

the work, and whose canons of judgment have more in common with Sheridan's *Critic* or the "correct diction" of Protagoras than with the spirit of the *Phædrus*. Plato has himself anticipated this manner of dealing with his ideas in the conclusion of the *Cratylus*, when he says that no man of sense will like to put himself or the education of his mind in the power of names. On which Mr. Jowett very properly remarks, that in this and other passages Plato shows that he is as completely emancipated from the influence of "Idols of the tribe" as Bacon himself. We think it fortunate for the English readers of Plato that Mr. Jowett has not fallen under the influence of the idols of the school.

In revising the passage above quoted for his second edition, the translator has made only one change. This is the omission of the word "here," which in the former version represented *metadzu tone logone*. "But here let me ask you" has been altered to "But let me ask you." This change, trifling as it may seem, suggests a general consideration of some importance with reference to this whole subject.

One of the chief differences between the ancient and modern languages, and notably between Greek and English, is in the use of the particles, by which in Greek the relation of sentences and the parts of sentences to one another is often made explicit, when in English this relation is left to be understood. And this is perhaps the crowning test of excellence in English writing. A good writer knows how, without loading his style with conjunctions and qualifying words, to suggest the particular shade of expression and emphasis which he intends to convey. This skill has been rarely attained by translators of the classics. Either they neglect the particles and make a bald disjointed piece of work, or more frequently they show the exactness of their scholarship by preserving a minuteness of articulation which is intolerable to the English reader. It requires no ordinary nicety and discrimination of judgment to strike the proper balance here. Of the two failings, we must confess our preference for that which elevates the whole above the parts to that in which the feeling of the whole is obscured or lost through the pedantically minute rendering of the parts.

Mr. Browning's brilliant transcripts from Euripides are too often marred by his close adherence to what may be called (tropically, of course) "the doctrine of the enclitic *de*." In one of the finest parts of his rendering of the *Hercules Furens*, the ode in which the Chorus "tell us plaintively of how many evils old age is the cause," there occur these words:—

"Never be mine the preference
Of an Asian empire's wealth, nor yet
Of a house all gold, to youth, to youth
That's beauty, whatever the gods dispense!
Whether in wealth we joy, or fret
Paupers—of all God's gifts most beautiful, in truth!"

The italics are ours. What has "in truth" to do at the climax and turning-point of a lyric rhythm? When has Mr. Browning been wont to give us such "sarcenet surety" in his verse? There is only one explanation of the phenomenon. The translator was anxious that we should not lose his interpretation of an ambiguous particle. In a cursor yre-perusal (*gown*?) of his charming version of the *Alceſtis*, we were ungracious enough to note forty-eight of these bits of "pepper-gingerbread" disturbing the melodious flow of Balaustion's recital. Our list includes fourteen "at leasts," with a proportionate sprinkling of "indeeds," "assuredlys," "undoubtedlys," "certainlys," and superfluous "thens." Here is a quantitative test which may enable some New Brown-

ing Society (when other keys to Euripides have been lost) to distinguish with certainty of cleavage between the translation and the beautiful, though too ingenious, commentary.

Another difference of idiom consists in the order of words and clauses. And here also the idea of translation has been hampered with a formal and empirical rule, which is not without a partial value, and has the sanction of no less a name than that of the late Professor Conington. This rule is, that the order of the words in the original should be as far as possible preserved. If by this it is meant that the most emphatic words shall be in the most emphatic places, and that connexion and association of ideas should be carefully observed, such a precept is not only just, but obvious. But, if taken literally, it is certainly not applicable to the process of translating from Greek into English. For in Greek the first word is the most emphatic; in English the last. The Greeks put relative before antecedent, predicate before subject, the consequence before the cause. The figure known to grammarians as *usteron proteron* (making first in thought what is last in nature) is far more frequently used by Greek than by English writers. The translator should take account of these and the like differences, not in any technical or formal spirit, but through the same instinctive sense of the relation existing between the idioms of both languages, which is his guide throughout his difficult and delicate task.

The pedantic tendencies which we are calling in question are apt to be summed up in the convenient formula, which is also not without a certain scholastic significance and value, that a good translation is the best commentary. By this it is perhaps meant that the best translator sums up the labours of previous interpreters, and adds something more. But it is apt to be understood in another sense, which tends to cramp and warp the execution. For it is inferred that the translator has a duty not only to the English reader, but to the schoolboy or college student, whom he is to inform as to the significance of the Greek particles, on the force of a gnomic aorist, on the construction of a noun with a neuter or passive verb. But he who engages in this work is sure to be hampered and confused if he has any other end in view than that of conveying to persons unacquainted with the original as nearly as possible the same impression, not only in detail, but in the contour and proportions of the whole fabric, which he believes to have been conveyed by the original to the mind of a Greek.

The foregoing remarks imply an assertion which to many, schoolmasters and others, is sure to sound like heresy—namely, that the object of translation "is not merely to render the worlds of one language into the words of another, but to produce an impression similar, or nearly similar, to that of the original on the mind of the reader." This ought not to be a paradox to any one who has ever been seriously engaged in translating from an ancient language. He must know that, while in the more level passages the language may be often turned "as clay to the seal," and the desired effect may be produced by an almost literal version, yet in those very places which most try his skill he finds an imperative need of a kind of alchemy by which the precious metal, when taken out of its first mould, may be fused and cast anew. He is above all things bent on giving to his work an appropriate form. And while he is rightly jealous both of losing anything essential and of the introduction of an alloy, he will hardly care to be bound by canons according to which his best work is that which costs him the least trouble. Why is Hope's *Iliad*, with all its spirit, an inadequate work? Not because it is not literal, but