

A

BRIEF NOTICE

OF

MR. THOMAS TAYLOR,

The celebrated Platonist,

WITH A

COMPLETE LIST OF HIS PUBLISHED WORKS.

“ Unde fit, ut qui, spretis quæ vulgus pravâ rerum æstimatione opinatur, id sentire et loqui et esse audet; quod summa per omne ævum sapientia optimum esse docuit, ille me protinus, sicubi reperiam, necessitate quadam adjungam. Quod si ego, sive naturâ sive meo fato, ita sum comparatus, ut nulla contentione et laboribus meis ad tale decus et fastigium laudis ipse valeam emergere; tamen quo minus qui eam gloriam assecuti sunt, aut eo felicitur aspirant, illos semper colam et suspiciam nec dii puto nec homines prohibuerint.”—MILTON.



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BRIEF NOTICE,

&c. &c.

THIS extraordinary man, distinguished for whatever can adorn the scholar, the gentleman, and the philosopher,—was born in London, on the 15th May, 1758. At a very early age, he was sent to St. Paul's school, and after remaining there about three years, he was placed under the care of a relation, who held a situation in the dockyard at Sheerness, where he resided several years, and assiduously applied himself to the study of mathematics. He subsequently became the pupil of the Rev. Mr. ———, a dissenting minister, possessing considerable classical acquirements, with an intention of completing his studies at Aberdeen; but a premature marriage and pecuniary difficulties compelled him to relinquish his plan, and obliged him to accept a situation in an eminent banking house. While in this employment he commenced his study of Aristotle and Plato, and every hour that could be snatched from the duties of his avocation, was zealously devoted to the acquirement of a thorough knowledge of the abstruse and recondite doctrines of these two great philosophic luminaries,* as developed by Proclus, Simplicius, Olympiodorus, and the other Greek commentators. By the generous and laudable exertions of a few friends, he was enabled to quit his clerkship, and became a private teacher of languages and mathematics. He also filled, for many years, the office of Assistant Secretary to the Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, in which situation he obtained the notice and patronage

* "Those suns of glory, those two lights of men."—SHAKSPEARE.

of the late Duke of Norfolk, and at whose expense Mr. Taylor's invaluable translation of Plato was printed. His latter years have been passed in philosophic retirement; and, although upwards of seventy years of age, he still proceeds with unextinguishable vigor and ardor, in the eminently great and valuable career to which his life has been dedicated; and I trust that he will yet communicate to the world, for the benefit of the uncorrupted and judicious few, many volumes of true science and genuine philosophy.* His unexampled efforts in the dissemination of the ancient philosophy, and the singular felicity with which he has unfolded the recondite doctrines of Plato and Aristotle, entitle him to the grateful thanks of every admirer of the genius and wisdom of antiquity. The tribute of applause which has been so generally paid to his astonishing labors by the discerning *literati* in foreign countries, forms a striking and cheering contrast to the acrimonious scurrility and abusive malevolence with which he has been assailed by the ignorant, the envious, and the bigoted among his own countrymen. Mr. Taylor has nothing remarkable in his exterior; he is of the middle size, well-proportioned, and firmly put together; his countenance is regular, open, and benevolent. There is a dignified simplicity and unaffected frankness of manner about him which are sure to win the affections of all who have the pleasure of seeing him. In his dress he is simple and unpretending; in his conduct irreproachable. Among friends, he is unreserved and sincere; a determined foe to falsehood; and always ready to make sacrifices, when the end to be obtained is worthy of a noble mind. I verily believe, that no man had ever a more passionate love of virtue, a loftier aspiration after truth, or a more vehement zeal for its diffusion. His manners, as already hinted, are peculiarly soft and graceful, alike destitute of

* It affords me very great pleasure to be enabled to state that Mr. Taylor has nearly ready for the press a translation of OCELLUS LUCANUS on the *Nature of the Universe*; to which will be added a translation of a fragment of TAURUS, a Platonic philosopher who flourished under Marcus Antoninus, on the *Eternity of the World*, and also of the *Thema Mundi*, from the *Mathesis* of JULIUS FIRMICUS MATERNUS, in which the position of the stars at the commencement of the several mundane periods is given.

