

the universe were normal, fully representing the character of God and his relations to men? Of course all this was, in some respects, ideal, and *facts*, such as death, were opposed to it. But the Hebrew doctrine of immortality was given in the idea and in the consciousness of the living saint; and the task of after revelation was to move out of the way the obstacles that stood before it. To us, on the contrary, the obstacles bulk so largely that we begin with them; and we are scarcely able to conceive a condition of mind that could give death a secondary place, or sweep it away in the rush of great principles regarding God and the universe, or sublime it in the intense ecstasy of conscious life in fellowship with God.

A. B. DAVIDSON.

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### BRIEF NOTICES.

THE BOOK OF JOB: a Metrical Translation. With Introduction and Notes. *By Rev. H. T. Clarke.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton.) As one who has himself but just emerged from a long and exhausting study of this "most marvellous product of Semitic genius," I still retain a keen sense of its difficulties and a deep sympathy with those who are brave enough to encounter them. I have therefore every motive, as I have every wish, to say all the good that can be said of Mr. Clarke's work, and must ask the reader to make such allowance for my present "personal equation" as he may think requisite.

It is of good omen that Mr. Clarke is profoundly sensible of the immense difficulties of rendering "the pregnant words of embarrassingly rich significance, and the perplexingly attenuated forms of construction" with which the Book of Job abounds, into "perspicuous and idiomatic English;" and that he has set himself to give a "real" rather than an "ostensible" translation of them, betaking himself to blank verse only that he may make the best amends in his power

“for the absence of the untranslatable music of the Divine original,” and binding himself to amplify the author’s “phrases in the way of evolution only, and not in that of addition.”

Nor in the Introduction which he prefixes to his Translation is there anything to dissipate the hopes which the promise of his brief Preface has raised. It does not touch many of the more difficult questions, indeed, which the Poem suggests, or answer those which it does take up in any very definite and conclusive way. Still, as far as it goes, it moves within the right lines and hints at the true conclusions.

When we reach the Translation itself, it must still be allowed that he has in his mind an accurate conception of the meaning of this great inspired Poem. I, of all men, should be the last to question his reading of it, since, in the main, it curiously resembles that which has recently appeared in this Magazine. But of the form of his translation it is impossible to speak so well as of its substance. He who undertakes to render the sublime conceptions of “Job” into blank verse should at least be quite sure that he can write blank verse; and in this rudimentary qualification Mr. Clarke seems to be wholly wanting. There is not, I am afraid, a single fine line throughout his work. I doubt whether there are a dozen which any poet would pass. There are hundreds on hundreds which even those whom “the gods have” not “made poetic” must condemn. Even his prose renderings—though he can write good enough prose, as is evident from the few phrases I have quoted from his Preface—are careless and awkward. What, for example, is gained by substituting for the familiar, “I am escaped, even I alone, to tell thee,” so often and pathetically repeated in Chapter i., words of so modern a tone as, “I only have escaped *to bring thee the news*”? or for such a rendering of Chapter xlii. Verse 8 as, “Job my servant shall intercede for you; for I will surely accept him, and not deal out to you according to your iniquity: for ye have not spoken of me aright, like my servant Job,” the jejune and clumsy periphrasis, “My servant Job shall pray for you; *I will not do otherwise than accept* his person, that I may not deal with you *as impiety deserves to be treated*: for ye have not spoken *in reference* to me *that which is well founded*, as my servant Job hath”? or for the brief firm statement of Chapter xl. Verse 1, “Moreover Jehovah answered Job and said,” the loose gossipy phrase, “Jehovah, *proceeding to bring home the argument to Job*, now said”?

But of course it is when we come to the poetical parts of the Book

that the real test is applied, and the excellences or defects of the "blank verse" rendering become apparent. I give a few examples, therefore, that the reader may judge for himself whether or not this new metrical version brings out more "precisely the ideas" latent in "the author's vividly metaphorical and richly suggestive language," or in any way "compensates for the absence of the untranslatable music of the Divine original." Compare, for instance, these two renderings of Chapter iv. Verse 8, the latter being the new "blank verse" translation :

As I have seen, they who plow iniquity  
And sow mischief, reap it ;

As oft as I have any seen  
Who ploughed iniquity, and mischief sowed,  
They reaped the same ;

or of Chapter xi. Verses 2-4 :

Shall a multitude of words not be answered,  
And shall a babbler be justified ?  
Shall men let thy vaunts pass in silence,  
So that thou mock with none to shame thee,  
And say, " My discourse is pure  
And I am clean in thine eyes " ?

