

ON 2 KINGS xix 26, 27

THE chief object of the following Note is to defend the famous conjecture of Wellhausen (לִפְנֵי קָמָה : for : לִפְנֵי קָמָה) in the last clause of 2 Kings xix 26. I ventured to give this passage as an example of a convincing emendation, which was afterwards found to be virtually supported by an ancient authority, in the article 'Text and Versions' (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, col. 5031), notwithstanding that it had been rejected on metrical grounds by Budde (*ZAT* xii 35).

1. *Wellhausen's conjecture.* This is to be found in the 4th ed. of Bleek's *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, p. 257, note. Wellhausen, who was responsible for this edition, there says :

'In 2 Kings xix 26, 27 (= Isai. xxxvii 27, 28) one must divide לִפְנֵי קָמָה וְשָׁבַח Before Me is thy standing up and sitting down, thy going out and coming in I know. To get any sense for the expression *Corn blasted before it be grown up* is a thankless task ; on the other side וְשָׁבַח stands opposite the corresponding pair וְצָחַק וְכִנָּן on one leg.'

This characteristically short and lively utterance will bear some expansion. Isaiah declares that the inhabitants of the cities sacked by the King of Assyria were weak, broken, and withered. They had become vegetation and green herb, grass of the roofs and a thing blasted before standing (corn). Roof-grass, as every one knows from Psalm cxxix 6, is a standing comparison for something weak and withered, and the word for 'blasted' is almost the same as that used in Gen. xli for the dried-up ears of corn in Pharaoh's dream. But, as Wellhausen says, it is a thankless task to find a sense for the words 'before standing corn'. In the next verse 'and thy sitting down' stands all by itself, something is missing. The 'and' (translated 'But' in the E.V.) is very harsh : obviously 'thy standing up' is required before it.

Wellhausen's solution is to end verse 26 at שָׁרְפָה (blasted) and to transfer לִפְנֵי קָמָה to verse 27, at the same time changing the final ה into ך. By a perfectly legitimate alteration of the vowel-points this can be read 'Before Me (i.e. Jehovah) is thy rising up'. Sense and balance are at once secured by the emendation of a single letter.

2. *Budde's objection.* Prof. Budde of Marburg, still happily with us though he fought at Gravelotte in 1870, is well known as the discoverer of the *Ḳinā*-metre in Hebrew, the rhythm used for laments, the characteristic of which is a long line of three beats followed by two. In the *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* xii 31-37 (1892) he discusses this Isaianic oracle and points out that it is in *Ḳinā*-rhythm. Therefore, he says, Wellhausen's emendation is unsatisfactory. The rhythm of the Masoretic text is better, though the text is obviously

corrupt, and we must read לפני קרים (a thing blasted *before the east wind*) or something like it.

The general question of metre in the Old Testament is highly controversial, and I do not wish to raise it. But it may be pointed out that the whole subject of metres and rhythms in Hebrew is theoretical, derived not from tradition but deduced from a study of the text. Granted that the *Kīnā*-metre was used, and further that some of the lines in this passage have the *Kīnā*-rhythm (three beats followed by two), there is no indication beyond the mere syllables, which are all written and printed as prose, where this rhythm began or left off. No doubt it begins where the poetry begins, at xix 21^b:

Mócked thee and laúghed thee to scórn
 hath the Vírgin of Zíon,
 At thee hath she sháken her head,
 Jerúsalem's Máiden.

That, no doubt, is *Kīnā*-rhythm, and it goes on similarly. But I must confess that ver. 23^a seems to me to have another rhythm, though the sense is perspicuous and the diction poetical.¹ In any case the rhythm changes after ver. 26. Verses 27 and 28 appear to me to be written in three and six lines to a verse.

To make my meaning clearer I add a translation of vv. 25-28.

²⁵ ' Hást thou not héard from afár? *Thát* is My dóing,
 From dáys of óld I fórméd it, nów I have bróught it,
 That thóu wert to máke waste heáps fórtified cíties.

²⁶ Théy that mánned them were wéak, they are bróken and withered;
 Théy became hérb of the field, as gráss that spríngs up,
 wéeds on the róof all scórched.

Before Me is thy rising ²⁷ and sitting,
 and thy going and coming I know,
 and thy rage against Me.

²⁸ And because of thy rage against Me,
 and thy noise has come up in My ears,
 I will put My hook in thy nose,
 and My bridle in thy lips,
 And so I will bring thee back
 by the way thou hast come.'

The last line is very near prose: Isaiah has brought his poem to an end, and the succeeding Oracle is only prose.

It is of course possible that the original had lost two words through

¹ In ver. 25 I should like to omit ו before יצרתיה (with LXX, certainly in Isai. xxxvii 26), and begin the second third of the verse with למי קדם. So also Budde.

'like beginnings', i.e. it read לְפָנֵי קוֹמָךְ : לְפָנֵי קְרִיִּים, and that through this accidental loss the text has suffered. In that case the short line at the end of ver. 26 would run

'Weeds on the rōof all scórched before the Eást wind.'

But be this as it may, it is surely difficult to force verses 27 and 28 into the *Kīnā*-rhythm. We know very little of the metric feeling of the ancient Hebrews, e.g. how soon Isaiah would feel he had maintained one rhythm long enough in the circumstances. Moreover, if this stirring tale of the Prophet's defiance of the insolent Assyrian be substantially historical—and why should it not be so?—the occasion is not one in which we should look for metrical finish!

