

SHORTCOMINGS OF TRANSLATION.

THE appearance of the Revised Version of the New Testament will lead, we cannot doubt, to a wider study of the full meaning of this portion of God's Word, and, such study once earnestly undertaken, we may confidently reckon on a more earnest acceptance of the truths therein made known to us. The best weapon that could be forged against scepticism, is a just knowledge of that which is written. The comparison of new renderings with the old will disclose shades of meaning hitherto unsuspected by the English reader, and point out connexions and relations where none have before been visible to him. And the more earnest and scholarly criticism is bestowed on the new Version, the more accurately will the value of the work that has been done, as well in the settlement of the original Text as in the English renderings, be estimated both by learned and unlearned. To reach such an estimate is a task which asks some years for its performance.

But even if such an examination make it plain that all has been done which now can be done to bring the older Version into a form more accordant with our present English speech, and to make it more representative of the oldest original Texts, there will still be many a passage to which no translation can do full justice, and which must be left for the expositor to make more lucid by commentary, expansion, and paraphrase. And no labour of the preacher could be better spent than in pouring all the light that is to be gained on such texts—and their number is not few—as seem to be unmanageable in a mere translation. No two languages quadrate in such wise that the single words of one will stand for the single words of the other. The difficulty is felt as soon as ever we proceed beyond mere primary nouns and verbs. Secondary and metaphorical

meanings have sprung up so differently in different tongues that the atmosphere, so to speak, which surrounds the one word differs often very widely from that by which its representative in a translation will be surrounded.¹ And we ought not to forget, as a translation from a dead language sometimes inclines us to do, that prophets and apostles used Hebrew and Greek as we use English; that to them the words they employed were living things, active with all their various shades of meaning and application; and that till we have grasped somewhat fully what the words, each in its whole bulk, represented to them, our labour on Bible exposition is not ended. In which case it is not likely to be ended for many a year to come.

A good example of what is missed, and must always be missed, by the reader of a translation may be seen in James i. 17. There in the Authorized Version God is spoken of as One "with whom is no variableness, *neither shadow of turning.*" From the last four words the English reader carried away most probably no more than the notion that St. James spake of God as a Being who was ever the same, and subject to no particle of change. When such a reader turns to the Revised Version he finds that an attempt has been made (and perhaps as well made as is possible for a mere translation) to give him a better grasp of the writer's full meaning. There the words are translated, "with whom can be no variation, *neither shadow that is cast by turning.*" He may be pardoned if he does not at once discern what the new rendering is intended to convey; but he will know at a glance that "shadow" does not in the Revised Version mean, what before it seemed to him to mean, simply "a particle or morsel" as in the common phrase, "There's not a shadow of a

¹ In his Translation of Pope Gregory's Pastoral Care, king Alfred felt this so keenly that he very often gives two, or even three verbs to represent in the English all that he felt was intended by the Latin.

chance." He finds that shadow is employed in its original primary sense, and if he be led thereby to puzzle over, and at last to puzzle out, the sense of the whole phrase, a great deal will have been gained for him by the new translation.

But I think that for nineteen out of every twenty readers, who cannot turn to the Greek for information, the expositor will be needed to explain St. James's magnificent figure; to tell them that he meant by his Greek to convey (and does convey) the sense that God is like the sun in the zenith, shedding directly down light but no shadows: and not only so, but that God's zenith is everywhere,—not like that of the created sun, in one place only at a time, but shining down equally in all places, and always present everywhere with the same beneficence and the same power. Such a God, who sees all things and all men, free from the many shadows that attend on human observations, to whom all light is pure, is One who alone can judge what are really good and perfect gifts, and his gifts, however we may estimate them, are the only ones which deserve to be called good and perfect. Such is the grand notion of God contained in the Greek, and which, in the Authorized Version, was lost altogether. If the new rendering leads men to know all St. James's meaning; that God is One to whose eyes all is seen, and all seen alike; One whose view can be subject to no deflection; One to whom none of his creatures, whether they live for his mercy or his judgment, can ever be in the shade, ever seen untruly, there can be no question of the gain to those who read; but it seems hardly probable that this gain will be secured by translation only without exposition.