Or should *a man of volubility*  
Be counted to have justice on his side ?  
*Is thy mere babbling rant* to silence men,  
That when thou triflest *none shall set thee down*,  
And when thou sayest, " The doctrine which I hold  
Is pure, and I am sinless in Thine eyes " ?

Or take the 11th Verse of the same Chapter :

For He knoweth evil men,  
And seeth iniquity when He seemeth not to regard it.

How is that bettered by being turned into,

*For well He understands falsehearted men,*  
*And all contempt of principle He marks,*  
*Nor needs to look into it narrowly ?*

Or, to take a more familiar instance, compare these two renderings of Chapter xiv. Verse 1 :

Man, born of woman,  
Of few days and full of trouble ;

Man, born of woman, is of but few days,  
And full of *harassing disquietude* ;

or those of Verse 4 in the same Chapter :

Oh that the clean could come forth from the unclean !  
But not one can.

Ah ! *who shall make it possible to get*  
A clean thing from an unclean ? No one can.

Or what do the close terse lines (Chapter xxv. Verse 1),

Dominion and dread are with Him,  
Author of peace in his high places !

gain by being beaten out thin into :

*Absolute sway, and dread-inspiring might,  
Are his prerogative : He causes peace  
To reign in every quarter of his realm  
On high.*

It would be easy to multiply illustrations, easy even to ridicule such changes as turn the question of Chapter xxvii. Verse 10, "Can he delight himself in the Almighty?" into, "Can he *experience a soothing joy* in the Almighty?" or the affirmation of Verse 13 in the same Chapter, "This is the heritage of the oppressor from the Almighty," into, "This is the heritage each *ruffian* shall *get* from the Almighty." But I will only add one of the nobler and longer passages of the Poem, in order that the reader may have an opportunity of judging Mr. Clarke's verse at its best. Here, then, is a prose translation of the incomparable description of the Horse given in Chapter xxxix. Verses 19-25 : "Dost thou give strength to the horse? Dost thou clothe his neck with the waving mane? Dost thou make him charge like a locust? The snort of his nostrils is terrible! He paweth on the plain, and rejoiceth in his strength; He rusheth forth to confront the weapons; He laugheth at fear and

is never dismayed, And he recoileth not from the sword ; The arrows rattle against him, The glittering spear and the javelin : With a bound, and a rush, he drinketh up the ground ; He cannot contain himself at the blast of the trumpet ; At every blast he crieth, ‘ Ha, ha ! ’ He scenteth the battle from afar, The thunder of the captains and the shouting ! ” And here is Mr. Clarke’s blank verse rendering of the same passage :

Dost thou to the horse  
Give strength ? Dost clothe his neck with quivering mane ?  
Dost cause that, bounding like the locust, he  
Shall *prance* ? The thunder of his snorting is  
Terrific. On the plain he paws the ground,  
Rejoicing in his strength. He dashes forth  
To meet the armed array ; he mocks at fear,  
Is never *paralysed with fright*, nor turns  
Before the sabre. Rattles over him  
The quiver, the bright flashing lance, and spear.  
*With fret and fume* he swallows up the ground,  
And will no longer stand, when once the trump  
Has sounded. At each trumpet blast he saith,  
Ha, ha ! and from afar the battle scents,  
The thundering of the captains, and the shout  
Of war.

Here, surely, are quotations enough to warrant the assertion that, whether for sense or sound, a simple translation of the words of this sacred Poem is much to be preferred to such metrical versions as this. And I cannot doubt that the intelligent reader will share my regret that Mr. Clarke did not content himself with giving us a plain prose translation instead of the halting and miserable pinchbeck which he palms off on himself for blank verse. That he is capable of getting at the meaning of Scripture it is impossible to doubt ; that he has the vision and faculty of the poet it is impossible to believe.

A POPULAR COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT. VOL. V.  
By *D. D. Whedon, D.D.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton.)  
Previous volumes of this Commentary have been commended in THE EXPOSITOR. We need only say of this final volume, therefore, that, though its annotations are brief, there is much good sense in them, much compressed reading and thought.

EDITOR.