DEAD LANGUAGE AND DEAD LANGUAGES

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO LATIN

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL

BY J. P. POSTGATE, Litt.D., F.B.A.

PROFESSOR OF LATIN IN THE UNIVERSITY

ON FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1909

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1910

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THOSE who reflect but for a moment on the significance of any word which they or their fellows employ will readily discern that there are two parts in it which may be always distinguished—the one what is expressed, and the other what is implied. A single instance will make this clear. When, in our Civil Wars, Roundhead and Cavalier spoke of 'the king,' or of 'kings,' the word they used expressed to each the same person, or the same class of persons. But how different to the two was all that the word implied, and how different were the consequences which streamed from the implications!

Life, says the most practical and the most comprehensive of all the ancient philosophers—life is action, not production[1]; and 'living' and its opposite, 'dead,' are words whose implications are in a high degree suggestive and provocative of actions. 'The branch is dead.' Cut it off. 'The flowers are dead.' Throw them away. 'The man is dead.' Bury or burn him. By a metaphor, possibly legitimate but just as possibly misleading, the word has been transferred from the world of nature to the world of speech. But its general import was not affected by the transference, and its implications went along with it. And the purport and influence of these implications will claim to-day our most serious attention. Most serious, I say, for if we allow these implications to govern our action, the

ancient languages of Greek and Latin will be consigned to the cemetery and the literatures follow in the following hearse.

Considerations of concinnity and a due regard to the limits of your patience have forced me somewhat to circumscribe my subject, and though it is not a little embarrassing to have to separate two studies so long and so intimately associated as those of Greek and Latin, called even in the time of Horace *the two tongues*,[2] I will confine myself almost entirely to the language which I have the honour to teach in this University, and the knowledge of which is prescribed by our ordinances for all who would graduate in Arts.

If, on the one hand, any part of my treatment seem to you to be unduly polemical, blame not me, the defender, but them, the assailants, the bitter and unceasing assailants of our ancient studies. If, on the other, what I have to say appears too trite and familiar, do not visit your tedium upon one who would willingly have spared you the repetition of the obvious, but upon those who cannot learn, however often they are instructed.

The most obvious and, I must add, the most superficial account of a dead language and literature, one to which I should not refer were I not obliged to take account of anything that might be said, is that it is the speech and writings of dead people, and that in these we living folk have no interest or concern. That the writers of Greece and Rome are defunct is incontestable. So are their sculptors, their architects, their goldsmiths and silversmiths. But does the death of the artist rob the work of its value? Take the test of sale-rooms and auctions. Do the continually mounting prices of Raffaels and Rembrandts, of Gainsboroughs and Reynoldses, show that the work of dead artists is dead? If a genuine work of Phidias came into the market, what think you it would fetch at Christie's?

'Oh, but,' it will be said, 'the case is different. To understand a work of ancient architecture or art, I need no toilsome preparation. I have my good British eyes, which will at once appreciate its merits.' I doubt, my friend, if artists and archaeologists would consider this enough. But I will be generous and not dispute it. Come, then, a step farther with me. Your good British eyes, let us say, will by themselves enable you to appreciate French pictures, but will they by themselves enable you to appreciate French poems? Do you not see that the difficulty which deters you is not that the language is dead, but that it is foreign, and that Latin is but in the same category as French or German, or, indeed, as any language but your own? The statement, then, that Latin and Greek are languages of the dead we admit to be true; but we set it aside as unimportant, and as such it gives us no further concern.

Another, and this a more plausible, view of a dead language is the view that it is one which has ceased to be spoken or written, and one withal that is incapable of expressing the ideas of modern life. Here are two charges which I must deal with separately. As to the first, I would say that if a great and world-wide Church uses Latin every day in its ritual and in the converse of its colleges and religious houses, and if newspapers are published in Latin in more than one civilized community,[3] then to call Latin dead is perhaps a little premature. But on this I will not greatly insist, because the second charge is much the more serious one. To it I would answer that, so far from believing that Latin is an inadequate vehicle for my modern thoughts, I am convinced that, outside the technical regions of our specialists, and apart from the nomenclature of peculiar products of our civilization, it would be found equal to any demands of expression that we might make upon it, and that I earnestly hope

and trust that there will be nothing in all that I say to-day which it would not be capable of expressing.

Colloquial Latin is a side of the language to which few even of the best scholars, at least in England, have devoted a sufficient attention. But there is a little manual of conversation by a German, entitled *Sprechen sie Lateinisch?*—'Do you speak Latin?'—which provides the tourist with all the phrases that he will need if he visits an hotel in an up-to-date Latin colony.[4] And scholars, such as the late Dr. Kennedy, have amused themselves from time to time by turning modern newspaper advertisements into Greek or Latin verse, with results surprisingly successful. And only last month I received from a correspondent with whom I was personally unacquainted, but who is, I understand, the manager of the 'Prana' Sparklet Works, Upper Edmonton, London, N., and who desired to bring his manufacture under my notice, a printed postcard (I have it here) and a covering letter, both written in Latin, of which I will only say this, that if the beverage is as pure and sparkling as the Latinity, anyone in my audience may imbibe it with the greatest security.

These achievements of rendering some may think to be mere *tours de force*. So I will take another and a different test, which all, I fancy, would admit to be fair. And I will say that, if Latin has been found capable of rendering characteristic passages from the novels of Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen, Stanley Weyman, and even from Pickwick and Martin Chuzzlewit, it is unjust to accuse it of inability to sustain the weight of modern requirements.

