COURTIER AND BISHOP.

THE LETTERS OF SIDONIUS. Translated, with Introduction and Notes, by O. M. DALTON. In Two Volumes. (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 3s. 6d. net each volume.)

It is at least interesting that, while a tendency to turn the classics out of their old place in education is still to be remarked in what are supposed to be progressive circles, two great series of translations of classical authors are being given to the world, each of them representing a higher level of scholarship than any such attempt has yet achieved. And it is hardly less interesting that neither the Oxford Press nor the Loeb translators limit themselves to the round of authors familiar to Englishmen at school and college. Not so long ago, for instance, two translations of "The Life of Apollonius of Tyana" were given to the world; and now the Oxford Press adds one of the letters of Apollinaris Sidonius—letters which, strangely enough, have never before been rendered into English except in excerpts and selections. The task was a formidable one, but Mr. Dalton has faced it bravely and successfully. His renderings are in real English; they are not always, perhaps, very close to the Latin—the English language could hardly have borne it, if it can be said that the Latin bore it—but in tone and flavour they recall the age and school of the rather remarkable man who composed them. The introduction is an excellent piece of work, full, fresh, and sympathetic; it touches a large range of matters all germane to the subject, and is a contribution which students of the period will welcome.

Apollinaris Sidonius lived in Gaul in the fifth century, spanning with his life the greater part of it, and dying before it ended. He was a man of letters—*vir litterarum* is his curiously modern phrase—a nobleman, a high official, and latterly a bishop. He mixed with Roman Emperors and barbarian Kings, and he lived for the most part exactly where and when Roman and Teuton were meeting and mingling, with results most fruitful for the world's history, and (one would have expected) most stimulating and interesting for the student of mankind. Yet it seems the general verdict of modern times that he missed a great opportunity. Suppose he had foreseen what we look back upon—that he had grasped the factors that most mattered—in short, supposing he had combined (let us say) the gifts of a Herodotus and a Thucydides, what an immense gain it would have been to us when we study the rise of the new Europe from the declining Empire! How fascinating his work would have been! And yet is it quite likely we should have had it? His letters and poems survive, in whole or in part, in some sixty manuscripts, and it looks as if the centuries which followed him and transcribed his writings so abundantly did so for the very reason for which we find him so tedious—they admired his style.

Gibbon did not admire his style, though he conceded that "the prose of Sidonius, however vitiated by a false and affected taste, is much superior to his insipid verse." Sidonius would have been hurt by this judgment, and he would have considered it wrong-headed. Was he not in the very best tradition, the successor—no! not of Cicero, "of him as a letter-writer I had best be dumb"—but of "Symmachus of the ample manner and Pliny of the perfected art"? True, he disclaims their gifts—"Quinti Symmachi rotunditatem, Gai Plinii disciplinam maturitatemque"—but he is in the succession; men compared him to Pliny, and to complete the likeness he yielded to the suggestion of adding a ninth to his eight books of letters. For he collected his letters himself, as a gentleman of those leisurely and cultured centuries might, to alleviate the tedium of an enforced idleness or to forget the disgusts of a changed world. His friends set him to rummage among his papers, and no doubt he touched and retouched the letters before he published them. His passion was for Latinity, and the language was in danger—"The Roman tongue is long banished from Belgium and the Rhine." Even in his own country, lazy ways prevail in speech, and there is a barbarian environment—even nobles use the squalid Celtic dialect ("sermonis Celtici squamam") which was at least native to Gaul, and some stoop (to the amazement and anxiety of their friends) to learn the language of their new German neighbours. Syagrius, after having had Virgil caned into him ("post ferulas lectionis Maronianæ") and "sweating at the opulence and eloquence of the varicose Arpinate," is now a purist in barbarism, an expert among Burgundians in German law and German speech. So Sidonius clings to Latin all the more—

> Unless your little band can save the purity of the Latin tongue from the rust of barbarisms of the streets we shall soon have to mourn its abolition and decease. All the fine flowers of diction will lose their splendours through the apathy of the people.

Mr. Dalton happily remarks that these fine flowers were artificial flowers. *Purpurea* is the word of Sidonius, and it suggests the phrase of Horace. He is all purple patches, and he learnt the tricks in the schools. Tertullian and Apuleius have them too, but they are greater men, and genius, passion, and humour purify, simplify, and ennoble their styles. Sidonius is too like Symmachus—a gentleman of culture without genius, and a firm believer in what all gentlemen of culture had been taught. Every trick of the school is there—the balanced clauses, the assonances, the jingles, the affected order, the impossible conceit; and he is bad to read and terrible to translate. Mr. Dalton, however, has achieved it.

