

ON THE CHINESE VERSION OF THE SCRIPTURES.



TO THE EDITOR OF THE CHINESE REPOSITORY.

Sir,

An article having appeared in your April number for the present year, on the subject of the Chinese version of the Bible, including remarks on the Committee of Delegates, and the secession of the London Society's Missionaries, with the supposed causes which may have led to that event, we feel ourselves called upon, as interested parties, to address to you the following remarks.

On page 221, your correspondent remarks, that "the Committee of Delegates on the revision of the Old Testament (consisting of Revd. Messrs. Medhurst, Bridgman, Milne, Stropach, Shuck, and part of the time, Dr. Boone* and Mr. Culbertson), commenced its labours in August of last year, and proceeded in the revision nearly to the middle of Leviticus."

You then state that "the union of labours was suddenly terminated in February, by the withdrawal of the agents of the London Missionary Society."

And you close by saying, that "the vacancy in the Committee of Delegates caused by the withdrawal of Revd. Messrs. Medhurst and Milne was supplied by the election of Revd. T. MacClatchie from the Shanghai Local Committee: that from Amoy remained vacant. The Committee of Delegates then consisted of Revd. Drs. Bridgman and Boone, and Messrs. Shuck, MacClatchie and Culbertson."

Having copied the above extracts, we will first offer some remarks regarding the constitution of the Committee of Delegates.

Your number for October, 1843, page 552, contains the following resolution, passed at Hongkong in that year.

"That the whole body of Protestant Missionaries do form a General Committee for the purpose of revising the translation of the Scriptures in the Chinese language; and that this Committee be subdivided into local Committees of stations, each to consist of all the Missionaries at that station; that the work of revision be subdivided and apportioned to the several stations.* * * * When the whole

* This is calculated to convey a wrong impression. From August last year to the 19th of February, when the secession took place, the "part of the time" during which Dr. Boone attended was on the first day of the Committee's sitting, when certain rules for the future guidance of the Committee were agreed to; but on no other occasion, from the commencement of the Committee's labours, through the work of revision, and to the middle of Leviticus, did Dr. Boone attend once.

of the New Testament shall have been thus revised, each station shall select one or more of its most experienced men to act as Delegates in a meeting of the General Committee, it being understood that each station will be entitled to one vote only, and these shall be the final judges as to the propriety of each revision.

“That Mr. Medhurst be requested to act as Secretary to the General Committee.”

Your October number for 1850, page 544, contains the following resolutions, passed by the Committee of Delegates, met in Shanghai, December 18th, 1849 :

“1. That the plan of having the existing translation of the Sacred Scriptures portioned out for revision among the local Committees of stations, recommended at the original meeting (at Hongkong in 1843) with reference to the New Testament, be not adopted with regard to the Old.

“2. That the work of revising the versions of the Old Testament in Chinese, be placed in the hands of a Committee of Delegates, who shall be appointed for that purpose by the several local Committees hereinafter to be mentioned, and who shall be the final judges of the version.

“3. That the Protestant Missionaries who are interested in the original plan of revising the Chinese version of the Sacred Scriptures, and located at the following places, viz. Canton, Hongkong, Amoy, Fühchow, Ningpo, and Shanghai, be recommended to form local Committees at their respective stations, which local Committees shall be entitled to send one or more Delegates at their option ; it being understood, however, that the Delegate or Delegates from any one local Committee shall be only entitled to one vote.”

In accordance with these resolutions, the Protestant Missionaries stationed at the above-named places did form themselves into six several local Committees, and passed resolutions regarding the constitution of their own body, together with the time and place at which the Delegates should meet and commence business. According to the majority of votes from these stations, it was determined that the Delegates should meet at Shanghai, as soon after the 1st of July 1850, as practicable.