In a smaller way the like need is felt in such passages as Proverbs iv. 7: "Get wisdom; and with all thy getting get understanding." This, as a rendering of the Original,

could hardly be surpassed; and yet, I fancy, a large proportion of English readers draw from it simply the exhortation: "Whatever else you get, be sure to get this wisdom." The marginal reference points them to Matthew xiii. 44; but marginal references are not in all Bibles, nor consulted by all readers. And so, many go over the words without realizing how much grander than they think is the teaching of the Proverb-writer, and that it tells how this heavenly wisdom is the pearl of great price, and must be secured with, *i.e.*, at the cost and sacrifice of, everything else that can be gotten.

And there are not a few words both in the Old and New Testaments which should fill a much larger space than mere translation will allow them to do, and which therefore are not likely to be appreciated in their completeness without the help of exposition. Such a word is the Hebrew **חסד** generally translated "to put trust in." As a rendering probably nothing better will ever be found in English; but it by no means exhausts the Hebrew word, which speaks much of the covenant relation between God and man, and of the satisfaction of a need which the heart, even of the natural man, soon begins to feel.

For even without a knowledge of Revelation, when men have surveyed the universe in the light of their own personality and reason and conscience, they have been led to a belief in a personal Godhead, and also to feel the spirituality of their own nature, and that their true self was meant for more than it could find here. Now a covenant between God and man gives to such a faith and sense in men exactly that of which they stand in need. It fits in with the belief in a personal God, and with the feeling of a spiritual nature within man; and it speaks of a power of communion between Heaven and earth.

As soon as Revelation speaks, it tells of this communion in earliest days uninterrupted, when God talked with man;

and, although through sin that blest state was forfeited and the curse came, yet amid the penalties a compact is made plain. The bread, though to be eaten in the sweat of the brow, will still be given; and, as soon as death by sin has come into the world, we hear of a connexion between man and his Maker; for the blood of murdered Abel crieth unto heaven for punishment. It is but little that man can do on his part in the covenant (must it not ever be so, when the parties to it are God and man?) but with that little God will be satisfied; and men begin for a time to call themselves by the name of the Lord, and to feel that they are the liege servants of Jehovah.

After the flood a covenant is made in set terms; and henceforth the records of God's book are full of it, and **חסד** is one out of many words which testify to the relation established between man and God. The whole usage of the word shews us that, at the full, it expresses, on the one side, a need for protection, which can however be boldly claimed, because it has been promised by the other. And, in return, there is looked for only the rendering of a loyal obedience. And it is to be noted that for all his guardianship, this alone does the Protector anywhere claim. He is a sovereign, but not as this world's kings, for then might his servants be called upon to fight his battles; now they only call forth his constant blessings on themselves by a faithful trust in the Power which shelters and preserves them.

An instance of the fuller force of the word **חסד**, on one side, is found in Judges ix. 15, a passage in which it does not refer to the bond between God and man. The bramble (who by the use of this word is made to ape the mighty Protector, and to speak in the grandest terms) says unto the other trees: "If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and *put your trust* in my shadow." This is but mimicry of the true Lord's offer, whose liegemen need

only come and live under the castle-wall, and call themselves by their Master's name; and, doing so, they shall be in safe keeping. Jotham desired to make the election of Abimelech appear ridiculous and so he compared him to the meanest of trees, but put into his mouth the largest of promises.

And from Deuteronomy xxxii. 37, 38 we find of what nature the service is which the Master wants, and which, if rendered to Him, will constitute a claim for constant protection: "Where are their gods?" Jehovah asks concerning the people that should be his: "Where is their rock *in whom they trusted*, which did eat of the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink-offerings? Let them rise up and help you, and be your protection." Victims had been offered, and wine poured out to them that were no gods. Victims and wine alike were God's gift, and to present them unto Him, was but to give Him of his own; yet He stipulates to accept this as full service. How great then the faithlessness which will give these things to another! And it is only when the offerer feels the nothingness of all he has to bring that the offerings of the servant are made in the true spirit. "Of thine own have we given Thee," were David's words (1 Chron. xxix. 14), when he brought his largest gifts before the Lord; and the offering was prefaced with the humble confession: "Who am I, and what is my people that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? All things come of Thee."