'But,' says the unabashed objector, 'you have picked your examples, and I will pick mine. Can you say in your dead Latin, "Shall I telephone for your motor?"' I cannot; nor could you in your living English, had you not taken your verb, *telephone*, from the one dead language and your noun, *motor*, from the other. And

tell me, my friend, can your test sentence be put into Shakespearian English? and, if it cannot, is the language of Shakespeare also dead and to be despatched to the crematory?

For do not imagine that the dispute on the value of studying a past form of language is limited to Latin or Greek. It arises over every language that has a history. Those who have watched the development of the Modern Language Tripos at Cambridge, a development which in its earlier stages it was my privilege to take part, know that one very great difficulty with which it had to contend was the adjustment of the conflicting claims advanced on the one hand by the advocates of the living speech, the German, French, or Italian of the present, and on the other by those who urged the rights of what might have been dubbed the corresponding 'dead' languages, but which both sides more properly and, as I think, more prudently, denominated the 'medieval' tongues—that is, the German, French, and Italian of the past.

We have now reached a point at which a reclassification of languages is necessary before we can proceed farther with safety. Avoiding all words now tainted with prejudice, we divide them as follows:

A. Native and spoken.	*C*. Foreign and spoken.
B. Native, and not spoken (Past Native Speech).	*D*. Foreign, and not spoken (Past Foreign Speech).

For an Englishman, *A* is the English of the present day. Of its claims I need not speak. We cannot ignore them if we would. *B* consists of a series of languages, or stages of language, which stretch away into the past, their distance and differences from present English continually increasing till at last we reach what is variously known as Old English or Anglo-Saxon. Class *C* includes French and German, but it comprises much beside—Spanish, Russian, Modern Greek,

Chinese, Arabic, Hindustani, and so on, and so on; all as spoken at the present day. Class *D* is not less numerous. It comprises the earlier forms of most of the languages in Class *C*. It covers the French of Rabelais and Montaigne, the German of Luther and the 'Niebelungenlied,' the Italian of Dante and Boccaccio, and, in addition, languages, such as Cornish, which have no modern representatives.—It is to this class that Latin belongs.

It is over the claims of *B*, *C*, and *D* that controversy most rages. It is not always observed that the pretensions of *C* to paramount importance are directed both against *B* and *D*. The thick and thin supporters of modern French and German regard the serious study of, say, the English of Chaucer with but little less disfavour than the study of the Latin of Cicero. In fairness, then, both to *B* and *D* these pretensions of *C* must be examined.

That a knowledge of any foreign spoken language is of some practical advantage to its possessor we of course allow. It is of use when travelling in a country; it is of use when trafficking with the natives. But this utility is both local and relative. It is local. French does not smooth the path of travelling in Germany; German does not conduce to commerce in Brazil. It is relative. To natives of a small country like Holland an acquaintance with one or two foreign languages is a necessity. Not so to a Frenchman, whose speech has an international currency. Far less, and increasingly less as the days roll on, to the Englishman, whose following of over 140,000,000 of fellow-speakers enables him to exact the homage of imitation which is ever at the call of numbers. Whether our tongue will continue its onward march towards the linguistic supremacy or even monopoly of the globe it is impossible to say; but of this we may be sure, that no other language will ever hold its own through the vast and still only

half-peopled territories of Australasia and North America.

These claims of the modern languages are being challenged from another side. It has long been felt that learning foreign languages for the sole object of conversation or correspondence with their speakers was a waste of human energy, and that international communications should be made through international speech. A universal language has, like flying, long been a dream. There is reason to think that, like flying, it will soon be a dream no longer. Failures in plenty there have been. The field is strewn with aerial wreckage. But each linguistic construction has flown farther and flown stronger than any of its predecessors. Volapük did well. Esperanto has done much better. But behind Esperanto, in the modest background, there is waiting another, a not unfriendly but a most formidable competitor. This language, which I rejoice to hear will owe its first formal introduction to England to the pen of a Liverpool professor of science, is not the work of philological amateurs or idealists. Its basis is no abstract scheme of what language ought to be, but solid fact and practical convenience. Applying the physical principle that bodies move along the line of least resistance, it recognizes that, if it is to be acceptable, its maxim should be the least discomfort of the greatest number. It examines the vocabularies of the Western world, and picks out in every case that word or that form of the word which is intelligible to the majority of actual speakers. This is the only practical and the only scientific method—the only one worthy of the eminent savants who have espoused the project, and amongst them Professor Jespersen of Copenhagen. Ido (for this is its provisional name) has, so to say, not yet come out. It is still being dressed for its début. But I have examined its structure and vocabulary, and upon

two points I am already perfectly clear. It will be appreciably smoother and easier to learn than Esperanto; and if I may trust the numerical tests which I have applied, 85 per cent. of its vocabulary will be immediately intelligible to an Englishman who has a knowledge of . . . Latin.[5]

The cleft between aviation and a universal language which my metaphor has spanned is not so wide as it might seem. When the aviaries of our great centres of population send out their flocks of week-enders to glide through the air at fifty miles an hour, think you not that the provision of a language which they can use wherever they descend, in France or Holland, in Spain or Portugal, in Norway or Germany, will be a need of the first practical importance? And when it is satisfied, are not the overzealous advocates of modern languages likely to regret that they did not base the claims of their clients to recognition on the intrinsic merits of those languages rather than on a casual and fleeting advantage?

