

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FRAGMENT OF THE
ORIGINAL OF ECCLESIASTICUS EDITED BY
MR. SCHECHTER.

HAVING been invited by the Editor of the EXPOSITOR to make some observations on the interesting Fragment of the original of Ecclesiasticus, published by Mr. Schechter in the last number, I gladly take the opportunity of congratulating Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson on their latest discovery, which, though it does not eclipse, is well worthy to rank, both for interest and importance, with the most remarkable of the documents they have brought to light. It is now a matter of common knowledge that, almost simultaneously with the discovery of the leaf which Mr. Schechter has deciphered, several more belonging to the same copy, and containing in all some eight chapters, came into the hands of Dr. Neubauer, who is now actively engaged in preparing an edition of them. The discovery is not altogether unexpected, for it was always a matter of surprise that Ben-Sira's book, which had enjoyed great popularity, and which had been known to have survived the taking of Jerusalem by many centuries, should have been preserved only in indifferent translations. But it is a more than usually fortunate circumstance that the discovery should have been made while all those who took part in the controversy about this author's language (to which Mr. Schechter has alluded) are still alive; for if then we saw through a glass darkly, we may now expect to see face to face.

Until the publication of Dr. Neubauer's texts it is premature to discuss the bearing these discoveries may have on the chief points that were then in dispute. As, however, one of the disputants has hastened to declare that their evidence goes *entirely* against the theses that I formerly maintained, perhaps I may ask those whom this

controversy interests to suspend their judgment. One of the Syriacisms which I had restored from the versions is confirmed by the Fragment; $\Psi \text{ חית}$ for $\theta\eta\rho\acute{\iota}\omega\nu \acute{o}\delta\acute{o}\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ in xxxix. 30.¹ Perhaps this is not very important, yet the fact of Ben-Sira having this term for "wild beasts," when the author of Daniel has not, cannot fail to strike us. One other, in verse 16, פקדן , which I had suggested as accounting for the Greek "salvation" and the Syriac "commandment," is now shown to be erroneous.² About two other restorations, which this Fragment does not confirm, something will be said in the sequel.

Most interesting is the light which this Fragment throws on the metrical theory which the writer advanced some years ago, and which obtained little favour. Those who are able to read unpointed Hebrew, and who have no prejudice either way, will allow that the following account of the evidence given by this Fragment is correct.

1. A great many verses suit the metrical scheme exactly, and many of these are hemistichs which in their Greek form gave little hope of their metrical form being restored.

(a) xxxix. 31a: "In His command they shall rejoice," $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \tau\eta \acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omicron\lambda\eta \alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon \acute{\epsilon}\nu\phi\rho\alpha\nu\theta\acute{\eta}\sigma\omicron\nu\tau\alpha\iota$: no literal rendering of this would have produced a tolerable verse. The Hebrew supplies an additional word of no importance to the sense, but of great importance to the metre "In His commanding them," $\text{בְּצִוְתוֹ אֱתָם יִשְׂשׂוּ}$ and thus the scheme is maintained.

(b) xl. 5a: "Wrath and envy and trouble and unquiet-

¹ See the *Speaker's Commentary*, ad loc. Mr. Ball's note in the *Variorum Apocrypha* is directed against this. I must, however, take the opportunity of thanking him for the friendly attention accorded to my portion of the *Commentary* on Ecclesiasticus in the work cited. References throughout this article are to the numbering of the verses in Swete's edition of the LXX.

² The suggestion was put in a more modest form in the *Speaker's Commentary*, and I was wrong in altering it afterwards.

ness," *θυμὸς καὶ ζήλος καὶ ταραχὴ καὶ σάλος*: the Hebrew shows that the word interpreted "wrath" is a corruption of a conjunction signifying "only," and that the following "and" is an interpolation. The Hebrew אַךְ קִנְיָהּ דְאִנְיָהּ דְאִנְיָהּ has perfect rhythm; but this could not have been restored from the ancient versions without arbitrariness.

(c) xxxix. 25*b*: "So to the sinners evils," *οὕτως τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς κακά*: these words seemed insufficient for a hemistich of the ordinary form, and the Syriac and Latin renderings, though giving such a hemistich, seemed unsatisfactory in sense. The Hebrew gives a correct verse, though its sense is somewhat obscure. כֵּן לְרָעִים טוֹב וְלְרָעִים.

