

though this is only one of several functions which a commentary ought to aim at discharging. There are places where a translation, although in prose, cannot combine literal with essential accuracy. A version which subordinates the letter to the spirit will sometimes involve a mental process of which the result bears no visible trace. If the version is sound, this process is not only morally sensitive, but has also a scrupulously logical march. A version which, while brilliant, is unsound, is one which seizes on a smooth compromise or a glittering resemblance, which may imply an unconscious misrepresentation or an undetected fallacy. 'This rendering, I can see, is not literal'—we may suppose a reader to say. 'In what sense, then, and *why*, is it equivalent to the Greek?' Here—supposing the translation to be sound—is the opportunity of the commentary. It comes in to show that there is no flaw in the process by which an advance has been made from a literal rendering to one which, though less literal, is more faithful.

This, then, is the first object for which I have striven—the vivid exposition of my own mind in relation to Sophocles; so that, even where my understanding of him is defective or mistaken, at least it may seldom be ambiguous. This is an endeavour which appeals more directly to classical students: it is by them, if any of them should use this book in their work, that the measure of failure or success will be most correctly judged.

2. The second object which has been proposed to this edition regards educated readers generally, not classical students alone. It is my hope—whether a vain one or not, I hardly know—that the English version facing the Greek text may induce some persons to read a play of Sophocles as they would read a great poem of a modern poet,—with no such interposing nightmare of *τύπτω* as at Athens came between Thackeray and his instinctive sense of what was admirable in the nature