But our friend has more objections to urge. 'What you say, my dear sir, is all very well in the abstract. But what I want to know is, why I should give my time and trouble to learning a difficult language which I shall never need to use. What can I get through it that I cannot get otherwise or have not got already? Are your authors worth my pains, and can I not read them in translations?'

These questions must be answered, for they deal with real issues. But first we must lay down some principles. And this to begin with: that a knowledge of some foreign language, ancient or modern, is the bare irreducible minimum for anyone who desires to be educated in any true sense of the term, and that for him who would have a liberal education two are required. Such a one would own the treasure which Ennius, the father of Roman poetry, described when

he said, with a grip upon reality not always observable in modern professors of education, that he had three souls, because he could speak Latin, Greek, and Oscan.[6] Though from the material side the English, as we have seen, need less than any other people to study foreign tongues, from the intellectual and spiritual side this is by no means the case. The right appreciation of our speech, of its development and its peculiar merits and defects, is impossible if we are ignorant of the languages which throw light upon its character and have gone to its making. To change a word in in the well-known couplet:

> "What does he know of English,
> Who only English knows?"

In choosing languages for our curriculum, I should agree with our friend in discarding sentiment altogether and basing the choice wholly on expedience. Since then Latin, as also Greek, requires more time and trouble for its study than either French or German, the benefit derived from its study must be correspondingly greater. To discover if this is so we must look a little more closely into the nature of language itself.

Human speech, like all else human, is by its nature subject to change. The change is sometimes slow and at other times rapid. But one thing it always is: it is gradual and continuous. A language, it is true, may disappear in a cataclysm. The whole of its speakers may be swept off in a deluge of water or fire. They may abandon their speech under the pressure of hostile force or at the promptings of commercial greed. But if the language is left to itself, there is no point in its course of which it can be said, 'Here the old ceases and the new begins.' It is the custom to say that Italian, Spanish, French, are languages 'descended' from Latin. The metaphor is drawn from the rela-

tions of parents and offspring, ancestors and descendants, and it carries along with it the ideas of separate individuality and interrupted identity. But in language there is nothing of the kind. The proper comparison is with a single individual, not with a succession or line of individuals. And if under Latin we include, as we should, the spoken language of Roman times, then Italian, French, and Spanish are not descended from Latin, but they are Latin. And you may with equal correctness call these the latest varieties of Latin, or say that Latin is the oldest Italian, the oldest Spanish, and the oldest French.

In these circumstances to speak of Latin as 'dead' should appear a little grotesque. I have the honour to number among my audience some whose age falls within the elastic period known as the prime of life. To these I would say: 'You are conscious that you are quite different from what you were twenty or twenty-five years ago. Your powers, tastes, and habits have changed; there is, maybe, not a single particle in your brains and bodies the same. But tell me, how would you feel if someone took up an old photograph of yourself and laid it down with the words, "My poor friend! He (or she, as the case may be) has been dead for fifteen years."?

The adequate appreciation of our principle makes the claims of the study of the old Roman tongue upon the students of the *Romance* or *Neo-Latin* languages, as they are most properly called, little short of irresistible. Of what other language can it be said that it is the key to a trio of languages and literatures as widespread and important as Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese? Is there anyone who, if he could, would not wish to read Dante in the original? Well, if he knows Latin, he need only acquaint himself with the not very numerous changes which Latin has undergone in Italy since the Roman age, and I will promise

him that he shall be able to read the third canto of the 'Inferno' in a day. I will promise it, I say, for I did it in half a day myself.

This is no exaggeration, for Latin has changed less in the Italian peninsula between the times of Vergil and Dante than English has altered in our island between the times of Chaucer and Tennyson. Yet there are many folk in this country who read the 'Canterbury Tales' by the light of a glossary and their otherwise unassisted intelligence, and imagine that they comprehend them. Closely questioned, they would own that they find the Chaucerian metre rather rugged and halting, and the phrases a trifle quaint. The very opposite is the case. Chaucer is one of the most musical poets in the world, and he wrote in vigorous and up to date English—the English of his day. But our modern lay reader approaches Chaucer as if he were a contemporary of Kipling; he thus reduces metre to doggerel, and treats genuine and spontaneous, though no longer current, expressions as if they were the archaising imitations of a modern age. Of the matter of Chaucer there may remain to him some tolerable apprehension, some rough appreciation, but the form and spirit are lost.

In the last case it was the semblance of nearness that was mischievous; but even its reality may do harm. It is possible to be too near. There is nothing so difficult either to acquire or to appreciate as that which differs just a little from what is customary and familiar. Broad differences we can see and render: but the fine shades, the slight nuances escape us. . . . This is why the Scotch and the Irish attain a German accent sooner than an English one.

May I illustrate the character of the difficulties that beset us when we would realize a stage of speech a little anterior to our own by the now somewhat unfashionable method of allegory? I will purposely take

nothing that has life, but choose what has only continuity of existence.

Imagine, then, a mighty river, down whose stream a huge ocean-going vessel, upon which we are passengers, is surely, though imperceptibly, drifting. Imagine again that we have the power of making excursions for a brief space up this river by means of swift motor launches, but that we must always return to the vessel, our base. Imagine once more that along the sides of our launch runs a high parapet of glass, painted with the objects and scenery in the neighbourhood of our vessel, and that through this parapet we must peer if we would see anything in our upward voyage. . . . Of which part, think you, of the scenery visible from our boat should we have the clearer and the truer view? which could we appreciate with less straining of the eyesight? The near, low-lying objects on the bank, of shape and colour but a little different from those depicted on our semi-transparent screen, or the lofty mountain peaks in the distance, with their wholly diverse hues and dissimilar forms? The comparison is imperfect, but you will see its application. The objects close to the bank stand for the languages or stages of language which are near to our own; the mountains for the remoter ones—those of Greece, for example, or Rome; the parapet symbolizes our own mental constitutions, from which we cannot escape, and which custom and nationality have painted ineffaceably with the scenes of our history and environment.

