

a vagueness and indefiniteness of conception, which shows that the writer either wants the sharpness to discern the *exact* truth, or that he has not taken time and pains enough to look *all around* the subject. There are some of the highest gifts and most refined graces of an expositor which we do not discover in these commentaries. But they combine so many of the substantial and fundamental excellences of a commentary, both for students and for the masses, that we cordially recommend them "for the use of ministers, theological students, private Christians, Bible classes, and Sabbath schools."

W. S. T.

ARTICLE IX.

WORKS OF RUFUS CHOATE.¹

THESE handsome volumes are a deserved tribute to the memory of a most brilliant, accomplished, and fascinating man. The biography, which extends through considerably more than half of the first volume, has been prepared from the fullest materials now accessible, and with eminent care and judgment. The intimate relations of the editor with the subject of his Memoir, his sympathetic and admiring, yet thoroughly discriminating, appreciation of his character and genius, and the full contributions of correspondence, reminiscences, and other valuable matter by professional and personal friends, make it in all respects most adequate and most attractive. Especially do the letters and journals, together with the reminiscences of the closing chapter, reveal the charm of Mr. Choate's personal character and domestic life, as well as the wide variety of his professional labors and literary studies, and will bring a new delight to those who had only known and admired him in his public career. The whole portraiture of the man — the advocate, the orator, the statesman — is spirited, beautiful, and complete.

The remainder of the work consists of Lectures, Addresses, Speeches in the Senate of the United States, and Miscellaneous Speeches, with an Appendix containing Fragments of Translations from the Classics. These serve to give some idea, as far as words, without the magical voice and eye, and marvellous power of personal presence, can do, of the strength and richness of Mr. Choate's mind and his full-toned and most musical eloquence. They show a broad range of subjects, and an interest and enthusiasm in all good learning which may well claim for the volumes a notice in our Review. The author of the Lecture on the Power of the State developed by Mental Culture, the Address at the Dedication of the Peabody Institute, and the Speech on the Bill for the Establishment of the Smithsonian Institute, will have the affectionate thanks

¹ The Works of Rufus Choate; with a Memoir of his Life. By Samuel Gilman Brown, Professor in Dartmouth College. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co. 2 vols. pp. 558, 523.

of every lover of letters. Favorite, too, among his topics of study and popular address was our Pilgrim History, and in his overflowing library, as not a few will remember, theology, mediæval as well as modern, was represented, and in rare hours of leisure turned to with a love almost professional.

The Journals of Mr. Choate will be found, we think, among the most attractive portions of the Memoir, disclosing as they do, his methods of self-discipline and the generous breadth of his studies and tasks. They show how fondly faithful he was to his ideal of personal culture amid the most crowded and exhausting labors. Whether at home in his library, or at Washington, engrossed with the duties of a statesman, he never forgets his plan of study; first, the full and searching preparation for immediate professional or political duty; then the larger circle of readings, ancient and modern, for refining, enriching, and invigorating the whole mind; and all this seriously reviewed and measured (in his own words) "by a faithful and severe judgment on the intellectual and the moral quality of all I shall have done; the failure, the success, and the lessons of both." At one hour it is a classic author, with a brief translation or extended analysis or delicate criticism, full of feeling and insight; at another it is a reading from the Greek Testament or the Septuagint, minutely observant of language, with grammatical and exegetical remark; for example, "the Temptation in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and then that grand and grave poem which Milton has built upon those few and awful verses, *Paradise Regained*;" at still another it is some English classic—Johnson or Burke, or Jeremy Taylor—or some French memoir from the Academy of Inscriptions, illustrative of Cicero, or even a dutiful lesson in the Greek Grammar, with the "practice of parsing every word in my few lines of Homer"; and then, once more to his regular work of preparation for the court or the senate. We cannot but heartily commend these suggestive and sometimes touching fragments to every sympathetic scholar. His own judgment of them disarms all criticism. "Those I love best may read, smile, or weep, when I am dead, at such a record of lofty design and meagre achievement; yet they will recognize a spirit that 'endeavored well.'" Brief, indeed, they are, and broken, pensive, at times to sadness, with the thought that so much of aspiration cannot be realized; yet unflagging, ardent, full of high moral purpose, and we may also add, beneath them all, though with characteristic reserve, rarely uttered even to himself, a reverent sense of the solemnities of religious truth and duty.

