

So much for Pope, on high authority; none higher, one might say, than Professor Conington. With regard to Chapman, let us hear what another poet, Algernon Charles Swinburne has to say, (5) since "Introductions" such as these must, necessarily, I am afraid, consist, chiefly, of quotations from various authorities, to whom, as to the authors—or poems—treated of, some few, at least, of those who read, will turn a close and careful attention.

George Chapman, translator of Homer, was born in 1559, and died in 1634; lived that is, in what was, unquestionably, the golden era of English literature, the age of Queen Elizabeth; whereof Carlyle, in "The Hero as Poet", writes thus: "In some sense it may be said that this glorious Elizabethan Era, with its Shakespeare as the outcome and flowerage of all which had preceded it, is itself attributable to the Catholicism of the middle ages".

Of Chapman's "Iliads of Homer", Mr. Swinburne has this to say:

"The objections which a just and adequate judgment may bring against Chapman's master-work, his translation of Homer, may be summed up in three epithets: it is romantic, laborious, Elizabethan... but setting this apart, and considering the poems as, in the main, original works... no praise can be too warm or high for the power, the freshness, the indefatigable strength and inextinguishable fire which animate this exalted work."

Charles Kingsley, in "Hypatia", describes the effect on an untrained, uneducated, but sensitive nature,—that of Philammon, the boy-monk, caused by hearing, for the first time, "the mighty thunder-roll of Homer's verse". He speaks, in a note, of Chapman and of Pope as having "failed", and adds "It is simply, I believe, impossible to render Homer into English verse, because, for one reason among many, it is impossible to preserve the pomp of sound, which invests with grandeur his most common words."

Yet Kingsley's "humble attempt" has in it something which Lord Derby's translation misses: Kingsley could "manage" blank verse,—a most difficult art, by the way—Lord Derby "had not caught the difficult secret" And, since it must, evidently, add no small measure of interest to what is, I fear, a somewhat dry paper, let me quote at random, from Kingsley, from Chapman, and from Pope. More, you can read for yourselves.

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(5) Enc. Brit. v. pp. 396, 397.