

"God bless you, child! 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger!'"

In a moment he was gone.

"Mary," said Mrs. Scudder, laying her hand on her daughter's arm, "the Doctor loves you!"

"I know he does, mother," said Mary, innocently; "and I love him,—dearly!—he is a noble, grand man!"

Mrs. Scudder looked keenly at her daughter. Mary's eye was as calm as a June sky, and she began, composedly, gathering up the teacups.

"She did not understand me," thought the mother.

[To be continued.]

## REVIEW.

*The New Testament.* Translated from the Original Greek, etc. By LEICESTER AMBROSE SAWYER. Boston: John P. Jewett & Co. 1858.

Few books merit the criticism which they receive; fewer receive all they merit. Here is a work, a translation, which is more likely than most to get its deserts, because its circle of critics will be unusually large. It purports to be a new and improved version of "the Book of Books," and puts forth claims which will be conceded only after it shall have sustained the most extensive, minute, and even prejudiced scrutiny. The Bible has more readers than any other book; and that which claims to be an improved Bible must, if it secure anything like a general attention, meet with criticisms from all quarters. Mr. Sawyer is fortunate in one respect: his work will be examined and judged by multitudes who never undertook to criticize any other book; he will have, therefore, ultimately, a popular judgment of his task and its performance. But he is unfortunate in another point: for he must meet that popular sentiment which at the outset looks with disfavor upon anything that has even the appearance of meddling with the commonly received and almost universally approved version of the Holy Scriptures. Let us, in a brief space and with as little of formal and scholastic criticism as possible, examine Mr. Sawyer's translation.

A work of such a character as this should be judged not more by its absolute or intrinsic merits than by a com-

parison of them with the design avowed and the claims advanced by the author. In a task of such magnitude we ought not to expect to find everything perfect. If the completed structure have a symmetry of proportions and excellence of finish approaching reasonably near to the plan proposed, we should not too severely censure minor defects. Critics rarely accord all that authors claim; the former measure the actual achievement,—the latter look to the ideal conception; if the one be in a reasonable degree commensurate with the other, we should be lenient toward the faults of the performance.

With this charitable substratum for our critical structure, let us test Mr. Sawyer's new version by contrasting it with his own avowed design and the claims with which he introduces his completed task. In the Preface he says,—

"This is not a work of compromises, or of conjectural interpretations of the Sacred Scriptures, neither is it a paraphrase, but a strict [strictly] literal rendering. It neither adds nor takes away; but aims to express the original with the utmost clearness and force, and with the utmost precision."

This is a somewhat pretentious claim. A strictly literal rendering of any language into another is by no means always an easy task; and it is especially difficult to couple, as the translator in this case asserts he has done, the utmost clearness, force, and precision in the expression of the thought, with minute exactness of version. We are surprised that Mr. Sawyer should have rested his claim for the excel-

lence and superiority of his translation mainly upon this quality of literalism, for it is often the case that the closest literalist is the worst translator. It is often impossible to render the thoughts expressed in the peculiar idioms of one tongue into exactly corresponding idioms of another. There are idiomatic forms, especially in the Greek, which have no precisely correspondent forms in the English, and yet these are not unfrequently the most forcible expressions of any to be found in the original; any attempt to render these literally must be abortive; and a literal rendering, or as nearly literal as possible, is the worst translation, because it sacrifices the clearness, force, and precision, to say nothing of the grace and delicacy, of the original. The French language abounds in words and phrases the literal translation of which into English perverts the meaning and destroys the force of the original. Still more is a strictly literal rendering incompatible with the preservation and transference of the beauties of style and the strength of diction. The widest range of the thought, its more delicate shades and subtler connections, often depend in great part upon the peculiar forms of the language in which they are first clothed; and by a strictly literal translation the scope of the thought is narrowed, its finer lines obscured, and that which is of more importance than all else, the fitness of the expression, is altogether lost. The utmost strictness of literal translation is a poor compensation for the re-

sultant poverty of language and dilution of thought; and by as much as the original is more impressive in its rich and fitting garb, by so much the more is it made to appear mean and unlike itself when forced to clothe itself in scanty second-hand habiliments.