We have also been especially interested, as we cannot but believe our readers will be, in examining the translations from Thucydides and Tacitus, appended to the second volume. All scholars will turn with eagerness to note these fruits and proofs of classical scholarship and taste, long attributed, yet not always, except by intimate friends, fully accredited to the great advocate. It attracts us at once that, with all his own exuberance, Mr. Choate was drawn to such dense, compressed authors, and chose to lay himself out on them, rather than on others like Cicero, with whom he was

equally familiar, and whom, in some respects, he so much more resembled. We think his versions will be found to exhibit in an unusual field, some of the most marked characteristics of his mind and style. They are, what is not often seen in this department of literature, translations of powerful writers by a man of genius, a man, too, in whom insight and imagination were blended in a very unusual degree. As specimens, therefore, of a version which is not a mere version, but from original power, we are inclined to think they have seldom been equalled. We can only the more regret that they could not have been completed. It should be borne in mind, in reading them, that they were never revised by the author, but were thrown aside, and only preserved by accident. This will account for anything that may be thought an imperfection of detail; and yet they will be found to be singularly accurate and free from even minor blemishes. It will be seen at one glance that they were not designed to be literal, verbal translations, nor should we wish or expect them to be from such a hand. They are generally rather the large but studiously careful expansion of the thought of the original, fully alike and equal to it, although not barely identical with it. The translator evidently aimed to realize and present before himself the total meaning of his author. Sometimes, if he can consistently with English idiom and natural clearness, he preserves the original form. More often he varies it, evolves the closely-folded thought, unrolls it in many lights, holding it up now in this, now that shade of sense, striving to lose nothing, yet equally to add nothing, that is not really present, although it may lurk in some particle or prefix, or tense form or mere verbal arrangement, or logical implication. Thus the result is not a dry, prosaic paraphrase, but the fresh reproduction, faithful yet ample, of an appreciative, imaginative scholar. There is sometimes accumulation, or even repetition of words; but it is not merely to repeat the thought tautologically to the mind, but rather to present and re-echo it to the imagination or the feelings, producing in some cases an almost pathetic refrain; as when he renders *ὁὐ χαλεπῶς ἀπαισταντο* (Thuc. I. 2, 2), "men habitually and perpetually migrated without difficulty, without resistance, without regret," or individualizes *οὐδὲ γῆν φυτεύοντες*, into "nor so much as planting a tree or a vine." So *μετὰ κινδύνων τὰς μετίτας ποιοῦμενοι* (18, 3) becomes more vivid in "as their place of exercise was not the parade but the field of battle," and the historian's fine prophecy of immortality (ch. 22) somewhat more proudly sonorous in the still, almost literal version, "since it is composed, not as a prize performance for a single reading or a single hearing, but for an everlasting possession." Indeed, in not a few passages the translator seems to us to illustrate well how much feeling and imagination have to do with interpretation; how great advantage a mind at once disciplined, impassioned, and affluent may have in penetrating and expressing the sense of a stern, compact, unyielding period in Tacitus or Thucydides. He evidently delighted in grappling with their most obscure and difficult thoughts, as in the archaeology and the speeches of the Greek historian; breaking down, enucleating, reshaping, expanding, but never weakening or diluting — rhetoric here, as always with him, never forg

seen his keen sense of words, his anxious adjustment of the English to the Greek term, and his zest in an idiomatic, choice expression, as well as in a rhythmic order and harmony. Sometimes he can be as terse as his original, or even more sententious; especially in rendering the sharp antitheses of the Greek, as in 37, 4, "to take by force when strongest, by fraud when weakest"; and 36, 1, when, reversing his more frequent process, he *folds up* the meaning in a few strong words: "Better the power acquired by breaking than the security hoped for in keeping such a treaty." (Compare also the well-known parallel between the Athenians and Spartans, ch. 70.) And how simply yet nobly he gives the severity, sometimes pathetic, sometimes austere and grand, of Tacitus, as *Annals*, 3, 18: "To me, the wider the survey I take of the events of older or more recent times, the more do the jests of human life, turning its solemn things to derision and laughter, display themselves; for surely all men might seem to have been destined by fame, by hope, by veneration, to the throne, rather than he whom fortune was secretly cherishing for the future prince." Here and there, too, we trace, not without pleasure, the word or phrase or shaping of a sentence which a lawyer would naturally use; for it is not the mere scholar, but the practised man of affairs, translating the story of ancient life into the living language of to-day.