According to the original plan for revising the Chinese version of the Sacred Scriptures, therefore, the *whole body* of Protestant Missionaries did form themselves into a General Committee ; and this Committee was subdivided into local Committees of stations, each to consist of all the Missionaries at that station. In practice the principle of carrying measures by the majority has been distinctly recognized. Without a majority of stations in favour of the measure, the Delegates for the Revision of the Old Testament could not have met in Shanghai, in the summer of 1850 ; and without a majority in favour of their so doing, they cannot consistently continue their sittings.

According to your April number for 1851, it appears that all “the Missionaries of the London Missionary Society stationed at Shanghai,” six in number, “withdrew from the Shanghai local Committee of the Protestant Missionaries, interested in the original plan for revising

the Chinese version of the Old Testament : and that Messrs. Medhurst and Milne, who had hitherto sat as part of the Delegation appointed by the six stations in China, for the revision of the Old Testament, withdrew from the Committee of Delegates, and handed in their resignation to the Shanghai Local Committee, by which they had been elected." The Missionaries belonging to the London Missionary Society stated at the same time, that "they would not consider themselves as represented in any Committee of Delegates, for the work of translating the Old Testament in Chinese, who had been or might be appointed by the agents of any other Society."

On the 3rd of March, 1851, a meeting of the London Society's Missionaries, three in number, was held at Hongkong, when it was resolved :—

I. That they should withdraw from the Hongkong Local Committee of the Protestant Missionaries, interested in the original plan for revising the Chinese version of the Old Testament.

II. That Dr. Legge, one of their number, who had been appointed a Delegate from the Hongkong Local Committee, to the Committee of Delegates appointed by the six stations in China, for the revision of the Old Testament, should be requested to hand in his resignation to the Hongkong Local Committee, by which he had been elected.

III. That the said Missionaries would not consider themselves as represented in any Committee of Delegates, for the work of translating the Old Testament into Chinese, who had been or might be appointed by the agents of any other Society.

On the 12th March, 1851, a meeting of the Hongkong Local Committee for the revision of the Sacred Scriptures into Chinese was held : present, Messrs. Legge, Hamberg, Lobschied, Cole and Hirschberg, when the Revd. Messrs. Legge and Hamberg begged to resign their appointments as Delegates of the Local Committee ; and Mr. Hirschberg, his Secretaryship, while all present begged to withdraw from the Committee altogether.

The following is contained in a letter from Amoy, dated March 30th, 1851.

" To the Revd. John Stronach.

" Dear Brother,

" Your letter of February 20th, in which you resign your office as the Delegate from the Amoy Local Committee for the translation of the Old Testament Scriptures into Chinese, was read at our meeting of the 4th current.

" In the circumstances of the case, we could not do otherwise than accept of your resignation, and express our gratitude for the important services you have rendered on our behalf, whilst acting as our Delegate.

" At the same meeting, the Missionaries of the London Missionary Society, and of the English Presbyterian Mission (i. e. all who were present, four in number), withdrew from the Local Committee.

" I remain, Sincerely Your's,

" THOMAS GILFILLAN,

" Secretary (quondam) of the Amoy Local Committee."

It appears also, that a meeting has been held of the Fühchow Local Committee, in which they came to something like the following resolutions :—That it is the duty of Missionaries residing in a given locality to translate the Scriptures into the language used by the people among whom they dwell ; that the Missionaries at Fühchow do therefore form themselves into a separate body, for translating the Scriptures for the people of that city ; and that they dissolve their connection with the General Committee, formed in China for that purpose. A copy of these resolutions not being before us, we can only give their general import. The Missionaries at Fühchow have no Delegate at Shanghae.

We are informed that a meeting has been held, since February last, at Canton, on the subject of the revision of the Old Testament Scriptures in Chinese, when two unordained Missionaries voted for a new version being made, and that their present Delegate continue at Shanghae. Two ordained Missionaries negatived both these propositions ; another declined voting ; another has since joined the noncontents. One Missionary was absent at Macao, and the Missionary belonging to the London Missionary Society, labouring at Canton, sent in his resignation as a member of the Local Committee, in the same way as the other agents of the same institution had done.