pride, haughtiness, or vanity, which, together with his venerable appearance, never fail to inspire both love and reverence. Being gifted with a very extraordinary memory, he is not only enabled to retain the immense stores of knowledge, which, in the course of a long life, assiduously devoted to study, he has amassed, but to bring them into complete action at his will. Such is the comprehension and vigor of his mind, that it can embrace the most extensive and difficult subjects—such the clearness of his conception, that it enables him to contemplate a long and intricate series of argument with distinctness, and to express it with precision. An acute observer of men and manners, he possesses an inexhaustible fund of anecdote, so that the flow of his familiar chat, the cheerfulness of his disposition, and his easy communicativeness, are as attractive as his mental faculties are commanding. Very rarely has an understanding of such strength and comprehension been found united with a heart so pure and ingenuous. “*Nihil unquam produxit rerum natura, aut pudentius, aut prudentius, aut candidius, aut benignius.*” ERASMUS, EPIST. 14. lib. 4. p. 286. I have the honor to know him most intimately,* and can truly say, that his whole conduct is in perfect harmony with the principles of his sublime philosophy, that his every thought is in accordance with the whole tenor of his blameless life; and that his intentions are wholly unsullied by views of personal interest. I could adduce many splendid instances of his great disinterestedness and singularly amiable disposition; but “*on ne cherche point à prouver la lumière.*” His very profound and extensive mathematical acquirements, his fine poetical taste, and ready powers of harmonious versification, would have raised other men to distinction, but which in him are only the accompaniments of still higher gifts. I regret that my limits compel me to bring my few cursory remarks to an abrupt conclusion; but I do not think that I can more truly and

* “Why should I deny myself the satisfaction I must feel in saying of him here, what of such a man I could say every where, with equal justice and equal triumph? The friendship of this excellent person, believe me, readers, will ever be ranked by me among the sweetest consolations, and the proudest ornaments of my life.”—DR. PARR, *Works*, vol. iii. p. 285.

concisely sum up the character of this great and good man than by applying to him what Shakspeare's Mark Antony says of Brutus.

“ His life is gentle; and the elements
So mix'd in him, that Nature may stand up
And say to all the world, *This is a man.*”

I. *The Hymns of Orpheus.* 12mo. 1787. *Second Edition, considerably augmented.* 1824.

In the Introduction and Notes there is much important information respecting the theology and mythology of the Greeks, derived from ancient sources, and which was here for the first time published in English. In the second edition, which is dedicated to the most learned and enlightened prince in Europe, Mr. Taylor thinks he has incontrovertibly proved, that these Hymns were used in the Eleusinian mysteries. Mr. T. has performed the very difficult task of translating them in a manner that reflects the greatest credit on his abilities, taste, and judgment. His ear for metrical harmony is exceedingly good; and there is a rich, yet varied melody in his versification, which often reminds me of the happiest efforts of Pope. If the reader refers to pp. 24—26, of the masterly Introduction to the second edition, he will find a truly beautiful passage descriptive of the sublime and scientific theology promulgated by Orpheus, Pythagoras, and Plato: and which has been copied nearly verbatim by the author of “THE REV. C. JUDKIN'S ORIENTAL MISSION,” but without giving the slightest hint of the source whence he obtained it. I am sorry to add, that this is not the only instance I have met with of writers freely availing themselves, without acknowledgment, of the inestimable labors of my erudite and philosophic friend.

II. *Plotinus on the Beautiful.* 12mo. 1787.

An excellent and spirited paraphrased translation of one of the most beautiful books of the profound Plotinus; and who, from the exalted nature of his genius, was called

INTELLECT, by his learned contemporaries. This little work has never since been reprinted, and is now very scarce and highly valued.

