

## The Christian Visitor.

## Correspondence.

## History for Young Persons.—Chap. XXXIV.

## [FOR THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR.]

The Greeks were now rising into the greatest earthly fame; their wealth and commerce, as well as their success in arms, gave them a name in the world: and still more, the excellence that they had attained in all the arts and sciences. Poetry, painting, and music, came almost to perfection in Greece; and no country ever equalled it in sculpture. Oratory, or the art of public speaking, was also much cultivated, as it was very important in influencing the opinions of the people, who had so large a share in the government. It is a singular and instructive fact, that the Greeks who boasted most of their great men and able warriors, treated them during their lives with the greatest ingratitude; and we see in their history how hard is the service of the world and the devil.

Miltiades, for instance, who was so much honoured after his victory at Marathon, was soon afterwards falsely accused, and so heavily fined that he died in prison, unable to pay the sum required. Aristides too, another Marathon general, was banished from Athens for recommending an aristocratical form of government: that is, that a few of the noblest of the people should be the chief rulers. In those days, when attachment to their native place seemed one of their strongest feelings, banishment was a grievous punishment; and in the Grecian states the people used this means of getting rid of any whom they feared would obtain too much power. At Athens, the mode of banishment was called ostracism, from the kind of shell on which the name of the condemned person was written by those who desired to give their judgment against him. These shells were collected and counted, and the number of them decided the sentence. It happened that Aristides was asked to write his own name on a shell by a citizen who did not know him, and could not write himself. "Has he done you harm?" asked Aristides; "No," replied the man, "but I am tired of hearing him called the Just." Aristides, upon this, quietly did as he was desired; and, satisfied with his own character, went into banishment. Thus, wherever there was even a glimmer of light, or superior uprightness, it was hated.

But the Greeks in their selfishness were soon glad to recall Aristides; as they were threatened with an invasion by the whole force of Persia. Xerxes had sought the help of the Carthaginians, who had become very powerful by their conquests in Spain, Africa, &c.; and they promised to attack the Greek colonies which were prospering in Sicily and Italy. It seemed, indeed, as if the chief part of the world were interested in the dreadful struggle between the Greeks and Persians.

It has been stated that Xerxes arrived at Thermopylæ, a narrow pass in the mountains of Thessaly, with more than two millions of men; but it is probable that the numbers were greatly exaggerated by the Greek writers, who wished to exalt the bravery of their countrymen.

Four thousand Spartans, commanded by Leonidas, one of their kings, posted themselves at Thermopylæ, in the clefts of the rocks, to hinder the progress of the Persians. There they stood, hard and immovable as those very rocks; and when called to deliver up their arms, Leonidas replied with contempt, "Come and take them." For three days they kept their ground; and thousands of the Persians were killed by the stones, arrows, &c., which they flung from the heights. At last a deserter showed their enemies a by-path to the mountains above them, and from thence they were overcome by numbers. On the same day the Persian fleet was defeated, B. C. 480.

Xerxes, being disappointed by the end of this war, made no farther attempt upon Greece but gave himself up to sensual pleasures: his conduct was hateful to all his subjects, and he was at length murdered by his chief favorite, Artabanus.

(To be Continued.)

A poor Madeira woman who had undergone great persecutions was asked if she was surprised when afflictions overtook her? She replied, "No; from the first we know it was written, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God; and when our troubles came we said, 'This is what we expected.'"

On the errors ascribed to the English version of the Bible.

The translation of the Bible in common use among us, needs no commendation from me, its excellencies are obvious to every devout attentive reader.

As a transcript of the original, I am but expressing the opinion of all who are competent to form one, in saying, that in fidelity, the English version is unsurpassed by any other version, with the exception of the ancient Syriac, called the Peshito or literal, on account of its very close adherence to the Hebrew and Greek texts.

As a translation for circulation among all classes, it is superior to all the English versions at present made, for simplicity, terseness, force, in fact for all the qualities that ought to distinguish a book for the people; as yet it stands unrivalled in this respect.

But no human work is perfect, and our English Bible is not free from the imperfections incident to every human undertaking. If any man thinks he can correct these imperfections without making more than he corrects, and imagines that he can furnish a translation, against which no objections could be urged, a perfection not hitherto attained, let him by all means attempt it, the object is most noble, and if he fail, his labour will not be in vain, his failure will be instruction, nor can we possibly have too many independent versions of the Bible.

