of the two principal German translations with that of the Vulgate. Mr Aldis Wright refers briefly in his Preface to the question of the 'five sundry interpreters' whose authority Coverdale alleges in the Dedication of his Bible, and apparently thinks it necessary to suppose that five were actually used in the Psalms. But when Coverdale mentions his five interpreters, it is in reference to the Bible generally, and Tindale may well have been one of them, though the translator could get no assistance from him in the Psalter. Pagninus may also have been one; but of him Coverdale actually made little use. It would be interesting to know on what grounds Mr Wright suggests Jerome's so-called '*Versio Hebraica*' as one of the authorities used here by Coverdale. In his translation of the Psalms Coverdale evidently aimed from the first at such rhythmical smoothness as would render them suitable for singing, and this aim was pursued still further in the Great Bible, where we have Coverdale's own revision of his earlier work, with the help of Münster's Latin version. He does not scruple to make additions purely with this object, as where he writes, 'God is a ryghteous iudge *strong and patient*,' for 'God is a