III. *Proclus on Euclid.* 2 vols. 4to. 1792.

Nothing can be conceived more perfectly rigorous, and at the same time more elegant, than the whole of this inestimable commentary. I need scarcely add, that the conclusions are invariably attained in strict accordance with the purest rules of ancient geometry. I beg to recommend this profound and deeply interesting commentary to the serious perusal of every lover of true science, as one of the most beautiful and ingenious pieces of mathematical research that antiquity has bestowed on us, and as being replete with all the information which the most persevering and enquiring student could demand. The luminous and powerful reasoning of the learned and philosophic translator on the True End of Geometry, cannot fail of affording the liberal and judicious reader much satisfaction and still more instruction. The printed Greek text of this invaluable work is extremely imperfect; but this deficiency is in a great degree supplied in the Latin version by Barocius, of which Mr. T. has avowedly availed himself in his translation.

IV. *The Phædrus of Plato.* 4to. 1792.

There is a considerable difference between the Introduction to this dialogue, and the second edition of it in Mr. T.'s translation of the whole of Plato's works.

V. *Four Dialogues of Plato; viz. The Cratylus, Phædo, Parmenides, and Timæus.* 8vo. 1793.

There are also several things in the Introduction and Notes to these Dialogues, which are not to be found in the second edition of them.

VI. *Sallust on the Gods and the World.* 8vo. 1793.

After the treatise of Sallust, follow some excellent Pythagoric sentences of Demophilus, which are succeeded by five Hymns of Proclus, in the original Greek, with an

English version by Mr. Taylor; and the fifth, which is addressed to Minerva, was first discovered by the translator among the Harleian MSS. in the British Museum; to which are added five original Hymns by the translator.

VII. *Two Orations of the Emperor Julian; one to the Sovereign Sun; and the other to the Mother of the Gods.* 8vo. 1794.

Much novel and valuable information relative to these divinities, and which is derived from ancient sources, is to be found in the Introduction and Notes to this translation; to which is subjoined an original Hymn to Apollo and the Sun.

VIII. *Five Books of Plotinus; viz. 1. On Felicity. 2. On the Nature and Origin of Evil. 3. On Providence. 4. On Nature, Contemplation, and the One. 5. On the Descent of the Soul.* 8vo. 1794.

The Introduction is replete with important additional information on the first, second, third, and fifth of these books. At the end there is an elegant Hymn to Apollo by the translator.

IX. *Pausanias's Description of Greece.* 3 vols. 8vo. 1794. *Second edition, enlarged, 1824.*

The Notes to this delightful work contain a treasury of mythological information, which is no where else to be found collected; and in the second edition there are several additional notes of very great value. Among them are two deserving particular mention: 1. A very full and highly interesting account of the perpetual lamps of the ancients; and, 2. A curious history of human bones of prodigious magnitude which have at various times been discovered. In claiming the indulgence of the liberal reader, Mr. T. states, that he was compelled to translate the whole of this exceedingly difficult work in the short space of ten months.

X. *Aristotle's Metaphysics.* 4to. 1801.

The Introduction to this first edition is more copious than the one prefixed to the second; the subsequent trans-

lation to the whole of Aristotle's works by Mr. T. having rendered it unnecessary to repeat in the latter what is contained in the former edition. There are thirty-five pages of additional Notes in illustration of the Platonic doctrine of Ideas; to which is subjoined an elaborate and scientific Dissertation on Nullities and Diverging Series.

XI. *The Dissertations of Maximus Tyrius.* 2 vols. 12mo. 1804.

In the additional Notes to this excellent work there is much novel and important information concerning Prayer, derived from rare and ancient sources; and also an account of the festivals of the ancients, from Libanius, which had never before been translated into English.

XII. *An Answer to Dr. Gillies.* 8vo. 1804.

Mr. Taylor, in his profound and luminous Introduction to the first edition of his translation to the *Metaphysics* of Aristotle, had indisputably shewn, that Dr. Gillies's novel arrangement of these books displays no less presumption than ignorance,—that his translation has neither the manner, nor frequently the matter, of Aristotle,—that his style, instead of conveying to the reader an idea of the unadorned purity and wonderful compression of that of the “mighty Stagirite,” is pompous and diffuse,—and that he frequently ventures to introduce entire sentences of his own, which are wholly unauthorized by the text. This severe, but just accusation, called forth a violent and scurrilous attack from Dr. Gillies, to which Mr. T. replied in the above masterly and irrefragable pamphlet, in which he convicts the Doctor of taking the most extraordinary and unwarrantable liberties with his original, and of ignorantly and basely calumniating some of Aristotle's best and most faithful interpreters.