We have said thus much on this point for two reasons: first, because it is on this chiefly that Mr. Sawyer appeals to the public for a verdict in favor of his translation; and secondly, because it is a common and popular notion, that, the more literal a translation can be made, especially in the case of the Bible, the better and more trustworthy it will be. And we are willing to admit, that, in translating the Holy Scriptures, the greatest degree of strictness in literal rendering, compatible with the full and correct expression of the thought, is and should be a first consideration; the translator should take no liberties with the text, by way either of omission, alteration, or compromise; he must in no way vitiate the thought; and if he keep within this rule, he will have escaped just criticism, and may claim the merit of faithfulness to his task. Has Mr. Sawyer, then, in his New Testament, given a strictly literal rendering? and is it an improvement on the common version? We have space for only a few specimens of his translation, and we have taken some of the first that attracted our notice; it will be observed that they are none of them abstruse or disputed passages.

## COMMON VERSION.

*Matt. ii. 16.*

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was *mocked* of the *wise men*, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and *slew* all the children that were in Bethlehem and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he *had diligently inquired* of the *wise men*."

Here is a comparison of the two translations of a simple narrative text taken at random. The essential changes (improvements?) made by Mr. Sawyer are in the words which we have italicized. Two of these changes, the substitution of "Magi" for "wise men," and of "destroyed" for "slew," we shall pass with the single observation, that the rendering of the common

## SAWYER'S VERSION.

*Chap. ii. verse 4.*

"Then Herod seeing that he was *despised* by the *Magi*, was exceedingly angry, and sent and *destroyed* all the children in Bethlehem, and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the precise time which he *had learned* of the *Magi*."

version is in both instances the more accurate and better expressed. Mr. Sawyer substitutes "despised" for "mocked," as the translation of *ἐνπαίζω*. Is this literal? or is it an improvement? The Greek verb *ἐνπαίζω* has the signification primarily to *deride*, to *mock*, to *coff* at, and secondarily to *delude*, to *deceive*, to *disappoint*, but it has not the meaning to *despise*. The word

*mock* is used in our language in both these significations,—in the secondary sense when it refers to men's hopes or expectations,—as, *to mock one's hopes*, that is, to delude or disappoint one's expectations. In this sense, and in this alone, it is obviously used in this passage. The wise men did not scoff at King Herod, but they did delude him; they mocked his expectation of their return, and went back to their own country without returning to report to him, because they had been "warned of God in a dream," not because they despised the king. To say, as Mr. Sawyer does, that they "despised" him, is neither warranted by the meaning of *ἐνπαίχθη*, nor is such a rendering accordant with the facts of the story or the connections of the thought. It is a forced and far-fetched translation, and a change from the common version much for the worse. The same word is of frequent occurrence in the Scriptures. In the Septuagint, Jer. x. 14, it is used in the same sense as in Matt. ii. 16. It is worthy of note that in no other instance does Mr. Sawyer render it by "despised." In Luke xviii. 32 and xxii. 63, and Matt. xx. 19, he translates it "mocked," like the common version. Mr. Sawyer should be more consistent, if he would have us put faith in his scholarly pretensions and literal accuracy. The passage in which he indulges in this variation from his own rule is the one of all the list where such a translation is particularly fitting, and where neither force, clearness, nor precision is gained by the substitution.

Mr. Sawyer renders *κατὰ τὸν χρόνον ὃν ἠκρίβωσε* thus: "according to the precise time which he had learned."—Is this literal or correct? *Ἀκριβῶς* signifies *to inquire diligently, assiduously, or accurately*, and has no such signification primarily as *to learn*. If the reader will now turn to Mr. Sawyer's translation of the 7th verse of the same chapter of Matthew, he will there find that he translates *ἠκρίβωσε* "asked"! And yet it stands in that passage in precisely the same connection of thought as in the 16th verse; so that we have our translator, who gives us only strictly literal renderings, translating the same word, occurring in the same relative connection, in the one instance by "asked," and in the other by "had learned,"—neither of them legitimate translations, and neither

precisely expressing the thought. The rendering "asked" falls—as far short of the full and forcible meaning of *ἠκρίβωσε*, in the one case, as "had learned" varies from its strictly literal signification in the other.

We will now examine another passage illustrating Mr. Sawyer's consistent fidelity to literal renderings. He translates the word *ψυχῇ*, Luke xii. 19, 20, and 23, "soul"; thus, "I will say to my soul," and "Is not the soul more than the food?"—agreeing with the common version in the first instance, and differing from it in the second. But he renders *ψυχῇ* in Mark viii. 36, 37, Luke xvii. 33, and Matt. xvi. 26, "life"; thus, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his life?" "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it." In these cases he seems to have made his choice between the renderings "soul" and "life" according to no rule of translation or of criticism in philology, but as his fancy dictated. How shall we explain these inconsistencies, and, at the same time, grant Mr. Sawyer his claim to literalness of rendering?