(d) xxxix. 24*a*: "His ways to the holy are straight," *αἱ ὁδοὶ αὐτοῦ τοῖς ὁσίοις εὐθείαι*. The Hebrew (which like the Syriac is here corrupt) nevertheless shows that the word employed for "holy" was one which suited the metre. From the Greek it could not have been restored quite naturally. דְרָכָיו לְתַמִּים יִישָׁר.

2. It must also be admitted that many of the Hebrew lines do not suit the metrical scheme, and on the hypothesis that this Hebrew Fragment is necessarily free from corruptions, this disagreement is fatal to the metrical theory. But will any person adopt such a hypothesis? Even in the canonical books the best critics are accustomed to treating the Masoretic text and the ancient versions as witnesses out of whose various assertions the truth must be forced. And that the MS. whence this Fragment comes was carelessly written will be apparent to any one who studies it. Endeavouring then to ascertain the true reading of some of the lines on ordinary critical grounds, without prejudice either in favour of or against the metre, we shall find that when their true form is restored, they naturally fall into the metrical scheme.

(a) xxxix. 23*b*: (Schechter, 11*b*). וַיִּהְיֶה לְמַלְאָךְ מִשְׁקָה.

Both the Greek and the Syriac versions invert the order of the last two words, rendering "as (Syr. 'and') he turned waters into brine." But the well-watered land was not turned into *salt*, but into *salt-land*, so that מִלַּח should be corrected מִלְחָה. The true reading of the hemistich is then וַיְהִיפֶד מִשְׁקָה לְמִלְחָה, and this is metrical. Gesenius in the Thesaurus, s.v. מִלְחָה, restores the verse in this form, except that he wrongly gives כִּים for מִשְׁקָה.

(b) xl. 1a: (Schechter, 26a) עֵסֶק גְּדוּל חֶלֶק אֵל.¹ With this the Syriac agrees, and it is unmetrical. The Greek, however, has ἀσχολία μεγάλη ἔκτισται παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ, "Great vexation has been created for every man," and if the law of parallelism have any force, this rather than "God created great vexation" is the true form of the hemistich which is followed by "and a heavy yoke upon the sons of Adam." In this form the first hemistich is metrically correct:

עֵסֶק גְּדוּל חֶלֶק לְכֹל אִישׁ.

The fact that the Greek has the nominative in both hemistichs shows that the translator had this reading before him. We notice in passing the Arabizing use of this word חֶלֶק, which this Hebrew Fragment repeatedly certifies. This will give some justification for the occasional employment of Arabisms in restoring the text where the Hebrew fragments desert us.

(c) xl. 6a (Schechter, 32a): כַּעֵט לְחִיק כְּרַנֵּעַ יִשְׁקוּט.

The Greek has here ὀλίγον ὡς οὐδὲν ἐν ἀναπαύσει. The Hebrew Fragment shows that we have not a mistranslation but a corruption of the Greek text. The proposition ἐν, which is before ἀναπαύσει, has really lost its substantive; and ἀναπαύσει (which should rather be ἀναπαύσεται) is a verb corresponding to the Hebrew יִשְׁקוּט. I do not see

¹ The marginal variant עֵלִיין for אֵל will give a metrical hemistich, but a poor one.

why Mr. Schechter should question לחיק, which seems very natural in this context. Only the Greek shows us that the order of the second and third words should be inverted; and indeed it is unnatural to separate כרנע from מעט. The verse so restored is metrical:

מַעַט כְּרֵנַע לְחִיק יִשְׁקוּט

and I can imagine none but metrical reasons which induced the author to add לחיק, and to substitute מעט כרנע for the idiomatic כמעט רנע.

(d) xxxix. 15d (Schechter, 1b): וכן תאמר בתרועה.

The Greek has *καὶ οὕτως ἐρεῖτε ἐν ἐξομολογήσει*, and from the two authorities the true form of the verse can be restored. On the one hand it would have been arbitrary to assume that the word used for "proclamation" was the particular form which suits the metre (בתרועה); on the other the Greek is clearly right in giving the plural rather than the singular of the verb; for both the vocative in v. 13, and all the imperatives which follow, are in the plural also. The form of the hemistich which results is metrical:

וכן תאמרו בתרועה.

