

heroic stanza, as I am of any acknowledged truth connected with the play. With regard to many parts of the choric metres, our ignorance of their effect in Greek ought to be enough to deter us from any attempt to reproduce them in another tongue, or at any rate in our own, for I do not feel myself qualified to pronounce an opinion on the success of the experiment in Germany^c. Thus it will be seen that nothing very definite can be laid down with reference to the degree in which a translator should copy the form of his author, owing to the indeterminate state of our language and metre, which will vary at different periods. There are some measures now tolerably congenial to our language which our fathers would have regarded as unnatural and affected; and the breaking up of conventional forms of phraseology, which has been for some time past going on under the influence of such writers as Mr. Carlyle, will allow us to hazard many expressions which could not have been used twenty years ago. All that can be said is, Be natural: and the appeal is to the *αἴσθησις* of the individual, checked by the prospect of an ultimate reference to "the common sense of most." So, whatever may be thought of

^c There are several German versions of the Agamemnon of comparatively recent date, all of them executed on the principle of exact metrical conformity. The most celebrated of them, Humboldt's (I am giving not my own opinion, but that which I have heard from Germans themselves), is still highly esteemed, but complained of for its extreme difficulty, as is that of H. Voss, who, in common with his father, is said to have completely spoiled his style by the habits of translation, so that their Pindar is pronounced to be harder than the original, while the first edition of the Homer, one of J. H. Voss's earliest attempts, is infinitely preferred to the second. Droysen's version, though not thought

equal to his translation of Aristophanes, is praised for its great ease, while in other respects, such as closeness to the text, it would appear to be deficient. Hermann, a severe judge in the case of a disciple of Müller, spoke of it to me as "luftig," flighty or frothy; and the little I have seen of it induces me to believe that much has been sacrificed to the wish of producing a translation in flowing language: e. g. he transforms ἀπλοία κενάγγελι (v. 181) into "ruhmlose Rast," inglorious repose. Franz's work, printed along with his edition noticed below, I heard favourably mentioned: but it does not seem to have been before the public sufficiently long to have received any decided judgment.