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VOL. II.

I. GERMAN TRANSLATION OF THE TALMUD.

A TRANSLATION of the whole Talmud has long been looked upon as a desideratum among the learned; and the want has been more strongly felt, in consequence of the very great difference of opinion entertained respecting its merits, by the friends and by the adversaries of this singular compilation. On a former occasion we remarked, that "the world at large,—which at present is obliged to form its opinion of this work on hearsay, or from extracts selected, either by inveterate assailants or zealous defenders,

—will not arrive at a correct estimate until the whole work shall have been translated and illustrated; *an undertaking rather to be wished for, than expected.*"* This wish is, however, nearer its accomplishment than, at that time, we had supposed. The Prospectus of a forthcoming translation into German, of the whole Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, has been presented to us, which, at the request of the learned Translator, we now submit to our readers.

PROSPECTUS.

THE spirit of the present age, which evinces so decided a love of that which is new and extraordinary, is equally distinguished by the ardent zeal with which it tries to discover and illustrate the remains of antiquity in every part of the world; in order, by their aid, to raise arts, poetry, and all the sciences to the greatest elevation of which they are capable; and, especially, to trace their collective design and purpose in religion, that central point of unity in reference to all human knowledge. Thus we see, that in the burning South zealous efforts are employed to decipher the Hieroglyphics of Egypt, and to discover their alphabet; while in the remotest East the works of Indian sages are being unfolded with equal activity and skill. We of the North are occupied with another not less valuable production of antiquity; namely, with a German translation of the whole Talmud, a work distinguished from those which we mentioned before, and deserving of a higher place, because it treats, not of the deification of Osiris, or the incarnation of Bramah, but of the knowledge and adoration of the Most High, and of the law of Moses in its most extended and comprehensive sense; and because it contains many maxims of the purest morality and virtue. A translation of the whole Talmud is, particularly at present, most important and desirable; as its great usefulness in the study of Divinity and of the Shemitic languages, and especially in the study of Jewish history, is generally acknowledged; and as the Israelites,—who, since the second destruction of Jerusalem, are chiefly indebted to the Talmud for their preservation as a distinct people and for their mental culture,—continue to be considered as actual members of every particular state in which they reside.

The difficulties which have to be overcome in a translation of the whole

* Vide Hebrew Review, Vol. I. p. 5.

Talmud, are incomparably greater than those which attend the translation of other ancient works. These respectively are formed on a less complicated plan, have a phraseology which is easily explained, and are written with one purpose or tendency only, by which all the various parts are regulated, and in accordance with which they may be expounded; in addition to which a greater or less store of auxiliary works offer their aid: Whereas in the Talmud the forms of expression are as various as the subjects of which it treats; so that the solution of one obscure phrase does not offer any criterion for that of others; nor are there any auxiliary sources, the aid of which can be rendered available. While other remains of antiquity mostly appertain to nations in whom the principle of vitality is still extant, and who expend the utmost vigour of research in order to discover and properly to understand the contents of these ancient relics: While these can produce documentary evidence to attest their truth and authenticity, and the aid of imperishable monuments, which, like beautiful blossoms, expand before the eye of the searcher, and attract his attention: The Talmud, on the contrary, relates to a nationality which has ceased to exist, to facts obscure alike in themselves as in the remoteness of the period at which they occurred; and is composed in a language, which, though forcible and expressive, possesses but little attraction. The Talmud presents us with a mass of dead letters only, which must become animated by proper exposition ere they afford any satisfaction, but which eventually will yield that gratification which alone can reward the infinite labour of the translator, or strengthen his zeal and perseverance. Accordingly, we must not feel surprised that the Talmud, although its precepts were in force when Jerusalem was in its glory, and full fifteen hundred years have elapsed since the greater part of the work was composed, has never yet been translated. We have reason to doubt the assertion of the Jochasin, that R. Isaac and R. Joseph Stanis translated the whole of the Talmud into Arabic about the year 1000 of the Christian era. The strict divine who considers the Talmud as a purely theological work, in which he seeks no other expressions or doctrines than those relating to the study of divinity, is liable to fall into and commit great errors when he likewise meets with juridical maxims, philosophical axioms, and historical facts, blended together, and developed in the most singular manner. He soon discovers that he is disappointed in his expectations, his zeal cools, and he readily resigns to another a task which he feels that he could never have truly performed or properly completed.

The linguist who treats the dogmas of the Talmud literally, construes them according to the rules of grammar, and seeks to develop their meaning according to an arbitrary standard, determined, perhaps, by his own prejudices, may probably unfold a beautiful system of reasoning, partly religious and partly logical; but he will never spread a true and clear light over the contents of the Talmud. For who, in an attempt to explain a Ramajan or Mahabharat, or to decypher hieroglyphics, would be swayed by the actual condition of Indians or Egyptians of the present day? Who would presume to judge the doctrines of a Marcion or an Origen according to a vapid orthodoxy of ideas, or subject them to the yoke of perfect slavery to the letter of what they wrote? Could any man correctly judge them, or their doctrines, without due consideration of the whole theological development, without knowing the mental tendencies [which at that time prevailed, or examin-

ing the purposes which each strove to attain, and the ground on which they took their stand? And are we justified in blaming the authors of the Talmud, if they often imitate nature, and envelope the precious but tender fruit in an unsavoury and inedible rind; in order that, while the tasteless shell performs its office, the rich kernel may be sought and found? It is needful that we should absolutely identify ourselves with the genius of that remote age, and its way of thinking, and ever transplant ourselves to those scenes and seats of tyranny and foul oppression, in order to arrive at the truth, and to recognise, in any attempted translation, the faithfulness and verity of the original.