When, with this covenant relationship in our thoughts, we turn to the passages where **נסה** occurs, we find that it puts a new force into nearly every one of them. How it adds to the bitterness of some reproaches! As when the prophet (Isa. xxx. 2) inveighs against those who *put their trust in the shadow of Egypt*. Having one Lord, able and willing to save, they have broken faith with Him, have

proved themselves rebels and taken service with another. "Therefore," he adds, "shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion."

We cease to wonder too at the oft-repeated claim which the Psalmist makes upon God (Ps. vii. 1; xi. 1; xvi. 1, etc.). "O Lord my God *in Thee do I put my trust*, save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me." Why should mere trust for safety constitute a ground for crying out thus? We grasp the reason only when we think on God's covenant, and that this was all Jehovah asked. For this cause does the Psalmist come boldly to the throne of grace.

We can understand also better the largeness of the promises which God makes for such liegeman's trust. Because He is the other party to the covenant, therefore do Jehovah's angels (Ps. xxxiv. 8) "encamp round about them that fear Him, and blessed is the man *that trusteth in Him*." Those who shew such trust "shall possess the land" (Isa. lvii. 13), saith God, "and shall inherit my holy mountain." For such (Ps. xxxi. 19) God "worketh goodness (oh how great) even in the sight of the sons of men," and (Ps. xxxiv. 22) "none of them shall want redemption, none of them shall ever be desolate." "For" (Nah. i. 7) "the Lord knoweth *them that trust in Him*"; and to be thus known of God the Apostle felt (2 Tim. ii. 19) was to have rested on the only sure foundation, to have found the true Master and Saviour.

Another word of the same class, but shewing a different side of the picture, is **בגד**, often translated "to deal treacherously," and the participle of which is the Proverb-writer's favourite term for "transgressors." The verb in its simplest use appears to convey the idea of concealment; and from it is taken the most usual word for "a garment," that which was first used for concealment, not for comfort. For we cannot help pausing to recall that primal state in which

all was innocence, when there existed nothing that wanted hiding, when garments were not, and having them not, yet men were not ashamed. For the concealment which our verb expresses is always closely connected with transgression. We find an example in 1 Samuel xiv. 33. The people had sinned against God's law by eating flesh with the blood; and Saul describes their offence by the verb which we are considering: "Ye have *transgressed*," and in the margin the Authorized Version gives "*dealt treacherously*." But, to the chosen people, to eat with the blood meant to do as the heathen did, and to hanker after their idolatrous practices. The words of Ezekiel when he describes the just man as one that hath not eaten upon the mountains, that is, who hath not gone up to worship at the heathen high places, and taken a part in their sacrifices and feasts, will occur to all, and the significant way in which they are followed by "neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols" (xviii. 5). And the same prophet describes more exactly in another place (xxxiii. 25) the close connexion between the one offence and the other: "Thus saith the Lord God, Ye eat with the blood and lift up your eyes toward your idols." And we shall see from further examples how the "treacherous dealing" implied in our word was really faithlessness to the covenant and turning away from Jehovah.

With the prophets it is a constant word in God's complaints against his people. Thus (Isa. xlvi. 8), "I knew that thou wouldst *deal treacherously* and wast called a *transgressor* from the womb." And Jeremiah testifies (v. 11): "The house of Israel and the house of Judah have *dealt very treacherously* against me saith the Lord." So too the Psalmist (lxxviii. 57): "They turned back and *dealt unfaithfully*, like their fathers"; and Hosea (vi. 7): "They like men have transgressed the covenant, they have *dealt treacherously* against me."