Luke ix. 24, 25, Mr. Sawyer translates *ψυχῇ* "life," and then renders *ἐαυτὸν δὲ ἀπολέσας ἢ ζημιωθείς* "and destroys himself or loses his life." The common version is "and lose himself or be cast away," which is not only more strictly literal, but far more forcible. *Ἀπόλλυμι* conveys the strongest idea of *total, irremediable ruin*; and *ζημιώω*, when used, as in this passage, in the aorist tense, has the signification of *bringing loss or ruin upon one's self*. Both these thoughts are lost in Mr. Sawyer's translation; and a more tame, insufficient, and tautological rendering than his could scarcely be imagined.

Another instance of Mr. Sawyer's singular choice of renderings, in his zeal for improvement, is found in Luke viii. 46, which he translates, "Some one touched me; for I perceived a power going from me." The common version, "Somebody touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me," is clear and precise; Mr. Sawyer's version, "a power," is more indefinite and less forcible. Any intelligent reader will at once perceive that the common version is the better, and that Mr. Sawyer's improved rendering is almost meaningless.

One more example of these strictly lit-

eral renderings must suffice. John iii. 4, common version,—“Nicodemus saith unto him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’” Sawyer’s version,—“Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? can he become an unborn infant of his mother a second time, and be born?’” The absurdity of the form of language put into the mouth of Nicodemus by Mr. Sawyer is obvious at a glance; no such thought was ever so expressed by any speaker in any language; it is wholly forced and unnatural; and upon comparing Mr. Sawyer’s translation with the original, we find that he has paraphrased the passage with a vengeance, altogether omitting to translate the clause *εἰς τὴν κοιλίαν... ἐισελεῖν καὶ γεννηθῆναι*, and interpolating an expression, instead, which is neither in the original text nor in the thought. Probably Mr. Sawyer’s motive for taking this extraordinary liberty was a false delicacy, amounting to prudery; but it ill assorts with his assertion, that his work is not a paraphrase, nor one of compromises, or of conjectural interpretations.

We might proceed with numerous illustrations, exhibiting the weakness of Mr. Sawyer’s claim of an improved and strictly literal rendering, but these are enough. Before he claims much on the score of scholarly accuracy or critical rendering, he must explain these inconsistencies and remove these blemishes. But if such faults are patent in the simplest narrative passages, what confidence can we place in Mr. Sawyer as a translator of difficult, abstruse, doctrinal, and disputed texts? In every instance in which we have tested his translation of the original, the changes which he has made from the common version not only, in our judgment, are no improvements, but positively render the expression less clear, less forcible, and less precise; of course, as the language is made worse, the thought is, in the same proportion, obscured.

Another peculiarity of Mr. Sawyer’s translation, which we suppose he claims as an improvement, does not meet our approval. In all cases where there is no word in our language which expresses the signification of the Greek, as in the names of weights and measures, Mr. Sawyer substitutes for the language of the common

version the foreign word of the original,—sometimes merely giving the orthography of the Greek in English letters, sometimes affixing a termination,—and frequently he adds, in brackets, an explanation of his rendering. As examples of this, we quote the following:—

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a *modius* [1.916 gallon measure].”

“I tell you that you shall not go out thence till you have paid even the last *lepton* [2 mills].”

“It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three *sata* [33 quarts] of flour.”

“And there were six stone water-jars there, placed for the purification of the Jews, containing two or three *metretres* [16.75 or 25.125 gallons] each.”

“And he desired to fill his stomach with the *carob pods* which the swine eat.”

“And one poor widow came and cast in two *lepta*, which is a *quadrons* [4 mills].”