I am here reminded of some discussions which I had with my father many years ago, when I was still at school. He came to the subject with no classical prepossessions, for his knowledge of the classics was confined to some Latin, which he had taught himself in order to qualify for his medical diploma. And he contended (so, at least, I understood him then) that the

meaning of an ancient book changed as time went on, because the meanings of the words in it changed. I thought this nonsense, though for good reasons I did not say so; for I could not see how the meaning of any writing could be affected by anything that came after it. But I have since perceived that perhaps he was trying to express the truth which to-day I have been labouring to inculcate that, if there has been no breach of continuity in a language, the older writings in that language will most certainly be misunderstood wherever the meaning of a word or phrase has shifted in the course of its transmission.

A passage in the controversy between the early Christian Fathers and their heathen adversaries may be cited in point. By their time the Greek word *δαίμων* had lapsed from the sense of 'spirit' or 'divinity' to that of 'evil spirit' or 'demon.' And so more than one Christian apologist knows no better than to construe phrases in the earlier writers, where it is used of fate or divinities, as if these were instances of its subsequent and invidious meaning.[7]

This drifting of language has a most serious bearing on the value of *translations*—these substitutes which we are asked to accept in lieu of the originals. Translation is the servant of literature, and fidelity, its single merit, is the virtue of a drudge. How imperfectly even this merit is forthcoming, I think everyone is aware. The best of translations are from the first but poor and inadequate reproductions, and from the hour of their making they steadily decline. As the words employed in them change their meaning or pass out of currency, they become first inadequate, next misleading, and at the last unintelligible. And then the translation may be said, without prejudice to truth, to consist of *dead language*. The words, indeed, are there, but their soul, the sense of which they were the chosen vehicles, has departed; or

worse, maybe, in the dead frame has been generated alien and usurping life, the corrupter and the poisoner of intelligence.

The gravest case of a translation in such dead language that I know is a translation of a Greek original. It is the Authorized or, as it should rather be called, the Unauthorized Version of the New Testament. The superlative homage still accorded to this translation, and the unequalled influence which it has wielded upon the thought and the expression of all English-speaking countries, make it difficult for many even now to see the truth; and plain speaking is required. Through the drifting of language which I have described, it has now become in many and often most important passages, both in letter and spirit, little better than a falsification of the original. Let me take one of a sheaf of instances.[8] In earlier English *ghost* was used, like the German *Geist*, in the senses of *breath* and *spirit*. The Authorized Version's phrase, 'He gave up the ghost,' is still intelligible to many of its readers; yet it misrepresents the original nevertheless, since it is now a strange and antiquated expression for the simple idea of 'expiring' or 'breathing one's last.' But the phrase 'Holy Ghost,' for which the American members of the Revising Committee most rightly substituted 'Holy Spirit' throughout, conveys nothing to an uninstructed reader but what is either unmeaning or grotesque. And yet every week, from hundreds and thousands of pulpits and platforms, this version is still read and—save the mark!—expounded, without a word about its true character or the pitfalls with which it abounds.

The harm which this rendering of the New Testament now works is intensified by the excellence of its literary workmanship. But against a very large number of translations from the ancient languages no

such charge can be brought. Many years ago a well-meaning publisher, Mr. H. G. Bohn, brought out a library of so-called translations from the Greek and Latin. And nothing has shown more clearly the buoyancy of the classical spirit in our country than its escape from being irrecoverably submerged by the series of millstones which this 'classical library' hung about its neck.[9] This recovery, to which the present generation owes its opportunities of reading the ancient masterpieces in something better than travesties, is associated with two of the most honoured names in the sister Universities — the names of Benjamin Jowett and Richard Claverhouse Jebb. But though Latin authors are not crushed under the posthumous tyranny of a canonized translation, the dead hand is with them none the less, and its palsying touch is visible upon many sides. From A to Z our Latin dictionaries abound with renderings of Latin words for which *dead* is no improper epithet. Such words, to quote only a few of these which have been brought under my notice in the past few weeks, are 'prince,' 'author,' 'lurid,' 'celebrate,' 'provoke,' and 'dismiss.' The number of these separate mistranslations make the preparation of a new Latin dictionary, which is indeed required on other grounds, a great, and for beginners an imperative, need.

But this is not the whole or the most serious part of the mischief that springs from the all but ineradicable belief that the English words derived from Latin are in very truth the same as the Latin ones. Such words are indeed as integral a part of our speech as those of indigenous origin. But though they grow in our soil, it is not as natives, but exotics, and their conscious or frequent employment in a writing gives a formal and artificial character to style. We may see this from the double narrative of the same incident in Dr.

Johnson's 'Tour in the Hebrides,' which in his letter appears in plain vernacular English, but in his book is turned into superior Latinizing Johnsonese.[10] If this impression of artificiality were confined to the borrowings from Latin in English, no harm would be done. But this is not the case. It is carried over from the English borrowings to the Latin originals with which they are identified, and thus very naturally, though unjustifiably, Latin is thought of as something unreal and artificial; whereas there never was a language which expressed itself so plainly, so directly, and with what we might almost call such a brutal grasp upon facts. The artificiality which we find in genuine Latin is mere mirage. If a Roman desired to be artificial, he could abandon the native straightforwardness (*Romana simplicitas*), and be as affected and unreal as he pleased—in the phraseology and constructions which his own language had borrowed from the sister language of Greek.

