

This tragic death of native literature that followed the fateful edict is seen in the fact that a famous father of the old school may have a famous son, yes, a graduate of Tokyo University, who still cannot any more read what his father has written than the ordinary graduate at home can read Herodotus or Livy at sight; and the father, learned though he be, can no more understand what his son reads or studies, than a hermit from the hills of India can read a modern newspaper. So they sit, this father and this son, separated by a gulf of a thousand years pitiful to see.

Nevertheless the poems, the literary notes, the graceful letters, the inscriptions, the biographies, the memorials, the sacrificial prayers, the stories, the fairy tales of old Korea will remain, a proof of the graceful and interesting civilization of this ancient people.

A JEWISH TRANSLATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BY THE EDITOR.

A NEW Bible translation has been published, and this time it is a version of the Old Testament prepared by Jewish scholars.¹ The work is apparently well done, but the reviewer would like also to have seen short notes and explanations of the meaning of certain passages and in some cases the literal meaning of the text according to its historical significance, where the new rendering varies from the familiar ones.

The Old Testament is a Hebrew document as every one knows, but it forms an important portion of Christian Scriptures, and as such it first became known to the Gentile world. Since the rise of Christianity the Bible has been translated again and again. Two or more centuries before the Christian era the Hebrew Holy Scriptures (the Old Testament) were translated into Greek by seventy rabbis who are supposed to have rendered the text verbatim in such perfect agreement that this was believed to indicate that their translations were inspired and should be regarded as revealed. Therefore this version is called the Septuagint and is usually expressed by the symbol LXX (the Seventy). At the beginning of the Christian era a translation was made for the use of the Roman Church by Jerome, who mainly relied on the work of a converted

¹ *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text.* A new translation with the aid of previous versions and with constant consultation of Jewish authorities. Philadelphia, 1877—1917.

Jewish scholar. Wycliff's translation into English in 1382 was the first translation from the Vulgate into a vernacular. Among later versions Luther's German translation is famous, and also in England the familiar King James translation known as the Authorized Version, which later on was followed by the so-called Revised Version.

Of course the Jews were reluctant to use Christian translations for their own services because the Christian interpretation naturally did not accord with Jewish views. In Germany a German translation made by German Jews is commonly called Mendelssohn's Version, after the chief editor. German Judaism then formed decidedly the leading body of the Jews, and so it is natural that the Jews found expression for their Holy Scriptures in the German language. But recently the significance of Judaism has extended into English speaking countries, and at present there are perhaps more Jews in English speaking nations than even in Germany or any other countries, except in Russia, so the need of an English translation by Jewish scholarship has grown more and more insistent, and here before us is the result.

The editors have made good use of prior translations, including all the Christian versions, but in addition to the popular translations they have taken every care to incorporate in their new version the full use of Hebrew learning without being afraid of the results of Higher Criticism which in some church circles have been denounced as anti-religious.

It would have been desirable to have brief pertinent marginal notes concerning those passages in the text which have been either wrongly interpreted by translators or where a definitely un-Jewish version has become habitual. But such tactics are not in the line of our translators. They have given their best scholarship without controversy, and have avoided even the mere appearance of controversy. A discussion of variant readings would perhaps best find expression in an independent little book on such passages, and perhaps it will follow in course of time.

At any rate this new translation of Jewish Scriptures is a welcome addition to Biblical scholarship and will no doubt find due recognition everywhere, not only in the circles of scholars to whom the Bible is a valuable portion of the world's literature, but also in the homes of Christian orthodoxy, and there is no doubt that it will be of great benefit to the synagogue service and Jewish home life.

As I have just intimated, it seems to me that some such addi-

tional little notes as appear for instance in the German Hirschberg edition of Luther's Bible would not have been inappropriate. Take for instance the passage in Job xix. 25 where we read: "I know that my redeemer liveth." Our Jewish version has unnecessarily followed the Christian versions by adopting the word "redeemer" as it is used in the English version, while we read in the Hebrew text the word *ga'ali* (גַּאֲלִי), i. e., "my blood avenger." The root form *go'el* does not mean "redeemer," but is a Hebrew term denoting the nearest of kin, or the one upon whom in case of murder the duty of blood revenge would fall, and a better translation would be "avenger." At any rate a little note with regard to the meaning of *go'el* would be pertinent, whereas the preservation of the Christian interpretation of the passage seems to us actually out of place, at least from a Jewish standpoint. Even Christian higher critics would regard as misleading a translation which could interpret the word as a synonym of "Saviour" or "Messiah."

There is one interesting passage which evidently presented a problem. It has been interpreted as promising the kingdom to Judah until the Messiah should come and is contained in the blessing of Jacob in Genesis xlix. 10. The Authorized Version of this verse reads: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come." This is the only passage where the word Shiloh mystifies us. We must assume that it cannot mean anything except the definite city where the tabernacle was erected and where the entire congregation was wont to assemble. The better rendering is "as long as they [people or pilgrims] come to Shiloh," and in this sense the new version translates it:

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
As long as men come to Shiloh."

In whatever minor details we might disagree with the translators of this new version, we recognize its high merits unreservedly and express our confidence that it will rank on not less than equal ground of authority with prior translations.