Sidonius and his school thought of little else than style, so perhaps we are right in setting it in the forefront of our criticism. All the same, as Mr. Dalton points out, a very great deal else survives in the nine books of letters. A man cannot be a courtier and a bishop without seeing a good deal of the world and understanding some of it. Symmachus was not a bishop—was not a Christian at all; and Rome after all was by his time out of the world—a long way from the main stream. Sidonius gives us constant glimpses of actual life—not as many as we might have wished, but still we should know much less of this strange world in transformation if we had not his letters. We shall not try here to sketch his career. Suffice it that in middle age he ceased to be a Roman citizen. A great tract of Gaul was ceded to the Goth—without a popular vote; and Sidonius by an act of diplomats became a Gothic subject. He had his troubles quite apart from sentiments, for under Euric he had a spell of imprisonment, which, however, ended in release. The Goths were not strangers at all by this time, and it would appear that there was a good understanding between the peoples.

Evidence in plenty of friendly feeling is in these letters, even if Sidonius admits he did not much like the Goths—not even good ones. The same compound of admiration and distaste existed in Cicero's day between Greek and Roman. What the Goths were like Sidonius now and then lets us see. Here is the young Prince Sigismer on his way to his wedding. (If a word or two of the Latin be interpolated, the reader may see Mr. Dalton's way of translating and be grateful to him.) Here he comes, then,

> in all the pomp and bravery of the tribal fashion. His own steed with its caparisons, other steeds laden with flashing gems, paced before and after; but the conspicuous interest in the procession centred in the prince himself, as with a charming modesty he went afoot amid his bodyguards and footmen, in flame-red mantle, with much glint of ruddy gold, and gleam of snowy silken tunic, his fair hair, red cheeks, and white skin according with the three hues of his equipment (*flammeus cocco rutilus auro lacteus serico, tum cultui tanto coma rubore cute concolor*). But the chiefs and allies who bore him company were dread of aspect, even thus on peace intent. Their feet were laced in boots of bristly hide reaching to the heels; ankles and legs were exposed. They wore high tight tunics of varied colour hardly descending to their bare knees, the sleeves covering only the upper arm. Green mantles they had with crimson borders; baldrics supported swords hung from their shoulders and pressed on sides covered with cloaks of skin secured by brooches. No small part of their adornment consisted of their arms; in their hands they grasped barbed spears and missile axes; their left sides were guarded by shields which flashed with tawny golden bosses and snowy silver borders, betraying at once their wealth and their good taste. Though the business in hand was wedlock, Mars was no less prominent in all this pomp than Venus.

The letter, while it exhibits the costume of Sigismer, no less displays the art of Sidonius; and it was no doubt the latter that saved it when he went over his papers.

Of Sidonius's country house, of the position of woman, of the luxury, the arts, the travel of the day we have left no space to speak. Church life, of course, claims the attention of the country gentleman turned bishop, like Ambrose and Synesius in preceding generations, and he gives many curious details. One letter stands out in memory, and it shall be our last reference—a vivid picture of the pilgrimage at St. Just: the procession before dawn, the vast basilica crammed and packed with a populace of both sexes beyond the capacity of "all its cincture of galleries"—the vigil, the chanting, the lights, the sultry night, and the panting closeness of it all till the autumn dawn brought relief and Sidonius and his friends found fresh air and relaxation outside, some in dice and some in a ball game. With Sidonius as captain of one side the game grows fast and furious—too fast for Filimatius, who falls flat once or twice, loses his breath, and feels his liver. So Sidonius and he retire, and he wipes his face with a towel, and Sidonius must write a quatrain on the towel, and after some chaff he does, and it is quite worthy of its subject and no more. And then the bishop is stirring, and they must go.

It may be that no one will ever again admire very much the Latin style of Sidonius, in spite of similar vagaries in modern English; but here we have, as we have tried to show, some glimpses of a society in the moment of one of the most important and least-known transformations that history has to record. We may be grateful to the genial and cultured gentleman, and, if we do not quite value his style and education as he did, we may take what he gives us and enjoy it.

Mr. A. Clutton Brock, whose "Thoughts on the War," reprinted from *The Times Literary Supplement*, came from Messrs. Methuen in a volume towards the end of last year, has a further collection of his articles in the press for early publication by the same publishers, entitled, "More Thoughts on the War."

Messrs. Constable will shortly publish "Men, Women, and War," by Mr. Will Irwin. Mr. Irwin started for the war three days after it broke out, returning in November to organize the Commission for Relief in Belgium. His book is a record of his experiences and impressions.

Professor Roland G. Usher has a new work in preparation with Messrs. Constable, entitled "Pan-Americanism: A Forecast of the Inevitable Clash between the United States and Europe's Victor." "Are We Ready? A Study of the Preparedness for War in the United States of America," by H. D. Wheeler, is another forthcoming addition to the increasing literature on the same subject—also to be published by Messrs. Constable. Possibly as an antidote to this literature the same publishers announce "The Road to Peace," by Dr. Eliot, President Emeritus of Harvard University, with chapters on "The Fears which cause Increasing Armaments"; "Why American Opinion favours the Allies"; and "America's Duty relating to the Great War."