Teachers of the elementary stages in Latin need to be very cautious how they follow the facile practice of aiding their pupils' memories by dwelling on the visible correspondences of English and Latin. They may otherwise resemble those improvident persons who obtain a little immediate relief by giving a bill for the future which has to be met at maturity with heavy accumulations of interest; and not always by the people who have contracted the debt. Nor is it the smallest advantage of the recent reform of Latin pronunciation in our country that, by abolishing the false resemblances of Latin and English sounds, it has laid the axe to the roots of what was a veritable nesting-place of confusions.

But our objector is once more in the field. You have given me reasons, he says, against reading the Classics in translations. But why should I read them at all? These Greeks and Romans have been dead,

on the average, over 2,000 years; and what concern is it of mine what they wrote, or made, or did? Mr. Carnegie says the Greeks were savages; and I know that the Roman's full dress was a blanket and that he ate with his fingers. Perhaps, my friend, we should reply, you are not so much ahead of them as you suppose, even in matters upon which you plume yourself most. Do you know that more than 400 years before Julius Caesar landed in this island a code of laws, called the XII Tables, was promulgated at Rome which contains a clause where the stopping of teeth with gold is specifically mentioned?[11]

Listen, again, to this:

> The Bill was then rejected, and in all directions rebuilding began. Roofing material was provided at the State's expense, and builders were authorized to cut timber and quarry stone from wherever they pleased; but they had to furnish security that they would complete within the year. In their hurry they failed to provide for the alignment of the streets; for they built on any vacant ground, regardless of the rights of property. This is why the old sewers, which were originally carried through public thoroughfares, now pass under private houses in every direction, and the city resembles a settlement of squatters rather than a town laid out on a plan.

This is not an extract from an unpublished history of Town Planning by the first professor of 'Civic Design' that the modern world has seen; it is a passage from the book of Livy appointed for the study of candidates for the Intermediate Examination in this University of Liverpool.[12]

Was it you or your father, my friend (I need not ask about your grandfather), who first realized that the requirements of your oft-quoted text, that 'cleanliness

is next to godliness,' were not sufficiently satisfied by the institution of the weekly, or, maybe, the fortnightly, bath? Does it lie in your mouth to disparage the civilization which provided throughout its cities establishments where the poorest and meanest inhabitants, such as now roam your streets unwashed and germ-infested, could secure, without fee, or for the smallest coin in civilization, this prime prerequisite of the laws of health?

But these things are mere trifles by the magnitude of much that is included in our debt to Rome. In law, in medicine, in theology, nay, even in science, we are reminded of it at every turn. Nor is her power to instruct even now exhausted, if we would but hear. Who that thinks for a moment can doubt that all along the road of Roman history lie lessons for us? A nation of landsmen, driven by political and geographical causes to grasp at the sceptre of the seas, pitting itself against the greatest maritime power of the ancient world, against a race of merchants and mariners for many centuries, and, in spite of the efforts of the greatest military genius that history has known, emerging victorious from the terrible conflict by the force of a consummate organization, an unflinching patriotism, and an iron self-discipline; a fair and fertile peninsula denuded of its cultivation and drained of its population through the unchecked working of economic laws; a commonwealth passing through social to political disintegration with an aristocracy frivolous and luxurious, a proletariat indolent and unfit, and a vanishing middle class; a great capital filled with aliens from every part of the globe, whose mob of pauperized sightseers was, as a rule, content to eat the bread and view the sports which its Government thought it a politic charity to bestow, but which rose in dangerous and deadly disorder when, through stress of weather or war, the corn-ships of Africa and Egypt failed to bring the foreign food; a class of financiers

whose operations disturbed the peace of the world, as when, for example, a millionaire of the Empire provoked a rising in Britain by suddenly calling in his loans[13]; a provincial administration which solved the problem of governing an empire over subject races without laxity and without discontent; and, lastly, the end of all, when the vast civilization, with its elaborate organization of law and order, its spacious and well-kept cities, its network of international highways and channels of communication, was shivered to pieces by hordes of merely virile and valiant barbarians, because it had done nothing to counteract the sapping and disabling power of perpetual peace, because it preferred comfort to duty, and delegated the burden of defence. These things may a man read in the Annals of Rome—'in illustri posita monumento,' as its historian says[14]—in works as far removed from the terminological inexactitudes of current politicians and the phrases, as empty as they are resonant, which call their followers to heel, as the pole-star is set above the fog, the smoke and the turmoil of our Northern towns.

But the claims of Rome and Rome's language upon our attention do not rest in the first degree upon their antiquarian, historical, or linguistic importance. They rest much more upon its literature, and upon this I would dwell to-day with the more insistence because a French professor, the occupant of the chair of the History of the French Language at the Sorbonne, has spoken of the literary monuments to which his country and its great authors are so deeply indebted in terms that even in a party politician would stand in need of some excuse. But with M. Brunot and M Brunot's literary appreciations I may deal hereafter.[15] To-day I will rather ask you to judge for yourselves upon the two specimens, all that I have time to set before you, only begging you in fairness to remember, if they do not reach the level of your expectations, that both are

merely translations, and that the second labours under the additional disadvantage of being verse converted into prose.