But we only reach the full notion of the word and realize the tender nature of the covenant which Israel had transgressed, when we read such passages as Jeremiah iii. 20 : " Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye *dealt treacherously with Me*, O house of Israel, saith the Lord." Hence we find that God is speaking in that figurative language which He has deigned to use for picturing the close relation between Jehovah and his people, and between Christ and his Church. Hence we understand what the oft repeated lamentation means, "*they have dealt treacherously.*" How full it is of what God would have done for his people ! How eloquent it is with the abundance of his love ! Hosea (v. 7) carries the figure somewhat further : " They *have dealt treacherously* against the Lord, they have begotten strange children " ; and Malachi (ii. 11) explains the figurative language of the prophets who were before him : " Judah *hath dealt treacherously*, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord, and hath married the daughter of a strange god."

Such is the climax of the " treacherous dealing," the end of which God had known from the beginning. Such the utter setting at nought of his covenant, wherein so much was given, so little asked. Jehovah would have won his people to Himself by all the love which the closest of family ties can suggest, and no words can be found to express their faithlessness better than " Judah hath *married* the daughter of a strange god." How like the Lord's lament over Jerusalem is God's complaint, that Judah " hath profaned the holiness of the Lord !"

We will gather a further example or two from the New Testament. Look for instance at 2 Peter i. 4, " that by these [great and precious promises] ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." For an idiomatic translation

this could not be much improved, and the Revised Version has little change. But from neither Authorized nor Revised Version does the English reader gain a complete insight into the Apostle's meaning. A very literal rendering of the Greek might be given thus: "That *through* these [promises] ye may *become* partakers of the divine nature, having escaped *from* the corruption that is in the world *in lust*."

If we examine this less attractive sentence, we shall see that we have gained something thereby; it is not however all that may be gained. First the word "become" infuses a very different shade of meaning into the whole passage. The "great promises" are not given that men shall at once *be* partakers of the divine nature, but that they may be put on the road to *become* so. God gives the seed, without which there could be no growth, but He leaves man responsible for the culture thereof. The sower goes forth to sow, and he sows on all lands; but it is only on that which has been made fit to receive the seed, that it brings forth its abundant fruit. This is also made clearer by the preposition "through." God's gifts are means of salvation, but are not necessarily salvation itself. He desires that the human race should be restored, that it should become again what it was when He had completed his design at the creation, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." But the moral new creation does not follow so obediently on the Maker's word and will as did the material first creation. There is a power at work in the world which mars what God would save. And the reality and activity of this power is marked in the literal translation given above by the preposition "from." That from which deliverance is needed is not some danger into which we may chance to fall, but an active potential agency *from* which we want to be helped to flee away.

And the second clause has its points of interest. Cor-

ruption is in the world (writes the Apostle), but at once he corrects his statement and in a very striking manner. He adds the words "in lust." The preposition in the first expression is exactly the same as in the second. By the first he had said "corruption is *in* the world;" but thought follows thought, and he adds, not in the material creation, that is a *κόσμος*, an order, obedient to its Maker; but the corruption is "*in lust*," that which has its home in man. There the evil power resides, and it is from this inward corruption that the promises are given to help us to escape. But the word translated "corruption" means also "destruction," and that shade of its meaning was in the Apostle's mind as he wrote. The word occurs below (ii. 12) where he is speaking of "brute beasts made to be taken and *destroyed*" (literally, "for capture and *destruction*)." You cannot have both words in a translation; but how much more force does it give to the sentence to know that in the "corruption" there is the germ, which, unless its growth be stopped, will wax unto "destruction." Corruption comes first; but, leave that unchecked, and destruction is sure to follow.

And now we can get a glimpse of further meaning. The simple verb *φεύγω* means "to try to escape" "to run away in flight," but does not necessarily imply that the attempt is successful. But the Apostle has used a compound verb, the full force of which is "to succeed in escaping;" and this sense should be in our minds as we read the verse. We should then have as a full paraphrase something like this: "Through God's exceeding great and precious promises, accepting and using them as means to help you in your spiritual progress, you may grow to be renewed into the divine likeness, for you will in this way be helped to make a thorough escape from the corruption, and consequent destruction, which human lust after evil has brought into the fair order of God's universe."