HUGH BENSON.

HUGH: MEMOIRS OF A BROTHER. By ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON. (Smith, Elder. 7s. 6d. net.)

It must sometimes happen to the gifted and gracious lady, whose lineaments are clearly discernible in the pages of this memoir, to reflect that she is the grandmother of a great number of books, but of no grandchildren. All her gifts of motherly insight, to which Mr. Benson bears a pardonably enthusiastic witness, have been poured out upon a brilliant generation that has not handed its gifts on to a succeeding one, and yet is ever so busy with the task of occupying the interests of its compeers. Hugh Benson, it is true, became in due time a Roman Catholic, and on submitting to be reordained as such, he was committed to a celibate life; but as one watches his brother affectionately yet quite candidly botanizing upon his recent grave, it begins to appear that there is something constitutionally celibate about his temperament and his development. In childhood other people were to him "just more or less favourable channels for him to follow his own designs, more or less stubborn obstacles to his attaining his wishes"; and the shades of this prison-house of self seemed to close about the growing boy. "Not often did he give his heart away; he admired greatly, he sympathized freely; but I never saw him desolated or stricken by any bereavement or loss." As a perhaps not very decided candidate for Anglican orders, he looked forward, says his brother, "to being a country clergyman with a beautiful garden, an exquisite choir, and a sober bachelor existence." He had day-dreams of establishing a community, but this community, "in his mind, was to exist not, I believe, for discipline or extension of thought; it was rather to be a fortress of quiet for the encouragement of similar individual impulses." In his last phase, as a member of the Roman Communion, the idea of establishing such a community at his country retreat was still potent; but again "the essence of it all was solitude, cheered by sympathy and enough friendly companionship to avoid morbidity."

Now, if this memoir were written by an outsider, such comments would be held to push candour to the verge of cruelty; but the truth is that the affectionateness of these brothers flourishes only in an atmosphere of the freest criticism. "I do not think we have ever felt it to be disloyal to see each other in a clear light." Thus Arthur's books bored Hugh, but less so than Hugh's books bored Arthur; indeed, Hugh once suggested to Arthur, who confessed to having nothing to write about, that he should "write a book about having nothing to write about." "It was good advice," says Mr. Benson, "and I took it." Such candour is quite disarming, and it tends to make the volume rather a memoir of two brothers than of one. But also the candour of the biographer produces some doubts as to the fidelity of the portrait. More than once he tells us that his real friendship with his lamented brother began when they both found themselves in Cambridge again, the elder at Magdalene, the younger as a Roman priest at Llandaff House. Henceforward the touch each with the other is close, and it is easy to see that the elder is trying to discover the younger.

As there is still to be an official biography of Father Benson written from a Roman standpoint, it may be that we shall yet have a more technical examination of his religious development. When it comes, we shall, perhaps, be able to realize why the Roman authorities, whose methods are usually quite different, seemed to place no obstacles in the way of their convert's habit of pursuing his own plans, surrounded by his own comforts, and passionately addicted to the rapid writing of romances. Mr. Benson shows us that his brother's activities as a preacher and a lecturer and a director of souls were so enormous as clearly to hasten the breakdown of his health. But as here pictured he remains the rather self-absorbed lover of the kind of life that suited his bent: the lover of vehement argument, who "hated dogmatic statements with which he did not agree"; the lover of perpetual book-writing, who by the time one book was finished, "had generally got another on the stocks, and did not care about the previous one at all."

But what every one will enjoy about Mr. Benson's close examination of his brother's career is the evidence that, when the break in his life came, it made no break in the association with the home. The responsibility for that happy circumstance rests upon the shoulders of the head of the home. It was ordained that his place was there for him just as before, and he came to occupy it more regularly than before. For the head of the house, to know all was to pardon all. One day—and the longer it is postponed the better—we shall have a vivid study of the development of this brilliant young life. There may be letters of his in the volume when it comes, but its chief value will lie and its abiding truth will out in her letters to him.

Some unpublished documents relating to the war are included in a book which Messrs. Harrap hope to publish this month, entitled, "Serbia: Her History and Customs," by M. Woislav M. Petrovitch, whose "Hero Tales and Legends of the Serbians" came from the same publishers. The author brings the history of his country down to the re-occupation of Belgrade last December. Messrs. Harrap also have nearly ready a pictorial commentary on the lighter side of the war entitled, "Jovial Jottings from the Trenches," by an officer, invalided home, who signs himself "Captain Wideawake."

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