Our translation of the whole Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, which during several years has occupied our undivided labours, together with the Commentaries of Rashi, Tosaphoth, Maimonides, Rabbenu Simeon, and R. Asher, will form twenty-eight volumes large folio. The text of the Mishna will be given with the vowel points complete; and in the text of the Gemara, as well as of the Commentaries, the most careful punctuation will be observed, in order, as much possible, to facilitate this study to the reader. Etymological illustrations will be added on each page, and the improved reading as well of the Gemara as of the Commentaries will be inserted, as appears from the specimen. At the end of each treatise in the Babylonian Talmud, the extract of Rabbenu Asher will be added; to which the same treatise of the Jerusalem Talmud, together with the Commentaries thereon, and our translation, will be subjoined.

From the present progress of our labours, we can with confidence promise that two or three volumes will annually appear, so that the whole of the work will be completed within ten years.

As an introduction and review of the whole Talmud, we have published a "Compendium of the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmud, (Berlin, 1832, 4to,) with a preface, by the Consistorial Counsellor, Professor and Doctor Bellerman. This first part contains the origin, language, and authenticity of the Talmud, the life and actions of one of its principal founders, the geography of all the cities mentioned in the Talmud, with due attention to the principal schools and teachers of the Talmudic age.

Subscribers receive the first of the Compendium immediately, payable on delivery, as are also the parts and volumes as they successively appear, the price of each volume being twenty shillings. The work will be put to press in the commencement of 1835, and be continued with uninterrupted diligence.

Signed,

M. PINNER,

Doctor of Medicine and Philosophy, Member
of the Asiatic Society, Paris.

Berlin, 15th August, 1834.

In a letter which Dr. Pinner, who is at present in London, has addressed to us, he states,—“On a three years’ journey, during which I have visited all the Universities of Germany, France, and Italy, this undertaking (the translation of the Talmud) has raised the most lively interest, and met with the greatest encouragement. Not only do the most learned divines and Orientalists afford it their unqualified support, (vide Leipzig Literary Journal, Number 144, June, 1832, Review of the Compendium, by Professors Rosenmüller and Krug,) but the Monarchs and Princes, to whom I have

had the high honour of being personally presented, have been pleased to subscribe to the work. The present number of subscribers amounts to eight hundred; but two hundred more are required in order to cover the heavy expenditure which the work occasions. I shall be happy to submit the list of Subscribers, together with the Compendium, to those gentlemen who may be pleased to acquaint me with their intention to patronise this work, to my address, No. 31, Great Prescott-street, Goodman's-fields."

While we call the attention of our readers to the above Prospectus, we need hardly add, that the erudite and enterprising translator has our best wishes. Respecting his undertaking, we subjoin the opinion of two competent judges, the learned Professors Rosenmuller and Krug, who, in their Review of the Compendium, say, "To a learned Christian, who does not devote himself, from his boyhood, to the exclusive study of the Talmud, as the Jews do, but who meets with so many branches of learning which claim his attention, it is almost impossible to arrive at a proper and correct understanding of the Talmud in all its parts. The work now before us (the Compendium, &c.) justifies our expectation, that the whole Talmud will become accessible to the student through the labours of a learned and classically educated Jew, who, from his infancy, has zealously occupied himself with the Talmud, of which he now promises us a faithful translation. From the author's intimate acquaintance with his subject, and his extensive philological attainments as evinced in the specimen before us, we expect that his undertaking will be of the most essential service to the Talmudic student."—*Leipziger Literatur Zeitung*, 11th June, 1834.

The list of subscribers is graced with the autograph recommendations of several eminent Rabbies on the Continent.

II. THE MISHNA.

מסכת אבות, *Mescheth Aboth*: "THE ETHICS OF THE FATHERS."

י"ן לבן. COMMENTS BY NAPHITALI HIRTS WESSELY.

(Continued from page 84.)

R. ELEAZAR Hamodai said, "He who profaneth that which is sacred, who despiseth the appointed festivals, who putteth his neighbour to shame in public, who breaketh the covenant of our father Abraham, or expoundeth the law contrary to its true sense, although he may be learned in the law, and perform good deeds, yet will he have no share in the world to come." (III. 15.)

COMMENTARY. *He who profaneth that which is sacred*—There are five classes of atheists whose gradations our teacher indicates by the special offence which he assigns to each. Foremost in reprobation are those who, denying the existence of the Deity, scoff at his holy law, and seek by their ribaldry and scurrility to profane that which all other men consider as most sacred, namely, the glorious attributes of the Most High, and his will as made known by Him, in the law He vouchsafed to reveal to us. The blasphemies such men are in the habit of uttering are too horrid for repetition. The man whose mind is matured by reflection, and who contemplates the wondrous works of nature, every one of which proclaims the power and goodness of the Creator, must feel convinced that a Being so mighty, wise, and beneficent would not leave the most perfect of his terrestrial creatures without some indication of the purpose for which it is called into existence, without some direction for its guidance, how to avoid evil, and do good: And that these directions must be made known to man by direct revelation from the Deity, and cannot possibly emanate from