XIII. *The Works of Plato.* 5 vols. 4to. 1804,

In the Notes to this great and inestimable Work, Mr. T. has given the substance of the Commentaries of Proclus on the *Parmenides* and *First Alcibiades*; of Olympiodorus on the *Phædo*, *Gorgias*, and *Philebus*, which, at the time of the publication of his *Plato*, were only in MS., but most of which have been since published. The originals of these

Commentaries were copied by him from MSS. in the British Museum and the Bodleian Library of Oxford. He has likewise given copious extracts from the Treatise of Damascius *περι αρχων*, which were also copied by him from the magnificent MS. of this admirable work in the Bodleian Library. To which may be added, that Mr. T., in the additional Notes to this splendid work, has given a translation of nearly the whole of the Scholia of Proclus on the Cratylus, which Scholia were at that time only extant in MS., but have been since published by Boissonade, the celebrated professor of Greek at Paris, and who, in p. 23 of his edition, calls Mr. T. *vir in Platonicorum philosophia versatissimus*.

XIV. *The Works of Aristotle*. 9 vols. 4to. 1812.

This voluminous and elaborate work is a strong and indubitable proof of the translator's extraordinary industry and very great abilities. He persevered in executing it in opposition to a numerous train of unexampled difficulties, and which would entirely have subdued a less resolute spirit. The philosophic reader is indebted for the publication of this magnificent work to the more than princely munificence of William and George Meredith, Esqs. both ardent admirers of the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, and who have patronized the labors of Mr. Taylor with a liberality unparalleled since the days of Medici. I cannot, however, avoid expressing my deep regret at the very limited number (fifty) of copies printed of this *magna mentis opus*, as it is in consequence rendered so exorbitantly dear as to be only within the reach of *hominum beatiorum*. In the Organon, or Logical Treatises, (a volume of 844 pages), Mr. T. has given copious extracts from the Commentary of Ammonius Hermias on the treatise entitled *de Interpretatione*, and also from Simplicius on the Categories. His elucidations from the Commentary of Simplicius on the Physics are still more copious, and contain, in addition to much other valuable matter, extracts from the lost writings of Parmenides, Melissus, Empedocles, Democritus, Anaxagoras, &c. which Simplicius says were very rare even in his time. In the books, On the Heavens, and, On the Soul, the reader will find the substance of the Commentaries of Simplicius on

these treatises. In the treatise likewise *On Meteors*, and, *On Sense and Phantasy*, he will find the *Scholia* of Olympiodorus on the former, and Priscianus on the latter, both of which are replete with peculiarly important information. The *Notes* to the *Metaphysics* contain nearly the whole of the *Commentaries* of Syrianus that are extant, and are a most able and satisfactory defence of the Platonic doctrine of Ideas, against the *apparent* opposition of Aristotle.

XV. *The Six Books of Proclus on the Theology of Plato.*
2 vols. 4to. 1816.

Never have I read a work more replete with wisdom, or more likely to afford sound instruction on the most important subjects. Every sentence is the result of profound and active thought, and cannot fail of producing a powerful and convincing effect upon all liberal and candid minds. In the seventh book, which Mr. T. has added from his own knowledge on the subject, in order to supply the deficiency of another book, which was written by Proclus, but since lost, he appears to have collected all the information he could find relative to the further developement of the theology of Plato. The original of Proclus's *Elements of Theology*, a translation of which is annexed to the above work, has been republished by the very learned Frid. Creuzer, professor of Greek at Heidelberg; who, in the additional *Notes* to his edition, continually quotes Mr. T.'s version of these *Elements*, and adopts nearly all his numerous emendations of the text.