The first is a description of the fall of Alba Longa, which, for reasons that I trust will now be plain, I give, not in the magnificent Elizabethan version of old Philemon Holland, but in an inferior modern translation:

> When they entered the gates, they found none of the circumstances which commonly attend the capture of a town. Instead of the panic and confusion which follow the breaking open of a gate, the battering down of a wall, or the storming of a citadel; instead of the hostile shouts, the rush of armed soldiery through the streets, the indiscriminate havoc of fire and sword, there was nothing but dreary silence, speechless grief, and universal stupefaction. For very fear men forgot what to take and what to leave behind, and each appealed to his neighbour for the counsel which his own reflection was powerless to afford. Sometimes they stood motionless on their thresholds, sometimes they wandered aimlessly through the houses on which they would never look again. But soon the cavalry, with shouts of impatience, commanded them to quit the place, the crash of the houses which were being demolished in the outskirts of the city reached their ears, and the dust, rising from opposite quarters, covered everything with a dense cloud. They hastily picked up anything that they could; and, bidding farewell to their hearths and homes and the rooms where they had been born and reared, they passed into the streets, which were now filled with a continuous stream of fugitives. As they looked on others, the sense of a common suffering renewed their tears, and cries of anguish even broke from

> the crowd, and especially from the women, as they passed their revered temples in the occupation of armed men; and left their gods, as it seemed, in the hands of their enemies.[16]

Let me now spring from grave to gay, and read you an extract from Ovid in a very different vein. It describes a scene in which the actors are three—a lover, a lady, and a smart young salesman:

> The fop of a traveller will call on your lady, who is a bargainer born. A chair for you, and he will get out his wares. She will beg you just to look at them, and let your fine taste be seen. Then she will give you a kiss. Then—she will ask you to buy. This, she will swear, will content her for many a long year. She will say that she must have it now, that now it can be bought for a song. If you protest that you cannot put your hands on the sum, a bit of paper will do, and you will be sorry that they taught you to write.[17]

Such literature surely is not dead; it is for all times surely real and alive. Because it deals, not with what is transitory, superficial, or material, but with what is permanent, essential, and spiritual; because it deals with that universal humanity which neither custom, fashion, nor soi-disant progress can ever change, the same on the Tiber as on the Thames, the same whether those who the moment embody it are carried in litters, or are conveyed in taxicabs or, it may be, on aeroplanes. Should we not say that our Scottish friends showed their insight into the truth of things when they named professorships of Latin professorships of 'Humanity'?

Some of you will have noticed that in the Saturday's issue of that up to date journal, the *Westminster Gazette*, side by side with drawings of Sir F. C. Gould,

appear Greek and Latin versions of modern poetical extracts, whose merits, often considerable, have been rewarded in what we call a substantial manner. This phenomenon, so astonishing to some people, is, indeed, a tribute to the fascination of Greek and Latin as media of the highest literary value. But, as I think, this is not all.

Translations into languages now commonly unspoken are the only translations proper that possess any advantage over their originals. This is the merit of immutability. Even at the present day the English poems of Milton do not, except perhaps after some study, convey to us just what the author intended. In another 200 years the words of 'Paradise Lost' and the meaning of those words will have drifted much farther, and, it is possible, very far apart. Not so with his Latin poems. There for all time the words are firmly anchored to the sense. And it is well within the bounds of possibility that future ages may owe a truer and more distinct appreciation of the flowers of English poetry to the despised composers in Greek and Latin verse.

The two classical languages, and Latin in particular, have, indeed, what can be called a monumental quality. And if we think that what we write is important for posterity, it is but common prudence to write what posterity is sure to understand. 'Fond' and 'foolish' express two ideas unfortunately contiguous. 'Fond,' we know, from the history of our language, meant 'foolish' once, and we have no certainty that it will not mean 'foolish' again. A man, then, who is commemorated as a 'fond husband' on a sepulchral marble may be thus exposed to the derision of a future generation. But the *coniunx amantissimus* of the language of the legend which encircles our tower, and of the supplication which will conclude this lecture, can never be so misunderstood.[18]

As I have been speaking of monuments, may I cite some eloquent words of a Latin poet whose works have suffered more than any others from the default of those whose duty it was to preserve them. Propertius could not foresee (as, indeed, who could?) the cataclysm which was to overwhelm the ancient world, and to leave the great works of Roman literature at the mercy of medieval ignorance, to maltreat and miscopy as it pleased. But, setting this aside, his words advance a claim so just and so striking that they may serve as a last protest against the calumny that the classical literatures are 'dead.' He is contrasting the durability of material and of spiritual monuments, and he prophesies the fate of the great edifices of ancient workmanship and art. Out of all of those whose ruin he predicts, the pyramids of Egypt alone remain. The rest are dust and fragments, some of which the labours of a devoted band, to whose number we are proud that this University has contributed, have once more uncovered to the sun.

His words I must again give you in a translation, yet again turning poetry into prose:

> Yes, neither the costly pyramids reared to the stars, nor the house of Jove of Elis, the image of the skies, nor the treasured opulence of Mausolus' tomb, escape the doom of death at last. Flame or shower shall steal their glories. Their vanquished masses shall fall to the battering of the years But the name that Genius has won Time shall not ravish. The glory of Genius abides and dies not

"*At non ingenio quaesitum nomen ab aeuo*
Excidet. Ingenio stat SINE MORTE *decus.*"[19]

NOTES

[1] Page 5.—Aristotle, *Politics*, I. iv. 5.

[2] Page 6.—Horace, *Carm.*, III. viii. 5, 'sermones utriusque linguae.'

[3] Page 7.—On newspapers in Latin see *Classical Review*, vol. xii., p. 430.

