

like one who wearily seeks to restore the matchless but shattered ruins, or to carve anew the limbs of the mutilated Grecian torso. With poetry this is still more true than prose. With the latter, it is possible to make some approach to the thought, although we may not be able to repeat the exact words. Much may still be saved. But with poetry, how different! Try it with some extract from Shakespeare, from Byron, from Wordsworth, from Tennyson, or from our own renowned poets. The mind wanders, if there be a break; to confusion follows vexation, and what would otherwise be an unpurchasable pleasure becomes an unsatisfactory as well as demoralizing regret over our own feeble memory. These attempts are, perhaps, in the seclusion of our own thoughts. Of what pleasure are we bereft when we wish to recall, for the enjoyment of our friend, the passages that gave us exquisite satisfaction? In society, as well as before the public, to quote incorrectly is to involve us in ridicule. It is not only a mistake, it is a serious blunder. Society did not ask the quotation. If it accept it, it will only take it as a perfect thing, or not at all. The same is true with quotations from Scripture. Woe betide the poor wight who, among Bible-taught people, substitutes a word for the old King James' translation.

This admirable faculty of exact memory teaches other things besides society and solitude. It enters into business, and powerfully affects the advanced student: it gives definiteness to our general thinking and a consciousness of power, a firm tread to the paths over which the mind travels. Its more immediate training in the school will be further considered when we come to speak of the proper use of text-books, in another paper.

—Schermmerhorn's Monthly.

The Art of Translation.

Translation is likely to occupy an important place in the classical scholarship of the future. The larger becomes the proportion of educated men who are imperfectly acquainted with the Latin and Greek languages, the more pressing will be the obligation on those who make them their special study to render the substance and the form of the great masterpieces of antiquity intelligible and appreciable to all persons of ordinary culture. But if the execution of this work is to be in any measure adequate to the laborious preparation which, exact and finished scholarship implies, it must be attended with a clearer conception of the end and nature of translation than the fallacies on this subject which appear to have sprung up under the shadow of distinguished names, both at Oxford and Cambridge, but which we cannot but regard as mere idols of the philological cave, overlaying the simple and obvious principles which should guide all translation, and not bearing the light when taken out of the peculiar atmosphere of the lecture-room. One of these is the assumption that freedom and laxity of translation are convertible terms; that a translation must necessarily be "slipshod" if it is free. Or, to adopt the converse mode of statement, it is assumed that a liberal and a faithful translation are the same thing. But surely a faithful rendering may yet happen to be free, and a very literal translation may be slipshod in point of style. Every good translator will aim at being faithful, and will avoid being loose; but to aim at being literal is only less mistaken than to aim at being free, at least in the sense in which freedom is opposed to literalness. For there is one kind of freedom which the translator, like every artist, must prize amongst his highest gifts—the freedom which is inseparable from perfection.

This fallacy has been reinforced by a false analogy from the art of painting. It is taken for granted that the work of translating an ancient writing is like that of copying a picture, and that hence, as far as possible, not only the meaning of every line, but the actual curves and sinuosities of every line, are to be preserved. But the two operations are not *in pari materia*. The impressions of colour and form are not so different in different ages and countries but that a similar effect may be produced by giving line for line and shade for shade. But it is otherwise with the varieties of human speech, which have a subtle and intricate correspondence with successive or simultaneous modes of thought. A line-for-line or word-for-word rendering may produce a wholly different effect from that which the original produced on those who first read or heard it, either because their ears were habituated to a greater fulness of sound, or their minds to less regularly constructed periods, or to a greater prominence of logical forms, or to a more perceptible blending of poetry with prose. It is another lesson that the analogy of the art of painting may really teach us—the lesson of preserving the *tout ensemble*, the general harmony of colouring, and, above all, the spirit and motive of the original. This is the higher and worthier aim, at once high and noble, which is indeed common to the translator and to the copier of a picture, and the attainment of which distinguishes the mechanical copyist from the real artist. The one sees only the lines and pigments of the work before him, the other sees in imagination the natural or ideal forms and hues which the old painter saw.

Take, for example, the well-known passage of the *Phædrus*, which, notwithstanding adverse criticism, in the revised edition of Dr. Jowett's *Plato* almost word for word as in the first:—

"Soc. But let me ask you, friend, have we not reached the plane-tree to which you were conducting us?"

"PHÆDRUS. Yes; here is the tree.

"Soc. Yes, indeed, and a fair and shady resting-place, full of summer sounds and scents. There is the lofty and spreading plane-tree, and the agnus-castus high and clustering, in the fullest blossom and the greatest fragrance; and the stream which flows beneath the plane-tree is deliciously cold to the feet. Judging from ornaments and images, this must be a spot sacred to Achelous and the Nymphs; moreover, there is a sweet breeze, and the grasshoppers chirrup; and the greatest charm of all is the grass like a pillow gently sloping to the head. My dear Phædrus, you have been an admirable guide."

The aim of the translator here is to reproduce the atmosphere of the original, radiant with life and redolent of joy and youth, so that it may be felt in all its freshness by English readers. The image, so familiar to the Greek, but unfamiliar and therefore cold and formal to the English reader, of a chorus accompanied by the flute, is felt to interfere with this effect of freshness and pure life and light, and is therefore suppressed. On the other hand, the "summery sound" of the breeze is felt to be so important for the main object, that this epithet is, by a license which grammarians recognise as Hypallage, transferred from its immediate context and placed at the beginning of the sentence; only, instead of "summery," which has a false poetic ring, the simpler expression "summer sounds" is used, so as not to divert the attention from the single image which is being presented to any particular feature, of from the meaning to the words. But this and the like processes, which are really indications of extreme care, are apt to be condemned as negligences by scholars who are not aware of the amount of "combing and curling" which has been bestowed on