XVI. *Select works of Plotinus.* 8vo. 1817.

The above-mentioned celebrated Professor Creuzer is at present engaged in republishing all the works of Plotinus; and in one of his letters he says, that he frequently uses Mr. T.'s translation, in which he has taught Plotinus to speak in English; and that his own *Annotations* make frequent mention of his opinion of Mr. T.'s lucubrations in a way which he thinks will not displease him. In a subsequent letter he says, that scarcely a day passes in which he does not insert Mr. T.'s name in his *Annotations*.

The *Introduction* contains the substance of Porphyry's

Life of Plotinus; and annexed to the treatises of Plotinus are copious extracts from Synesius on Providence; to which are added forty pages of additional Notes by Mr. T.

XVII. *Iamblichus's Life of Pythagoras.* 8vo. no date.

At the foot of the title-page is an engraved head of Iamblichus, the original of which is to be found at the end of an 18mo. volume, published at Geneva, 1607, consisting of Latin translations of Iamblichus, De Mysteriis, Proclus on the first Alcibiades, &c. &c. What authority there may be for this engraving, I have no means of knowing, but at all events it is ornamental. I take this opportunity of informing my learned friend and the reader, that there is a fine bust of Pythagoras in the Vatican, and that a correct representation of it may be seen in tom. 6, plate 26, *Statue del Museo, Pio Clementino.*

XVIII. *Iamblichus on the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians.* 8vo. 1821.

In translating this work, Mr. T. has given in his Notes many emendations of the text; and in his Introduction, says of Gale, the editor, "that for the most part where philosophy is concerned, he shows himself to be an inaccurate, impertinent, and garrulous smatterer."

XIX. *The Commentaries of Proclus on the Timæus of Plato.*
2 vols. 4to. 1820.

In translating this work, which Fabricius justly calls *opus admirabile*, Mr. T. says, that he has been obliged to make upwards of twelve hundred emendations of the text; and which, he adds, are not *conjectural* but *necessary*, and will be acknowledged to be so by every one who is an adept in the philosophy of Plato. These Commentaries contain some exceedingly interesting information; such as that the Atlantic, beyond the Straits of Gibraltar, was marshy and full of breakers in the time of Plato, owing to the subsidence of the Atlantic Island; that the fixed stars have periodic revolutions on their axes, unknown to the moderns; that every planet has a multitude of satellites, &c. &c.

XX. *Political Pythagoric Fragments, and Ethical Fragments of Hierocles.* 8vo. 1822.

The translator most justly remarks in his Introduction that these Fragments “ must be considered by every one as highly valuable, if their antiquity only is regarded ; but, by the lovers of genuine wisdom, they will be deemed inestimable, as proceeding from the school of the father of philosophy.”

XXI. *Select Works of Porphyry.* 8vo. 1823.

The contents of this volume are : on Abstinence from Animal food ; on the Homeric Cave of the Nymphs ; Auxiliaries to the Perception of Intelligible Natures ; and at the end, Mr. T. has given a developement of the Wanderings of Ulysses, showing that Homer’s narration is allegorical ; and, in so doing, he has availed himself of the authority of the ancients.

XXII. *All the Fragments that remain of the lost Writings of Proclus.* 8vo. 1825.

Among these Fragments, there are five very remarkable instances of persons who have returned to life after they had been for a considerable time buried ; see p. 109. The narration is derived from the MS. Commentary of Proclus on the tenth book of Plato’s Republic.

XXIII. *Cupid and Psyche, from Apuleius.* 8vo. 1795.

XXIV. *The Metamorphosis, and Philosophical Works of Apuleius.* 8vo. 1822.

In addition to that most entertaining and instructive of Romances, the Golden Ass, this volume also contains two admirable treatises of Apuleius ; 1. On the God of Socrates ; 2. On the Philosophy of Plato ; to each of which the learned translator has given copious Notes, replete with the most interesting and valuable information. I beg to call the particular attention of the reader to Mr. T.’s beautiful and satisfactory explanation of the tale of Cupid

and Psyche; the most elegant and philosophical of fables. See p. 88.