Another passage into which much additional force may be infused by a like appreciation of its full translation is Romans viii. 18. The Authorized Version rendered very beautifully, for its day: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." But, in our day, we lose something by reason of the colloquial use which has brought the verb "reckon" to mean in modern speech little more than "I suppose." St. Paul's verb implies a veritable reckoning, the casting up and comparing of an account. The Apostle knew by revelation something of the glories of the world to come, while the long catalogue of his sufferings given in his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 23-28) proves that he had more than a common share in the sufferings of this present time. But he has struck a balance and the account is all in favour of the joys that are in store for those who walk after the spirit.

But it is in the word "sufferings" that the need for a fuller conception of the sense most shews itself. The word in the original is akin to our English "passion," and varies in meaning as widely as its English cognate. "Passion" means suffering at times in English, but it often means something quite different; and so it is with the Greek word. We find it in a former chapter of this same Epistle (Rom. vii. 5) rendered "the motions" of sins [*Rev. Vers.* the sinful passions], where the Apostle is describing the previous life after the flesh of those who now serve in newness of the spirit. So too in Galatians v. 24 it is translated "affections." "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the *affections* and lusts," where, as before, the reference is to those things in which the flesh finds pleasure and not pain.

Now if in our minds this other sense be added to the received rendering of the verse, we shall gain an argument from the Apostle's words which will apply even more widely

than that which may be drawn from them as they appear in our English Bibles, and one which suits St. Paul's reasoning and the other uses of the word very completely. He has been speaking in the earlier part of the Chapter about the distinction between those who live after the flesh and those who live after the spirit. The mind of the flesh is enmity against God, and they that are in the flesh cannot please Him. Then, addressing the Romans as those who had received Christ, he continues: "We are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." And then, as if to console them for what to the carnal mind might seem to be a great sacrifice for Christ, he tells them that the end of all this denial of the flesh is, that they who suffer with Christ may also have a share in his glory. But the suffering might arise not from pains inflicted, but from the deprivation of such things as to the natural man seemed to be pleasures. So the Apostle employs the word *παθήματα*, which equally embraces both notions, and he says: "I make account that the *παθήματα* of this present time, be they sufferings or be they affections of the flesh, be they of sorrow or of joy, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward."

And surely this additional sense speaks to a wider range of men than the more limited, and also puts the Apostle's argument in a more telling form. The *sufferings* of the present life may make some hearts rebel against God and Christ, but some they surely bring nearer to God, as they did David: "Before I was afflicted I went wrong, but now have I kept thy word." The joys and the attractions of the world, however, pull all the contrary way. They take the thoughts far away from the world to come and all that has regard thereto. To men, then, who are in this temptation, it must be a precious lesson to be taught, that it was not only to the painful side of human experience that the

words of St. Paul had reference, but to its pleasurable side also; and that, with a mind fully made up, he proclaims the result of his deliberate estimate, and leaves it on record, that the world can neither inflict pains nor hold out attractions which should compare in the Christian's mind with the hope for which he yearns.

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DAN AND DAN-LAISH.

WHEN Abraham and his little army pursued Chedorlaomer, they overtook him at Dan (Gen. xiv. 14), and when Moses from the top of Pisgah took his survey of the promised land, he is said to have seen "all the land of Gilead *unto Dan*" (Deut. xxxiv. 1).

Again, we learn that after the division of the land, the children of Dan found their portion too small for them, and sent forth a party of armed men, who took the city of Laish, and called it Dan after the name of their father (Jos. xix. 47; Jud. xviii: 27-31).

From these facts it has been argued that Genesis and Deuteronomy must, in their present shape at least, be of later origin than the occupation of Canaan by the Israelites; or, that Laish and not Dan must have originally stood in the passages quoted from these two books; and that Dan was substituted by some later hand.

In the first place, it seems very unlikely that any later hand should have substituted Dan for Laish in Genesis xiv. Several other places are there mentioned by their ancient names, and in these cases the more modern name is attached to the ancient one. Thus we have "*Bela*, which is Zoar;" "the vale of *Siddim*, which is the salt sea;" "*En-mishpat*, which is Kadesh." Why, if Laish was in the original document, did the corrector not write, as in the other instances, "Laish, which is Dan"? Of course this argument does not apply to the occurrence of Dan in Deuteronomy.