[4] Page 8.—*Sprechen sie Lateinisch?* by Georg Capellanus, Leipzig, first edition, 1890. It was preceded by *Sprechen sie Attisch?* by E. Joannides, Leipzig, 1889.

[5] Page 12.—Ido, the new international language, owes its birth to the Universal Exhibition at Paris in 1900, where a number of the congresses then assembled appointed deputies to confer on the best means for remedying the continually growing inconvenience of the diversity of languages. By October, 1907, the movement had received the adhesion of 310 societies, and included 1,250 University professors and members of academies, and a committee of 12 eminent savants and scholars of different nationalities was elected to consider the question. The result of their deliberations was a unanimous decision to adopt a modified and improved form of Esperanto. The changes made for this end were very similar to those proposed by Dr. Zamenhof, the author of Esperanto, in 1894, and rejected only for accidental reasons. [From *Apprenez la Langue Internationale 'Ido,'* an official tract prepared by the Bonveno Union of Friends of International Language for the Brussels Exhibition in 1910.]

The fullest and best account of Ido, its aims and advantages, will be found in the forthcoming English translation of *Weltsprache und Wissenschaft*, five essays by L. Couturat (formerly Professor of the University of Caen, and Secretary of the Ido Society), O. Jespersen (Professor in Copenhagen), R. Lorenz (Zürich), W. Ostwald (Emeritus Professor of the University of Leipzig), and L. Pfaundler (Professor of the University of Graz, Austria). The translator is Professor Donnan, of the University of Liverpool, and the publishers Messrs. Constable and Co.

The publications of the Society can be obtained from the English agent, Guilbert Pitman, 85, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

[6] Page 13.—'Q. Ennius *tria corda* habere sese dicebat quod loqui Graece et Osce et Latine sciret.'—Gellius, xvii. 17, 1.

[7] Page 17.—Examples are to be found in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, v. 580, who lays down that the name *δαίμων* is not 'neutral' or 'indifferent' (*μέσον*), and reproaches his adversary with 'not having read our Scriptures' (the Gospels, which use the word for 'evil spirit'), as though this settled the matter. Compare viii., p. 785, where it is clear that, while Celsus used the word in a good sense, of the genii which, according to the Egyptians, had charge of the

different parts of the human frame, Origen accuses him of attempting to subject the soul of man to demons by assigning them different provinces in his body. And Cyprian, *De Idolorum Vanitate*, c. vi., p. 573, says that 'The [heathen] poets recognize these demons'—'Hos et poeta daemonas norunt'—and that Socrates gave out 'instrui se et regi ad arbitrium daemonis,' a gross perversion of the philosopher's statement that his actions were from time to time checked and regulated by the check of a supernatural sign (*δαιμόνιον σημεῖον*).

[8] Page 18.—If only one example is given in the text, it is through no dearth of material, as witness the following list, which might easily be enlarged: Acts xxi. 15, 'We took up our *carriages* and went to Jerusalem' ('baggage,' and so the Revised Version); 1 Tim. v. 4, 'If any widow have children or *nephews*' ('grandchildren,' and so the Revised Version); Acts xix. 37, 'robbers of *churches*' ('temples,' and so the Revised Version); 1 Pet. iv. 5, '*Charity* shall cover the multitude of sins' ('love,' and so the Revised Version). On the Authorized Version's employment of 'hell' the late Archbishop Trench, *On the Authorized Version of the New Testament*, p. 65, writes: 'The distinction between *Ἅιδης*, the underworld, the receptacle of the departed, and *γέεννα*, the place of torment, quite disappears in the Authorized Version.' The translation of the first word by 'grave' in a single passage (1 Cor. xv. 55) is much less misleading. How much misunderstanding may be produced by the rendering 'publicans' instead of 'tax-collectors,' as in the recurrent phrase 'publicans and sinners,' it is needless to say.

The words of the late Bishop Ellicott, no rash advocate of change, may be quoted as showing the serious character of some of the mistranslations in the Authorized Version. On 1 Cor. xi. 29, he says (*Considerations on the Revision of the English Version of the New Testament*, p. 101), 'We have at any rate a rendering of *κρῖμα*, which, combined with the intruded *ἀναξίως*, has produced an influence on thousands, and even tens of thousands, of a very unhappy kind'; and on Acts ii. 47, *τοὺς σωζομένους*, 'those who were being saved.' 'Faithfulness requires that we should change a rendering, which not only leads to a doctrinal inference not warranted by the tense, but obscures the true and almost technical meaning which this important expression constantly maintains in passages of profound doctrinal importance.' And again: 'The list of actual and definite errors of a less important kind is very large.'

The literary workmanship of the Authorized Version has been the subject of repeated and well-merited encomiums. But I imagine that not many who welcome and echo these commendations are quite aware what they mean. Those who know the Greek original as well as the English translation do not need to be told that the general impression conveyed by the one and the other is by no means the same. Nor are the reasons far to seek. To the Greek a reader comes divested of all external prepossessions. But for the English his intelligence is enmeshed in a network of alien associations. The language is not that of to-day, and he feels it as something antique and remote. The influence which the version has exerted upon subsequent literature has necessarily reacted on itself. Its phrases come to us charged and coloured with the uses that they have been put to by writers of genius and prestige. Bacon quotes the famous question of 'jesting Pilate,' 'What is truth?' and

forges an almost indissoluble link between his *Essay* and the context of John xviii. 38. Will any Church or Nonconformist divine, who is absolutely honest with himself, maintain that 'baptism' and 'bishop' affect him precisely in the same way as *βαπτίζειν* and *ἐπίσκοπος*? And what then of those who cannot apply the correction which is furnished by a knowledge of the original? Lastly, much of the grace and charm that the English possesses is extraneous to the Greek, which is the plain, unpretentious speech of every day. This draws off the attention from the substance to the style; and, if I may speak without reserve, for those to whom this Book conveys a message of supreme meaning and importance, to dwell so much upon its literary merit is an irrelevance that borders upon indecorum.