3. Where neither text is metrical, there are cases in which both can be shown to be corrupt.

xxxix. 22, 23 (Schechter, *vv.* 10 and 11) read as follows in the Hebrew:

ברכות (ברכתו) כיאר הציפה וכנהר תבל רותה

זעמו גוים יוריש ויהפך למלח משקה.

The first two are metrical; for the pointings כִּי־אֵר and כִּנְהָר are certified by texts of the Old Testament. The omission of the first *anacrusis* is not an arbitrary supposition of mine, but a license admitted by Arabic prosody; perhaps in this context I may quote the words of the poet Abu'l-'Alā Al-Ma'arri (*Letters*, p. 112 of the Beyrout edition; p. 68, l. 26 of my forthcoming edition). "How," says the

author to his friend, "did you manage to keep clear of the licence called *Kharm*, which poets both ancient and modern agree to admit? Do you not know that Mutanabbi was most fastidious about his versification, and would alter words after they had been recited, and avoid licenses even when the metre naturally led to their employment? Yet even he employs *Kharm* in two places: لا يحزن الله الامير and واني ان تك طيبى كانت لياما and واني. Those who can read Arabic will see that the license referred to is the same omission of the first *anacrusis* of a verse that I postulate for Ben-Sira.¹

The fourth was restored above on the ground of the consensus of the Greek and Syriac versions, and certified Hebrew usage. There remains the half-verse 23a: "so his wrath nations shall inherit" (Greek), "his wrath nations shall drive out" (Hebrew), "so in his wrath nations he judgeth" (Syriac). From the consensus of the Greek and Syriac we infer that the word "so" is wrongly omitted by the Hebrew. Otherwise the Greek text corresponds with the Hebrew, except that for the singular וריש it substitutes the plural ורישו. Adopting this reading, we should get a line suiting the metrical scheme tolerably well; but it is nevertheless clear that the singular is a better reading than the plural on critical grounds. If therefore one of these readings be right, the preference must be given to the unmetrical one.

My belief is that neither reading is right. It seems to me that an image, similar to that of the *river* in the pre-

¹ I had supposed that the license by which the Arabic poets divide the sense or even the words between the two halves of the line was too well known to need illustration. V. 4: μη εἰπῆς ἡμαρταν και τι μοι ἐγένετο; ὁ γὰρ κύριός ἐστι μακρόθυμος

אל תאמר המאתי ומה לי
היה כי אל ארך אפים

shows that Ben-Sira allowed himself the first of these liberties, and we may assume that he allowed himself the second.

ceding verse, is imperatively required both by what precedes and what follows. Just as the Divine blessing is like a river that overflows and fertilizes the soil, so the Divine wrath is like a . . . that turns the fertile land into a barren waste. A trace of the true reading seems to me preserved in the Syriac "judges." This, as Mr. Schechter observes, probably stands for שפּט; and this can with ease be emended שפּט—*overflows*—just the word that we require. That which *overflows*, and, instead of fertilizing, turns the land into salt-land, would seem to be the *sea*—and this is preserved in the second half of the word rendered "nations." I should emend the whole verse, therefore,—

בְּנֵי יַעֲקֹב כִּי־שָׁטַף יִשְׁטַף,

where the addition of the infin. absol. seems to me required by the idiom as well as by the metre.

So far, therefore, as the metre is concerned, the verses restored to us in this fragment may be divided roughly into three classes: verses which correspond with the metrical scheme; verses which, when corrected in accordance with the ancient versions, correspond with it; and verses which disagree with it according to all the authorities, but which can be shown on critical grounds to be corrupt. I do not assert that this division is exhaustive; but, for my part, the study of this fragment has strengthened me in the belief that my metrical analysis of Ben-Sira's verses is substantially correct.

Before proceeding to speak of the Aramaisms which this Fragment does not confirm, I will add one to the mediæval reminiscences of Ecclesiasticus collected by Mr. Schechter, and request the reader to consider the passage in detail. In the *Sahih*, or collection of Traditions of the Prophet Mohammed, compiled by Muslim (ninth century), we find the following: "There are three," said the prophet, "whom God will not address on the Day of Judgment

. . . *an old adulterer, and a lying king, and a poor man who is proud.*" We can have no doubt of the source of this saying if we compare Ecclesiasticus xxv. 2—"Three sorts my soul hateth, and I am greatly offended by their life: *a poor man that is proud, a rich man that is a liar, and an old adulterer that doateth.*" We cannot be sure that the person who put this saying into Mohammed's mouth got it from the Jewish tradition; but, as it is one of those of which the original Hebrew is preserved, and which, therefore, circulated independently, this may be regarded as probable. The Hebrew form of the saying occurs, as has often been pointed out, in Talm. Bab., Pesahim 113*b*:

דל בָּאָה וְעִשִׂיר מְכַחֵשׁ וּזְקֵן מְנַאֵף וּפְרָנָס מְתַנַּאֵה
עַל הַצְּבוּר בַּחֲנָם

—"a poor man who is proud, a rich man who lies, an old man who commits adultery, and an official who, without ground, sets himself above the community."