It will be observed also, in his occasional works, that he exemplifies some of the finer virtues of an interpreter; discussing and balancing evidence, judging, not from a dry, verbal analysis, but from the entire course of thought, holding at once in his mind, as so often before a jury, the whole case, and letting each historical or logical point throw light on all the others. He evidently prepared himself with care for his work of translation by historical and other illustrative reading. We have seen a fragment of a translation of Demosthenes on the Crown, preceded by a somewhat extended introduction, together with the opening of the speech of Aeschines, and showing with what research he sought to bring before himself the whole view and scene before he attempted to reproduce the spoken words. With what success he could thus make the fortunes and the eloquence of the Greek and the Roman orator live again before us, may be seen in his *Lecture on the Eloquence of Revolutionary Periods*.

It is this blending of a careful insight into thought with a clear and ample utterance, of trained and just precision with an affluence of expression never out of control, and always — to the last word of the farthest-rolling period — conscious of the thought it bore along, that constitutes a distinctive peculiarity of Mr. Choate's mind and style, and makes his writings a valuable study to public speakers. To some of these traits of style Mr. Tracy has called attention in his interesting criticism (*Vol. I. p. 298*), which will serve to correct an erroneous opinion sometimes expressed, that Mr. Choate's rhetoric overpowered his thought. That even in his most voluminous sentences he was mentally self-possessed, and steadily saw the purposed end from the beginning, cannot be doubted by those who knew his methodic self-discipline. That his characteristic exuberance sometimes have overflowed the limits of an austere taste or a cc

may readily be admitted. Yet, that he could, at will, as readily be terse and brief, is not only proved, as we have seen, by his translations, but by many passages in his speeches, as in that on the Birth-day of Daniel Webster.

The reader of these volumes will find the classical tastes of Mr. Choate abundantly revealed, as has been already indicated in his *Journal*, in his fond recurrence to favorite ancient authors, his daily hour redeemed, somewhere and somehow, for such readings, his hope even of sometime producing a work on the history and culture of Greece. These all prove that his scholarship was no mere tradition of blind admirers, but authentic, the result of affectionate and assiduous study, seeking the best aids and knowing how to use them, applying the toilsome yet fruitful culture of the advocate to the understanding and interpretation of the great minds of antiquity, scientifically analyzing and chastising style with Quintilian, or refreshing and resting itself in the dreamy world of the *Odyssey*, the legends of that sea he loved so well. What new influence these studies must have had upon his natural wealth of thought and language — at once enriching and purifying, giving vigor and justness, yet comprehension and amplitude, and withal enduing with that fine gift of delicate allusion, that far-off music of the antique world of poets and orators which his hearers still remember with enthusiasm — needs hardly be said. Not often is it that one so overborne with professional and public labor will still be true to a scholar's love and duty; and yet that he could do and bear so much, was perhaps due, in no small part, to the relief he compelled himself to take, early or late, in these intellectual diversions. Who can forget the description he has given of the tired lawyer, coming home from his week's imprisonment in court to the society of his library and his favorite authors (Vol. I. p. 477) ! "With a superhuman effort he opens his book, and in the twinkling of an eye he is looking into the full 'orb of Homeric or Miltonic song,' or he stands in the crowd — breathless, yet swayed as forests or the sea by winds — hearing and to judge the Pleadings for the Crown; or the philosophy which soothed Cicero or Boethius in their afflictions, in exile, prison, and the contemplation of death, breathes over his petty cares like the sweet south; or Pope or Horace laughs him into good humor; or he walks with Aeneas and the Sibyl, in the wild light of the laurelled dead; and the court-house is as completely forgotten as the dreams of a pre-Adamite life. Well may he prize that endeared charm, so effectual and safe, without which the brain had long ago been chilled by paralysis or set on fire by insanity !"

To the preacher, the mind and methods of so eminent an advocate may well prove an instructive study. His preparations for the pulpit may perhaps borrow some side-lights of illustration from the lawyer's preparations for the bar. He may at least find here aids and suggestions, how to make all learning tributary to professional culture; how to amplify without enfeebling style; how to bring out the full riches of his noble language on sacred themes, which is one privilege of a Christian scholar; how to invest truths higher than those of the forensic orator or jurist in that perfect form of which they are surely the most worthy.