On reviewing the above, it appears that the agents of the London Missionary Society, residing at Shanghae, Amoy, Canton and Hongkong have all withdrawn from the Committees interested in the original plan for revising the Chinese version of the Old Testament.

Two Local Committees (Amoy and Hongkong) have formally withdrawn from the association. Another (Fühchow) is reported to have seceded. If the majority of the Missionaries at a fourth station (Canton) be not actually averse to it, they are at least divided as to the duty of going on with the version, and sustaining their Delegate. One third of the Missionaries at a fifth station (Shanghae) have withdrawn themselves from the Local Committee. At a sixth station (Ningpo), four or five Missionaries have stood aloof from the movement according to the original plan altogether. Attention ought also to be drawn to the secession of *Delegates*. Three in Shanghae, and two in Hongkong have formally resigned their office. Two others at Fühchow have virtually seceded from the Committee ; so that only *four* out of the *eleven* of those originally chosen are left.

We here repeat our observation that the affairs of the General Committee have hitherto been managed by a majority of the six stations : it was only by such majority, that the meeting of the Old Testament Delegates was decided to be held at Shanghae, in the summer of the past year. (See Repository, vol. xix. page, 545.)

It was on the same principle, that the Committee on the Old Testament was relieved from any further discussion on a most perplexing question ; as we see from the following preamble and resolution, proposed by Dr. Boone, and seconded by Mr. Stronach, on the very first day of meeting, August 1st, 1850 :

“ Whereas, a majority of the Committees at the local stations having determined that the rendering of the words *El, Eloah, Elohim* and *Ruach*, shall be excepted from the decision of the Committee of De-

legates, &c. it is therefore resolved : That this Committee * * * * will offer each successive portion of the Old Testament, as it shall be completed by them, to the Bible Societies of Europe and America, &c. leaving the words *El, Eloah, Elohim, and Ruach*, untranslated. * * * The Committee feel themselves as a body, released from the responsibility of making any decision with respect to the rendering of these words, by the action of the majority of the local Committees, by which action, the right to render these words is withheld from the Committee." See Chinese Repository, vol. xix. page 547.

This being the principle upon which the Committee has acted from the very first, what other principle can now guide them? and if they bow to the majority of the local Committees, what alternative is left for them, but to declare that the basis, on which the Committee for the revision of the Old Testament was formed, is broken up, and that the name of the Committee of Delegates is no longer sustainable.

No one can have the slightest objection to the gentlemen named on page 224 of your April number, meeting together to translate the Old Testament Scriptures into Chinese. But let their association be called by the right name. They may be Committee of Delegates from certain Missionaries at Shanghai, Ningpo and Canton, but they certainly are not from all of them neither are they in any respect, Delegates from Amoy, Hongkong and Fühchow. They should not therefore call themselves "the Committee of Delegates," or if they do, the public ought to be informed by whom they are delegated, and how different the constitution of their present Committee is from that which previously met under that name.

The principal object of the present letter however, is to call attention to your correspondent's remark, on the conduct of the London Society's Missionaries, while they sat on the Committee of Delegates, both for the Old and the New Testaments. The causes which led to the withdrawal of the London Missionary Society's agents, your correspondent says is unknown to him, but, as if he would suggest what might be one of the causes leading to that result, he says "in the letter from the Committee of Delegates written to the B. and F. Bible Society, after their (i. e. the London Society's Missionaries) secession, the principles of translation adopted by them (the said Missionaries) are stated to have been such as their associates did not approve." Further on, your correspondent observes : "In the letter above referred to, it is remarked that this difference of opinion had become so marked as to jeopard the further harmonious action of the Committee."

From the above it is evident, that a letter has been written by a body calling itself the Committee of Delegates, to a public body (the B. and F. Bible Society) regarding the principles of translation adopted by the London Society's Missionaries. That the remarks in the letter above referred to were prejudicial to the said Missionaries is evident, because it is said, that "their associates did not approve of their principles of translation," and that "this difference of opinion had become so marked, as to jeopard the further harmonious action of the Committee." Here we ask, was it fair, was it honourable in the

so-called Committee of Delegates, to remark disapprovingly upon the principles adopted by their former associates, in a letter to a public body with which they both wish to stand on good terms, without giving those associates a sight of the letter, and affording them an opportunity of defending themselves; leaving them to glean a few scattered hints of what had been written from the pages of a periodical, four months after the date?