We have then apparently the original of the words of Ben-Sira, and yet we cannot well credit him with the sentiment contained in the text. What writer of respectable morals would have placed an old *adulterer* on a level with the other characters mentioned in the passage? In a poor man, lying (according to Juvenal) is a peccadillo; even if he perjures himself, the gods will wink at the offence. That wealth naturally produces pride was also the opinion of the ancient moralists. If, therefore, a poor man lies, and a rich man is proud, reprehensible as their conduct is, it excites in the mind of the moralist no special indignation. But in what state of life is *adultery* a venial offence?—for let it be observed that neither the Greek nor the Hebrew of the passage allows us to substitute a less obnoxious notion for this deadly sin. It is clear that there is no such state, and Ben-Sira cannot have written this; although, if the Hebrew of chap. xxv. be found in

the same recension as Mr. Schechter's Fragment, it is probable that it will agree with the Rabbinical quotation.

To find out what Ben-Sira can have meant, let us go to the other sources for the reconstruction of his text. And in the first place the Syriac gives us a natural and proper sentiment in place of that which we condemn, substituting for "an old adulterer" "*an old man that is a fool and wanting knowledge.*" And the same is given by some Greek MSS., one substituting the word "fool" (*μωρόν*) for "adulterer" (*μοιχόν*), one putting the words "adulterer" and "fool" side by side; and so also the Old Latin *senem fatuum et insensatum*. *Folly and ignorance* in an old man are as inexcusable as lying in a rich one, or boastfulness in a poor one. Reprehensible in all cases, in that of an old man they are also inappropriate.

If this be so, why have half or more of the authorities "adulterer" for "fool"? The reason I suggest is the following. The New Hebrew for fool is שוטה *shoteh*, a word as characteristic of the Rabbinical language as עסק, which Ben-Sira is known to have employed repeatedly. The word used by the Biblical language for "to commit adultery" (of a woman), is שטה, *satah*, whence the Rabbinical for adulteress *sotah* (ordinarily spelt with ס). In the ancient copies of Ben-Sira the word was probably שוטה, which might be read "fool" or "adulteress." The Syriac translator, familiar with the word from his own language, renders it correctly. The Greek translator, a poor scholar, renders it *adulterer*; but later correctors of his work insert the true rendering on the margin. The ancient editor of the Hebrew text, misreading as the Greek translator did, "adulteress," substitutes the classical Hebrew for "adulterer" (כַּיִן). And in this last form the verse gets circulated, to the discredit, it must be owned, of those who have cited it with approval.

But there is another point to be noticed before we quit

this verse. The Hebrew ends (the list of three) with the "old adulterer," but the Greek and Syriac add the words "wanting in wisdom"; and the agreement of these two authorities makes it highly probable that this addition formed part of the original text. What is the significance of these extra words? Why should Ben-Sira have spoiled the terseness of his epigram by adding them? It is difficult to think of any reason for the addition, until we observe that the true words for "an old adulterer," together with the text which this addition naturally represents, give us a line of the same rhythm as the first half-verse preserved in the Rabbinic quotation.¹ That observation indeed supplies us with a very adequate reason for their insertion; for in all ancient poetry the insertion of words which fill the metre, but only slightly affect the sense, is exceedingly common. But if Ben-Sira inserted words in order to conform to a metrical standard, he must have been consciously writing in metre; and we shall be entitled to search in other parts of his work for the same rhythm as we have detected in this verse. The nature of the Rabbinical quotation does not prove that there was no metre in Ecclesiasticus, but only that at an early period the law of its metre was forgotten.²