XXV. *A Dissertation on the Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries.* 8vo.

A second edition of this work is printed in Nos. 15 and 16 of the Pamphleteer. By the aid of this little volume the philosophic reader will be enabled to form a more correct idea of the true end and design of these celebrated mysteries than he could possibly hope to derive from any other source. Mr. T.'s interpretation is supported and corroborated by very copious extracts from rare and valuable Platonic manuscripts. Dr. Parr, in a note respecting this work, (see his Catalogue, p. 388,) calls Mr. T. "the learned Mystic," and says, that he has been most unjustly derided by Porson and his tribe.

XXVI. *Hederic's Greek Lexicon.* 4to. 1803.

In this edition many words are inserted not found in other modern Lexicons, and an explanation is given of some words agreeably to the Platonic philosophy.

XXVII. *The Elements of the true Arithmetic of Infinities.* 4to.

In this scientific dissertation, the mathematician will find that all the propositions in the Arithmetic of Infinities, invented by the celebrated Dr. Wallis, relative to the summation of Infinite Series, as also the principle of the doctrine of Fluxions, are demonstrated to be false.

XXVIII. *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse.* 12mo. 1805. *Second edition,* 1806.

The principal article in this collection is a beautiful Essay on the Triumph of the Wise Man over Fortune, according to the Doctrine of the Stoics and Platonists.

XXIX. *A Dissertation on the Philosophy of Aristotle.* 4to. 1812.

Mr. T.'s complete and accurate knowledge of the ancient philosophy is amply and unequivocally displayed

in this truly admirable volume, in which the physical and metaphysical dogmas of Aristotle are luminously unfolded. I sincerely confess that this elaborate work has greatly increased my esteem for the Aristotelian philosophy, and at the same time confirmed me in the very high opinion I always entertained of the profound knowledge and eminent talents of its learned and excellent author

XXX. *Theoretic Arithmetic.* 8vo. 1812.

In this exceedingly curious volume will be found all that has been written on this subject by Theo of Smyrna, Nicomachus, Iamblichus, and Boëtius, with some remarkable particulars respecting perfect, amicable, and other numbers; as also a specimen of the manner in which the Pythagoreans philosophized about numbers, and a development of their mystical and theological Arithmetic.

XXXI. *The Elements of a New Arithmetical Notation.* 8vo. 1823.

Although I have not studied this profound treatise with that persevering and long-sustained attention which is absolutely necessary to justify a decided opinion; yet, in the cursory examination I have bestowed on it, I have seen quite sufficient to warrant my recommending it to my scientific readers as a work of considerable elegance, subtlety, and ingenuity.

Le Croix, the celebrated French mathematician, has been commissioned by the Academy to make a report on it.

XXXII. *Collectanea.* 8vo.

This volume of Collections was privately printed for the purpose of distribution among the author's friends.

To Mr. Taylor we are also indebted for the most complete* and valuable collection of the "*Chaldean Oracles*"

* The truth of this assertion is fully acknowledged by the learned Professor Kopp, in the Preface to his edition of Damascius, Περὶ Ἀρχῶν. For he there says, p. 12, "*Ista Oracula Stanleius Historia Philosophiæ inseruit. Eadem plenius dedit Taylor, vir vere Platonicus in Class. Jour.*"

ever published,* the result of many years passed in patient and laborious research, in which he has not only added more than fifty oracles, which had not been noticed by any preceding editor, but has also accurately arranged them conformably to their proper subjects. And this he has done, not from conjecture, but from the authority of those antient philosophers by whom these oracles are cited, and who had in their possession the entire work, of which fragments only at present remain. In addition to these extensive and elaborate works, Mr. T. has communicated many curious and important articles to the *Classical Journal*, and other periodical publications. After surveying such extraordinary labors, I cannot conclude more appropriately than by quoting the words of Milton to Manso:—

*“ Ergo ego te Clivus et magni nomine Phæbi
Munse pater, jubeo longum salvere per ævum!”*

J. J. W.

DECEMBER, 1830.

* *In the Classical Journal, see Nos. 32, 33, 34.*