It does not appear from your correspondent, what were the principles of translation adopted by the London Society's Missionaries, or wherefore they were disapproved of; whether their principles were too close or too free. As your correspondent seems to be well acquainted with the proceedings of the Committee of Delegates, perhaps he could inform us, what action was taken by the Committee regarding principles of translation;—what resolution they have on their books respecting such principles;—or if their associates disapproved of the principles of translation adopted by the London Society's Missionaries, what record there is of such disapproval. We know of none; if verbal objections were made to individual renderings, they were always discussed in Committee; if valid, approved of; and if unsustained, rejected. But no record exists of disapproval by the other Delegates of the principles of translation adopted by the London Society's Missionaries.

On page 221, your correspondent says, "Some difference of views existed among the members (of the Committee of Delegates), regarding the best style to be adopted in the work." This is a very different question from principles of translation, though your correspondent confounds the two on page 223. The undersigned are mentioned as having sat on the Committee of Delegates from August, 1850, to the 19th of February last, but they know nothing of such difference of views regarding the best style to be adopted in the work. The subject was never brought up for discussion in the Committee of Delegates, nor was any resolution regarding it ever recorded by them.

In March, 1850, a majority of the Shanghai Local Committee passed the following resolution: "That our Delegates be instructed to advocate the employment, in the version of the Old Testament now contemplated, of a plain and simple style of translation, such as can be read and understood by men of moderate education." Although this resolution was placed before all the other stations, it was not sustained by any of them. On the contrary, the Hongkong station voted that the Delegates should be left to follow their own discretion. When the Delegates for the Old Testament met in the beginning of August last, Dr. Boone and Mr. Shuck, who had voted for the resolution passed in the Shanghai Local Committee, being Delegates from Shanghai, had a fair opportunity of bringing forward the views of their constituents on the style to be adopted, but they remained perfectly silent, and the understanding pervading the minds of all was, that the style to be adopted in the Old should be in conformity with that already employed in the New, according to the standing resolution of the original meeting at Hongkong in 1843.

The differences of opinion, however, whether real or supposed, as to style or principles of translation, adopted in the translation of the Old Testament, could not have been the cause of the withdrawal of the London Society's Missionaries, as suggested by your correspondent; because, as he says himself, quoting the letter of Mr. Milne, "this was the only alternative left them, by instructions received from the Directors of their Society." He says further, "that an interval of seven months occurred between the date of the resolution of the Directors and its being acted on in China." The withdrawal took place on the 19th February, 1851; seven months previous to that would bring the date back to July, 1850; at which time the Committee of Delegates on the Old Testament had not met in Shanghai, and it could not have been known, what principles of translation or style would be adopted by the London Society's Missionaries, or whether the same would have been approved or disapproved of by their associates.

We come now to the consideration of what your correspondent has said regarding the version of the New Testament: "A difference of opinion existed among the members of the Committee respecting the best style to be adopted in the new translation; and even in the New Testament, where the classical style had been attempted, great doubts were felt as to its adaptation to the capacity of the great mass of readers." There are two things clearly deducible from the above paragraph; first, that in the New Testament the classical style was attempted; and secondly, that great doubts were felt as to its adaptation to the capacity of the great mass of readers.