דג נאחא וְעִשִׂיר מִכְתָּשׁ וְזָקֵן שׁוֹטֵט חֶסֶד בִּינָה 1

² No attempt has as yet been made to reply to this argument. But yet there must be some reason why—*e.g.* in the enumeration xxxix. 26—"wine" should be described as "the blood of the grape," and "corn" likewise given two words; and it is from observations of this sort that facts can be learnt. So in the line immediately preceding that which we have been discussing, *καὶ προσώχθισα σφόδρα τῆ ζωῆ αὐτῶν*, Heb. (probably) *וְקָצַתִּי מֵאֵר בְּתַיִתָּהֶם*, *metrical* necessity will account for the substitution of "their life" for "them"; but scarcely anything else. In the preceding hemistich, "three sorts my soul hateth," the substitution of "my soul" for "I" has probably the same reason. That lines of many words like iv. 22a, *συντήρησον καιρὸν καὶ φύλαξαι ἀπὸ πονηροῦ* (עַתָּה וְהִשְׁמַר מִרָע) *שמר עת והשמר מרע*; the last word was rather *מִכְּבִישׁ*), should fall *naturally* into the same rhythm as those of few words, like viii. 10, *μη ἕκκαιε ἀνθρακας ἀμαρτωλοῦ* (see Syriac), cannot to my mind be accidental.

The consideration to which this little discussion leads is whether the text supplied by these fragments of the tenth or eleventh century must necessarily supersede that which can be restored from the versions; or whether, even where its testimony is unfavourable, ground already won can be defended against it. To take an example of what seems to me a certain restoration—in viii. 10 the Greek has “the coals of the wicked,” the Syriac “the perfectly wicked,” whence it follows that the original had for “coals” the word *gumrē*, which is found in Rabbinical Hebrew, but is unknown to the classical language. If a Hebrew MS. of this passage were discovered, and it were found to contain some classical expression for “coals,” what should we infer? The right inference would probably be that this MS. contained an interpolated text.

Let us apply this consideration to one of the verses as they appear in the fragment published by Mr. Schechter. In xxxix. 16 the Greek has “all the works of the Lord that they are good exceedingly”; the Syriac, “all the works of the Lord are fair together.” Since there is a Chaldee word meaning “exceedingly” which could easily be misinterpreted “together,” the present writer restored it as the last word of the verse; and he also found that with this word the metrical scheme was satisfied. While then the variety of the Greek and the Syriac renderings was accounted for by the hypothesis that the word לְהַרְבֵּה had occurred in the original text, the metrical scheme gave a sufficient reason for the employment of this Chaldaism instead of the ordinary Hebrew מְאֹד, which would suit the Greek, though not the Syriac version. A MS. of the Hebrew has now been discovered, and it contains no adverb at all. When therefore I hear the taunt of the adversary, “You were positive that לְהַרְבֵּה occurred in the original of that verse; I told you that it did not; and now see which was right!” is there any answer that I can with modesty

make? Perhaps there is. The whole affair is a question of probability. On the one hand, the metrical theory may be a delusion, and the Greek and Syriac versions may have conspired to deceive us. On the other hand, the Hebrew recension may be corrupt. The same interpolator whom we detected in the act of substituting כִּנְיָהֻ for שׁוּטָה may have banished the Chaldaic adverb from the verse. When the metrical law had been forgotten, words of this sort would easily drop out.

The other Aramaism which "ought to appear, but does not," is of less importance; for it was rightly pointed out by Prof. Noeldeke that the word כֶּפֶן occurs in the Hebrew of Job, and that therefore I was not justified in claiming it for my thesis. The Hebrew (Schechter, 18a) by omitting an "and" restores the metre, so that the thesis gains something from it; and since the form כֶּפֶן accounts for both the Greek and Syriac renderings, I am inclined to think it was the word employed by Ben-Sira, the word כֶּפֶן which appears in the text being the remains of a variant inserted by some one who preferred the more strictly Hebrew synonym.

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THE DERIVATION OF PURIM.

RENAN, in his *Histoire du Peuple d'Israel*, following P. de Lagarde, derives Purim from the Persian. The Jews, according to this view, adopted the Farwardigân Festival, discarding its religious peculiarities, and celebrated it in the twelfth month as a purely secular festival. They called it in Aramaic *Pourdai*, and in Hebrew *Fourdim*: the latter, whether by errors in transcription or some process of phonetic decay, became Purim.

Zimmern, in Stade's *Zeitschrift* for 1891, sought a derivation from the Assyrian *pukru*. At the same time he derived the festival from the Babylonian New Year Feast.