It requires no knowledge of the original to pass judgment on such changes as are here made from the common version. The practice which Mr. Sawyer here introduces and sanctions is a vicious one in any translation, and is especially so in the case of the Holy Scriptures, which are to be read by the unlearned and ignorant as well as by the scholar and the critic. Mr. Sawyer’s translation of such words as we have noted above conveys no idea to the mind of the common reader, and requires a glossary to make it intelligible. There is in his choice of words a pedantry and affectation of learning that are in bad taste. But in this, as in his other strictly literal renderings, he is inconsistent, and does not adhere to his own rule. He translates Matt. vi. 30,—“And if God so clothes the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the *oven*,” etc. If he were consistent in his practice, he would have rendered the word “oven” *klibanon*, and then, in parenthesis, explained that it signifies “a large round pot, of earthen or other material, two or three feet high, narrowing towards the top, on the sides of which the dough was spread to be baked in thin cakes.” Probably Mr. Sawyer was deterred from following his rule in this case by the formidableness of the necessary parenthesis; but there is as much reason why he should have written *klibanon* instead of “oven,” as there is for substituting *lepton* for “farthing,” or *modius*

for "bushel," or *carob pods* for "husks,"—and in fact more reason, because the word "oven," which he indorses and uses, conveys a far more imperfect idea of the original, *κλιβανον*, than those words of the common version which he has rejected do of their originals. All such changes as those instanced above, in our judgment, mar the simplicity and obscure the meaning of the passages where they occur.

But we will now notice what appears to us a more serious defect than any of those already mentioned. Mr. Sawyer throughout his translation substitutes vulgar Latinisms and circumlocutions for the vigorous phrases of the received version. Sometimes this is done at the expense of homely Saxon words which are the

very sinews of our language; and whenever such words are sacrificed for Latinisms, the beauty and force of the whole are impaired or destroyed. Again, the translator seems to have a peculiar antipathy to everything like poetical expressions or the euphonious arrangement of sentences. He has evidently fallen into the error of supposing that the most prosaic rendering is necessarily the most exact; whereas the fact is, that the most poetical form of expression of which a passage is susceptible is often the most clear, forcible, and precise. The best method of giving the reader an idea of the justice of this portion of our criticism of Mr. Sawyer's version is to quote some passages in contrast with the common version.

## COMMON VERSION.

"If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles."

"So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord: thou knowest that *I love thee*."

"God be *merciful* to me a sinner."

"Give us this day our *daily* bread."

"*And therefore* I cannot come."

"And to whom men have *committed* much, of him they will ask the more."

"*I give tithes* of all that *I possess*."

"For which of you intending to build a tower sitteth not down first and *counteth the cost*?"

"And upon this rock I will build my church."

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if *he repent*, forgive him."

"And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, *Rejoice with me*, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, *Peace*, be still."

"As we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen *deemed that they drew near to some country*."

"Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate and *broad* is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate and *narrow* is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they *toil not*, neither do they spin."

## SAWYER'S VERSION.

"If you please, we will make here three tabernacles."

"When therefore they had breakfasted, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, Yes, Lord, you know that *I am a friend to you*."

"God, be *propitious* to me a sinner."

"Give us to-day our *essential* bread."

"*On this account* I cannot come."

"And of him with whom men have *deposited* much, they will ask more."

"*I tithe* all I *acquire*."

"For what man of you wishing to build a tower, does not first sit down and *estimate the expense*?"

"And upon this rock will I build my *assembly*."

"If your brother sins, reprove him; and if *he changes his mind*, forgive him."

"And coming to the house, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying, *Congratulate me*; for I have found my sheep that was lost."

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the lake, *Hush!* Be still!"

"When we were borne along in the Adriatic, at about midnight the sailors *suspected that some land was approaching them*."

"Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and *spacious* the way which leads to destruction, and many are they that enter in by it; for narrow is the gate, and *compressed* the way which leads to life, and few are those who find it."

"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they *perform no hard labor*, neither do they spin."

These must suffice. We cannot extend our quotations, nor is there occasion to do so. We think we have seen enough of Mr. Sawyer's use of words and phrases, enough of his improvements on the common version of the Bible, to convince any candid mind that his is neither a literal nor a correct translation; that so far from having improved the version, by adding clearness, force, or precision, he has injured it in each of these respects; and that the world would be immensely the loser by accepting him as a substitute for the forty-seven translators who composed the famous Council of King James in 1611. We are informed that Mr. Sawyer has completed his improved ver-

sion of the Old Testament, and will soon publish it. We almost shudder in anticipation of the sounds which he has probably evoked from the harp of Judah's minstrel king, of the colors which he has put on the canvas where are painted the glowing visions of Isaiah, and of the rude matter-of-fact method in which he has doubtless used the modern telescope to penetrate and scatter the glorious and solemn mysteries of the cloud-land of prophecy out of which spake the God of Daniel. But we forbear, and must wait till we have the remainder of this *magnum opus* before we venture to hazard an opinion of its merits.

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