

**THE ORATION OF
DEMOSTHENES UPON
THE CROWN, TRANSLATED
INTO ENGLISH**

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The Oration of Demosthenes upon the Crown, Translated into English by Demosthenes & Henry Lord Brougham

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DEMOSTHENES & HENRY LORD BROUGHAM

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by Thomas Hitchcock.*

THE
ORATION OF DEMOSTHENES

UPON THE CROWN,

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH.

BY
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1840.

INTRODUCTION.

THE attempt to translate the Greatest Oration of the Greatest of Orators into a language so different in its frame and idiom from that noble tongue in which it was pronounced, had long appeared so hopeless, that, after intentions repeatedly formed, the plan was for some years abandoned.

During the period of my retirement from Parliament after the general election in 1812, I had frequent communications upon this subject with one of the best scholars and most acute, though severe, critics of his time, my lamented friend Lord Dudley; and it was principally an argument of his that then turned me aside from the project. When pressed with the considerations which naturally suggested themselves in favour of it—among others the example of Cicero, who had made the same experiment on the Latin language,—his answer was calculated to make me pause, from its appearance of sense and force. “Either,” said he, “the translation is

addressed to those who know the original, or to those who do not. The former cannot want it; the latter cannot materially profit by it; for no translation can give an adequate idea of the original."

Subsequent reflection has served to remove the deep impression which Lord Dudley's argument had made.

It must be considered, in the first place, that even to scholars the experiment is not without interest of trying how far the two languages can be used so as to render in the one the thoughts couched originally in the other; and even to scholars the comparative trial of the structures of the two, their resemblances, their differences, and their contrasts, is very interesting. Then, if indeed this be not included in the preceding observation, there can no more accurate method be fallen upon for well apprehending the force and genius of both tongues than such a comparative trial. Many things are sure to be thus observed which had previously escaped our attention: nor is it to be doubted that the sense, as well as the diction, of the original, is much more thoroughly perceived and felt after such an attempt. I can truly say in the present case,

that although the exquisite original had been, for many long years, familiar to me in all its parts, most of which I knew by heart, yet I never felt its incomparable beauties, both in the substance and in the diction, until I made the attempt at transferring them into our Saxon tongue; and although there is far less benefit in this respect to be derived from reading the work, yet whoever shall, in perusing, compare it carefully with the original, can hardly fail to profit considerably, and to discover merits and peculiarities which had before escaped him. There is something in this process resembling the advantage we gain in relishing the beauties of the ancient dramatists, from seeing their pieces performed instead of reading them. Many a scholar has felt how greatly his notions of Terence were improved by seeing a Westminster play—however well acquainted he may have been with the original by previous study. The examination of the Greek Orator's passages, with a view to their being delivered to an English audience, the consideration of the effects which they are calculated to produce upon such an assembly, and the feeling of their effects as given in our mother tongue, is calculated to produce somewhat of the same effect.

The example of Cicero must here again be adverted to. No one could more thoroughly know the Greek than he did, hardly even the Athenians themselves. He had practised declaiming in that language so much as to speak it with perfect ease. When he sent his History, written in Greek, to Posidonius at Rhodes, desiring he would write one in purer Attic, that Rhetorician said that the perusal of it filled him with despair of being able to improve the diction. Nay, when Molo, a teacher of rhetoric at the same famous school, heard him declaim in Greek, he is said to have lamented the complete subjugation of his country, which must now yield the palm in Attic eloquence to the people whose arms had subdued her. Nothing, then, could have made the Great Roman undertake the task of translating the two Orations on the Crown, except the desire of trying an experiment such as we have been considering, probably with some such views as have just been stated. The loss of his Translation (of which the Introduction only has reached us) is deeply to be lamented. But we may venture to affirm that the English language is much better adapted to the task here exacted of it than the Latin. It is far richer in roots and in idiom; much

better adapted than the dialect of a barbarous people to express abstract ideas and the other thoughts which the progress of civility and refinement gives birth to ; indeed in all respects except the want of flexion, it is better fitted to convey with closeness the sense of the Greek original. The complacency with which certain French artists have expressed a conviction that their language comes nearest to the Attic of any, should make us suspicious of our national partialities and slow to claim for our mother tongue any decisive superiority—for it shows how far prejudices will warp acute minds. Yet still there seems good ground for affirming that the English and German, and generally the dialects of Saxon or Teutonic origin, when improved and corrected by judicious importations from the ancient tongues are, of all others, if not the nearest in point of resemblance to the Greek, yet certainly the most capable of making its treasures accessible to those who are denied access to the original. Even against the superiority of the Latin in its conjugations and declensions (its greatest though not its only resemblance with the Greek) we may set off its want of articles ; and how far its similar flexion has aided the work of transla-

tion may be seen by its failure where the exquisite diction of the Attic Orators was to be imitated. The famous passage in the *Παραπρόσβεια* of Æschines (*ταῦτα ἑκάστῳ ποιητῆ, &c.*) which Cicero has translated in the Oration against L. Piso, ("*Hæ flammæ! Hæ faces!*" &c.), being one where the merit lay in the sense, is far better given by him than either he himself has succeeded when parodying the beautiful climax in the *περὶ Σεφάνου* (*οὐκ εἶπον μὲν ταῦτα, οὐκ ἔγραψα δέ, &c.*) or Quintilian when professing to translate it, the exquisite diction being here the great beauty. In truth the similar flexion of the Latin carries us but a small way towards approaching the Greek. It has no articles, and so far, is inferior to the English; and as for particles, the Roman artists and ourselves are alike deficient in that great resource, as the equally signal failure of both in attempting the famous passage just mentioned may prove, the use of the particles being the source of the delicacy of the diction in that passage, and even of its perfectly luminous perspicuity, notwithstanding its extreme concision. The tenses which are peculiarly Greek, together with the particles, are certainly the great instruments by which such nice distinctions can