The utmost care, however, ought to be taken, lest, in prosecuting this object, we so speak as to be the occasion of irreparable mischief. The unqualified assertion that there are twenty four thousand errors in the English Bible, coupled as it is with charges of inaccuracy, unfaithfulness, and other delinquencies in the translations, is certainly fitted to leave a very false and injurious impression on the minds of those who have no access to the originals—injurious, because an average of thirty errors of translation in every page must sap the unlearned reader's faith in the accuracy, and therefore authority of Scripture,—false, because an immense mass of these errors are not inaccuracies of translation at all, and do not therefore touch the authority of Scripture.

Had I the documents it would be a work of pleasure to examine each one of these alleged errors, and give the result in a tabular form; but though I have heard much of them, I have not yet met with the record of more than a sample.

An edition of the Bible, with twenty thousand emendations, was published some years ago in England, by Dr. Conquest, doctor of medicine. This was reviewed in the *Eclectic*, and the value of the emendations was assigned with great precision.

The article in the Review was reported to have been written by a gentleman, who is now Classical Tutor at Bristol College; and, as a further proof of his competency to deal with such a question, was recently appointed one of the Hebrew examiners in the London University. When it is stated, that Dr. Conquest did not even profess to have any knowledge of the Hebrew language, few will assert that he was sufficiently equipped to correct the translation of the Old Testament.

As far as I can learn, the following division will comprise all the errors said to exist in the English Bible:—

1. Errors of punctuation.

2. Errors of orthography.

These are typographical errors to which every printed work is liable.

3. The same proper name spelt differently.

4. Obsolete words and phrases.

5. A retention of the old ecclesiastical words.

6. Words offensive to a fastidious taste.

7. Errors of Grammar.

8. Errors of Translation.

An adequate exposition of each one of these points would take up too much space. A few words may be allowed on each.

1. and 2. For none of these errors can the translators be made responsible. Since my return from the association, where I heard our Translators accused of securing the sense by putting a full stop where there ought only to be a comma xiii, 23, "for many, I say unto you,"

not be able." I have examined the Greek Text, and find a full stop, exactly as our translation gives it.

The ancient Manuscripts, from which the Greek Text has been made, have no chapters, no verses, no stops, and no division of words.

3. The same proper name differently spelt is an inconvenience, the remedy for which must be preceded by the settlement of some general principle on which to base conformity of spelling. In what manner errors of this kind have been reckoned, I have not yet discovered. For example, "Timothy" occurs five times, "Timotheus" six; is that reckoned five, or six, or eleven errors?

4. Obsolete words are not to be charged as faults upon the Translators; nor does any one do this, when they are spoken of separately; but when errors are charged against the translation, and these are numbered among them, an injustice is done, for they are not errors at all. They may be a reason for revision, although that is an interesting question upon which much might be said, but I refrain.

5. The retention of the old ecclesiastical words, appears from the preface addressed by the "Translators to the Readers," (a document well worthy of perusal) to have been in accordance with their own views of the golden mean between two extremes. They say,— "Lastly, we have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to others, as when they put *washing* for *baptism*, and *congregation* instead of *church*: as also on the other side, we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists in their *asymes*, *tunike*," &c.

It may be a matter of regret to us that they did not yield themselves to the guidance of a better principle; but they are accountable to an authority superior to ours for their choice, and we also are accountable to the same authority for the spirit in which we impugn it.

Let it be observed also, that the question of altering these words in a translation which has now been circulated by millions, is very different from that of adhering to the principle of translation wherever possible in a new translation. This opens a wide field, but I must hasten on.

6. It is only necessary to say on the use of words which offend the ears of some; that it is a question of taste, not of accuracy, and will be decided by some in one way, by others in another. I once heard a Minister in England read the passage "I will spue thee out of my mouth," "I will reject thee," an emasculation of the nervous English of our excellent translation which seems to me by no means desirable. But it is purely a question of taste.

7. Errors of Grammar. These must be shown to have been ungrammatical at the time the translation was made; for if they were in use in that age, they cease to be errors, and come under the head of obsolete forms of expression. I have not seen any pointed out that are not of this nature.

8. The errors of translation therefore are the only ones that ought to be spoken of as errors in connection with the translators and their work. How few or how many these are I do not pretend to determine. To what degree they affect truth must be determined by a laborious investigation into each. In my judgment, those that I have seen, do not affect one single cardinal truth. Let us all, however strive to put in practice the holy precepts which enjoin "humility and meekness"—"brotherly kindness and charity" which are all most faithfully translated, and then, whatever views we may adopt, or whatever line of conduct we may pursue upon this debated question, we shall, I trust, all be accepted through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen!

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