3. *The Septuagint.* It may not be out of place to add a few remarks on the Greek versions of 4 Regn xix 26, 27. In the parallel passage (Isai. xxxvii 27) לְפָנֵי קָמָה is passed over altogether and שְׂדֵמָה or שְׂדֵמָה is rendered ὡς ἄγρωστίω, possibly a mere guess. The Greek of 4 Regn is more literal, but very unintelligent: it is evident that the translator had a very feeble grasp of the Hebrew, especially as regards its poetical form. The words from שְׂדֵמָה to יְדַעְתִּי are translated

πάτημα ἀπέναντι ἐστηκότος. ²⁷ καὶ τὴν καθέδραν σου καὶ τὴν ἑξοδὸν σου καὶ τὴν εἰσοδὸν σου ἔγγων.

Here ἐστηκότος stands for קָמָה (see 1 Regn xxviii 20, Isai. xvii 5), but πάτημα can be nothing but a guess. It is fair to say, however, that its mere existence is a proof that we have here the original Greek of the version, for any correction by a later interpreter would be sure to be more literal, if not better sense. ἀπέναντι ἐστηκότος means nothing, but it shews us that the LXX read לְפָנֵי קָמָה, as in our present Hebrew.

There is no evidence for a Fifth Greek Version of '4 Kingdoms', in addition to the Hebrew in Greek letters, Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. But in this book a number of readings are cited in the margin of the 'Syro-Hexaplar' text, i.e. the Syriac translation of the LXX Greek of Origen's Hexapla made by Paul of Tella. These readings have prefixed to them . 5, i.e. 5, as if they came from some fifth column. Their nature is entirely obscure, but they may perhaps have been corrections of the LXX which Origen thought it worth while to preserve in a sort of margin, making a fifth column.

The Syriac here is ܨܘܕܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܝܐ ܕܥܘܠܝܐ

This is translated in the Larger Cambridge LXX

ε'. et incendium ante segetem tuam.

That, no doubt, is the meaning (or, a possible meaning) of the Syriac, but it does not seem certain how it should be retranslated into Greek, or what Hebrew that Greek represents.

The Syro-Hexaplar text is, speaking generally, a very literal translation from the Greek, not an emendation of the Peshitta. Here **ܡܥܒܠ** (*incendium*) undoubtedly represents *ἐμπυρισμός*, which is an independent rendering of the Hebrew, whether it be the M.T. **שׂרפָה** or an otherwise unattested variant or misreading **שׂרפָה**. The fact that *ἐμπυρισμός* is a 'better', i.e. a more scholarly, rendering than *πάτημα* makes it improbable that *ἐμπυρισμός* is a relic of the original LXX. For **שׂרפָה** here and also for **שׂרמָה** in Isai. xxxvii 27 the Peshitta has **ܥܫܡܠܐ**, a rare word of uncertain meaning, said to mean the withered lower leaves of an ear of corn. Evidently, therefore, the *ἐμπυρισμός* of the Syro-Hexaplar note has no connexion with the corresponding word in the Peshitta.

This makes it improbable that **ܡܥܒܠ** in the Note is directly suggested by **ܡܥܒܠ** in the Peshitta (**ܥܫܡܠܐ ܡܨܝ ܦܥܝܠܐ**). And even if it were, what would be the underlying Hebrew for **ܡܥܒܠ**? It would be **קמתך**, i.e. an even greater consonantal change of the M.T. **קמה** than Wellhausen's emendation.

The natural deduction is that Paul of Tella had here in mind not the Peshitta but a Greek text, and that the Note is a literal rendering of Greek words without reference either to the Syriac Bible or to the sense of the context. Now **ܡܥܒܠ**, like **ܦܡܬܐ** in the Targums, is sometimes used to translate the Hebrew **קמה** meaning 'standing (corn)', but its ordinary meaning is something that stands, a statue (like Lot's wife) or a stele. I suggest that it is nothing more than a rendering of the LXX *ἑστηκότος*, which in the text which the Note follows had **σου** (**ܫܘܐ**?) added to it.

Field, in his *Hexapla*^{10c}, translated the Note

Ε'. καὶ ἐμπυρισμὸς ἀπέναντι ἀναστάσεώς σου,

and would have pointed to Zeph. iii 8 (*ἀναστάσεώς μου* = **קומי**) as his justification. But there is really not much reason to go beyond *ἑστηκότος* for **ܡܥܒܠ**, which as I have said is paralleled by the Syro-Hexaplar renderings in 1 Regn. xxviii 20 and Isai. xvii 5. To render **ܡܥܒܠ** by *seges* in this passage is to beg the question.

May I say here that I dare not continue to maintain the view which I put forward some time ago (*PSBA* for 1902, p. 218) that this Note from the 'Fifth Column' is really a survival of the original LXX? It does seem to support **לפני קמך**, the consonants of Wellhausen's emendation, but the *πάτημα* of the ordinary text looks more original, because more incompetent, than the scholarly *ἐμπυρισμός* of the Note. Therefore it is an emendation of the LXX, not an earlier form. But even without this shadowy support the emendation itself may be confidently accepted. At least, there is little reason to sacrifice it at the altar of a metrical theory, which we have but small reason to suppose that Isaiah or his contemporaries would have ratified.

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