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OUR GOAL AND ITS ATTAINMENT

IN THE FIELD OF TRANSLATION, success comes only to those who work diligently, patiently, with painstaking care and attention, and who, in addition, possess a power of adaptability, for, in passing from one language to another, one must adapt oneself not only to changes in grammatical structure but also to varying modes of expression.

The stages through which the successful translator must pass are three.

First and foremost, the grammatical and syntactical structure both of the language into which one is translating and of that from which one is translating must be mastered completely. A general comprehension of the portent of the text or of the mood of the author in no way suffices. To translate well, one must first learn thoroughly the grammar and syntax of the languages involved.

Secondly, a translation must never betray itself as such. If one is translating into English, for example, the translation should have no traces whatsoever of foreign phraseology. It must read as would a text written originally in English by an English speaking person. It is useless for a student to argue that such and such an English word is, according to his dictionary, the correct translation of such and such a foreign word and that therefore he is justified in using it in his translation. If it is not the term normally used by an English speaking person in such a context, it is unsuitable, regardless of how accurately it might translate the same foreign word in a different context. By the same token, an obsolete or literary word, though it may translate the meaning of a text correctly, simply cannot be used in an ordinary context.

This brings us, naturally, to a further consideration. If we are translating a passage in which legal terms appear, then in the translation legal terms—not merely correct and normal colloquial usage—must be found. If a business letter be translated from French to English, the resultant English will probably be shorter. It will still be

polite, as the French letter most certainly is, but it will be less elaborately expressed. In other words, not only must the correct commercial terms be used, but the whole tone of the letter must be that of an English business letter.

The third stage of proficiency to be attained by the translator is perhaps the most difficult and presupposes a complete mastery of the first two stages. The third stage is that in which not only the meaning is correctly and normally expressed, but also the style of writing so skilfully reproduced that the very mood of the author breathes through the words as though he himself and not his translator had phrased it thus.

To follow the intricacies of another's thought to such a degree as to be able to express it as if it were one's own,—to assume the mood of another who, being of a different mother tongue, has, apart from probable differences in economic and social status, at least a very different cultural background,—surely this is no small achievement, and yet this is precisely what is expected of the translator.

The setting forth clearly, correctly, and without redundancy of the meaning of a text, the use of phraseology peculiar to the language into which one is translating, and, in translations of a literary nature, the faithful expression of the mood of the original text—this is the skill and this the art of a translator.

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