We shall not stop here to point out the difference between a classical style in Chinese, and the style of the Chinese classics. We reserve this for the close. We believe that there is a great difference; that the former ought to be attempted, and attained by those who would write acceptably, and even intelligibly for the Chinese; that the latter is neither to be desired nor acquired by moderns, especially by foreigners. We wish to draw attention more especially to two questions, 1st, Who attempted the classical style in the version of the New Testament? and 2dly, Who felt doubts as to its adaptation to the capacity of the great mass of readers? The translators were Messrs. Medhurst, Stronach, and Milne, associated with Drs. Boone and Bridgman. Dr. Boone never attended as a translator, except for a few days, when the translators were engaged on the first 23 verses of the 1st chapter of Matthew, and half a day afterwards. The charge of attempting the classical style therefore must rest either on Messrs. Medhurst, Stronach and Milne, or on Dr. Bridgman. As we believe, from evidence afterwards to be adduced, that Dr. Bridgman is the writer of the article in your April number, we will not suppose that he is the individual referred to. As Messrs. Medhurst, Stronach and Milne have resolved, when they proposed to go on with the translations of the Old Testament, unconnected with the agents of any other Institution, "that as far as practicable, they would adopt in the Old Testament, the style which, when associated with

the Revd. Dr. Bridgman, they adopted in the translation of the New," and have thus, as it were, based their future credit on what they had already done, we will suppose that the charge is intended to be levelled against them.

But it will not be so easy to settle by whom the great doubts in question were felt; particularly as they were never expressed in the hearing of the Committee, nor in any way brought before the attention of those more immediately concerned. We will suppose, however, that these great doubts were felt by Drs. Bridgman and Boone. But why, if they felt them, did they not express them? and how, if they felt and did not give expression to these doubts in Committee, can they reconcile their conduct to the claims of conscience, and to their duty towards their constituents? Dr. Bridgman was a Delegate from the united station of Canton and Hongkong, and represented the interests of a large body of Missionaries. He met daily in Committee, or as often as his health permitted. He entered freely into discussion with the other members of the Committee on principles of translation, and on the quality of particular renderings; why did he never breathe a syllable of disapprobation regarding the style adopted by the translators? why did he not raise his voice against the attempted imitations of classical phraseology? why did he himself recommend a phrase entirely in the classical style, which was adopted in that and all similar cases? was it to shew his disapproval of the classical style, or to confirm his fellow-labourers in the prosecution of a principle, regarding the adaptation of which, to the great mass of readers, he felt great doubts?

But why Dr. Boone did not express and urge his doubts, if he felt them, we are still more at a loss to divine. He did not attend, but the manuscripts were regularly sent him: indeed he procured copies of what was done, to be forwarded to Fühchow. He either read them or he did not. If he did not, he cannot be considered a suitable judge. If he read the various books of the New Testament, as they were revised, he must have approved of them or not. His silence would argue that he did: but we have reason to infer his approval on other grounds. When the revision of the New Testament had almost approached its completion, in the spring of 1850, Dr. Boone entered into a lengthened correspondence with one of his fellow Delegates, on the property of the version; contending that it did not belong to those who had laboured to complete it, but to those who had deputed them to that work, viz. the whole body of Protestant Missionaries in China. "If any one, said he, were to propose to fill the blank for *Theos* with Shang-te, I cannot act in any other way than to oppose any one's using this version, to teach men to worship Shang-te. Should any one propose to use Shang-te as the rendering of *Theos* in it, I should protest against his doing so, and call the attention of all the owners of the property to the use he was about to make of it. If the owners said no, said individual could have no right to use other men's property against their will. Should any refuse to listen to our protest, and reject our appeal to the owners, or some

umpire, he would violate our rights in this version." Here we have reference to property, to owners, to rights, and to a protest against the use of such property to the violation of such rights ; now men do not generally contend about property which they undervalue. If "great doubts were felt as to the adaptation of the version to the great mass of readers," why did Dr. Boone contend about a right to it? if its utility was likely to be so circumscribed, why did he not let it go, as of questionable value, and allow those who esteemed it, to obtain it? But no such thing was even hinted at; and the inference is, that Dr. Boone, at that time, considered that a property for which he thought it worth his while to contend so sharply, was worth contending for.