[9] Page 19.—It is only fair to add that the present publishers of the 'Classical Library,' Messrs. George Bell and Sons, have brought out a number of translations which have done something to remove the associations which cling to the name of 'Bohn.'

[10] Page 20.—See Johnson's *Letters* (ed. A. Birkbeck Hill), vol. ii., p. 251, with the editor's note. Macaulay, 'Essay on Johnson,' *ad fin.*, adds an example that may be quoted: 'Sometimes Johnson translated aloud. "The Rehearsal," he said, very unjustly, "has not *wit* enough to *keep* it *sweet*"; then, after a pause, "it has not *vitality* enough to *preserve* it from *putrefaction*."' The bilingualism of the Prayer-Book ('*seek* peace and *ensue* it,' '*craft* and *subtlety*,' etc.) is a curious phase of the language which may be noted in passing.

[11] Page 21.—The fragment in which occur the words *dentes auro uincti* is preserved by Cicero, *De Legibus*, ii. 60.

[12] Page 21.—From Livy, v. 55. 'Civic Design,' is the title of the recently founded professorship of Town Planning which the University of Liverpool counts among its debts to the enlightened munificence of Mr. Lever.

[13] Page 23.—According to the historian Dio Cassius, lxii., a chief cause of the revolt of the Britons under Boudicca was the action of the philosopher Seneca in pressing for immediate repayment of the 40,000,000 sesterces which he had induced them to borrow.

[14] Page 23.—From Livy, *Praef.*

[15] Page 23.—Some of the flowers of M. Brunot's speech at the International Congress in Paris are quoted in *Modern Language Teaching* (July, 1909, p. 142 *et seq.*). Here are two sentences, from which the capacity of the speaker for serious criticism may readily be gauged: 'Quel est celui qui fera à une des grandes nations civilisées l'injure de comparer sa langue et sa littérature *à ce pauvre idiome latin et à cette littérature sèche stérile et médiocre* qui n'est dans ses meilleurs œuvres qu'un pâle reflet d'un génie étranger?' 'Dès aujourd'hui l'idée de mettre en balance Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Molière, Victor Hugo, Balzac, Flaubert avec Plaute, Pétrone, voire même Horace ou Virgile apparaît comme boufonne et on ne plaide plus la primauté de la langue latine.' This method of weighing the claims of literatures is as original as anything in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. Take four authors from among your own countrymen, and one each from three different foreign nations. By the side of this constellation of luminaries, which you have picked from four different peoples and six centuries of writing, set four representatives of a single literature whose life at best barely

exceeded three hundred years; and then declare the idea of comparing them 'droll.' Droll it is; and M. Brunot makes it droller by his selection from the writers of Rome, in which, for example, Catullus and Lucretius are omitted, and prose is represented by Petronius.

I note with personal regret that there is danger of the Modern Languages Association, which has done and is still doing excellent work within its proper sphere, being led away into a policy of narrow and short-sighted aggression upon the ancient rights of Latin. And as the cry of 'humanistic education without Latin' is now being raised with some noise and insistence, I venture to reproduce a passage written twenty-one years ago, but none the less applicable to-day. I do so with the less compunction as it is no longer to be found where it first appeared (*Sermo Latinus*, p. 6) and as it has since been quoted without the author's name. Except for the omission of a sentence, which deals with the relative importance of English and French and German (a point already touched on), the passage is given as it stood in 1889:

'The sellers of new lamps for old are doing their best to make out that French and German can furnish the student with all the advantages that he can find in the classical tongues. There is no doubt great scope for instructive observations in the teaching of these languages, and especially so when the students are far advanced. But if the classics are overthrown, these languages are not likely to take their place. . . . Educationally they are inferior instruments. They have no literature to compare with that of Greece. Their grammatical structure is almost as worn out as our own. They possess a remnant of inflexional system, it is true, but its forms have none of the clearness and distinctiveness of Greek and Latin. In German the endings *e*, *er*, *en* do duty for nearly everything; and French disguises a similar paucity under a mask of obsolete spellings—*e.g.*, *aimais*, *aimait*, *aimez*, *aimer*. And to talk of their affording an equal intellectual stimulus! Why, Greek and Latin carry us into a different country, I had almost said into a different world, while their modern rivals can take us no farther than another street, or at most a neighbouring town.'

[16] Page 25.—From Livy, i. 29.

[17] Page 25.—From Ovid, *Ars Am.*, i. 421 *et seq.*

[18] Page 26.—Public functions of the University of Liverpool are brought to a conclusion with the words: '*Salua sit Vniuersitas Nostra quod precantes consurgamus.*' The 'legend' referred to in the text is the Latin inscription round the tower of the Victorian building.

[19] Page 27.—From Propertius, III. ii.

ADDENDUM.—Pages 21 *sq.*—The principle of the taximeter was known to the Romans and used by them both in land and sea conveyance. See Vitruvius, *Archit.*, x. 14, and Mr. H. W. Garrod in the forthcoming number of the *Classical Quarterly*.

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