On the 30th of January, 1850, a letter was addressed to the Protestant Missionaries in China, containing the following paragraph: "Some of us have been employed in preparing a version of the New Testament, which is, as far as we can make it, philologically correct: the insertion of such a word (*viz.* Shin) in it, as a translation of *Theos*, would, we conceive, render the whole work unclassical and contemptible."

Dr. Boone, animadverted upon this paragraph, in the January number of the Repository for the present year. Now it appears to us, that that was a favourable opportunity for the distinct avowal of his disapprobation of the classical style attempted in the translation of the New Testament, if he felt such disapprobation. He might have said, We do not wish to make the work classical; we would rather have it "adapted to the capacity of the great mass of readers." This aim at "philological correctness" spoils it for general utility. Instead of this, Dr. Boone brings forward the supposed prayer of Keying, (since proved to have been surreptitiously introduced into a work falsely ascribed to that statesman,) as an *answer* to the assertion, that "the whole work would be rendered unclassical and contemptible." As he did not attack the classical style, when he had so fair an opportunity, we are disposed to think that, up to that period, he had not felt the great doubts of which your correspondent speaks.

Further, Dr. Boone proposed, on the 1st of August, 1850, the following resolution, showing that he considered the version at that time so far complete, and was anxious to defend it against any alteration, except by the Delegates themselves:—

"The Committee of Delegates, engaged on the version of the translations of the New Testament in Chinese, having now *completed* their work, * * * do hereby resolve: that the version, *as it now stands*, be offered to the Bible Societies of Europe and America, and to all and every one of the Protestant Missionaries engaged in the work of evangelizing China; with the understanding that all parties, who shall make use of the version, *shall refrain from altering the text*, as now given out by this Committee, who reserve to a majority of their own body, the right to make any alteration therein."

Does this look like the statement of a man who had great doubts, &c? Surely if Dr. Boone entertained such great doubts, as to the adaptation of the version to the capacity of the great mass of readers, he took the strangest method of intimating the same to the Bible Socie-

ties of Europe and America, and to the Protestant Missionaries engaged in the evangelization of China.

But the strongest evidence that Dr. Boone approved of the Delegates' version, and deprecated the issuing of any other, is found in the fact, that to avoid the issuing of more versions than one, he voluntarily gave up a point, which was to him of great consequence. It is well known that there was a strong contest among the Delegates, as to the proper mode of rendering *Theos* and *Pneuma*. Two were for translating these words one way, and two another; when they found that they could not agree, they mutually resolved to leave them blank, and to go on translating to the close. They did so, and the New Testament was completed: the question then arose, what was to be done with the work? Print it with blanks they could not; nor could the Committee agree about filling up the blanks. One party would not yield to the other, to have the blanks filled up in a way that they could not approve of, and thus deprive themselves of the benefit of the version. In this extremity, we on the one side proposed that the manuscript copy of the version should be placed at the disposal of the Bible and Missionary Societies with their agents, allowing each and all to fill up the blanks in any way they thought proper. Dr. Boone objected to this arrangement, saying that some might think proper to fill up the blanks in a way that would be disagreeable to him, and as he expressed it, injurious to the cause of Christ in China. Dr. Boone seemed to be apprehensive, likewise, lest others, when they found that they could not get the version to fill in the blanks as they wished, would take it, and making a sufficient number of alterations to constitute it in many points different from the Delegates' version, would publish it with such alterations, and with the blanks filled in as they desired: in order, therefore, to prevent this evil of different versions of the same book, he withdrew his opposition to the giving out of the version with blanks, and proposed the following resolution:

“The vote of the members of the Committee of Delegates being equally divided on the rendering of the words *Theos* and *Pneuma*, this version must either leave their hands, with the blanks that have been left for these words, or be laid aside as useless, unless an appeal be taken to some other parties to fill those blanks, to which appeal this Committee cannot agree. Under these circumstances, being fully persuaded that several parties will issue, on their own responsibility, versions that differ in the rendering of the words *Theos* and *Pneuma*, and believing that said diversity of rendering will cause less injury, *if all parties use the same version*, instead of having *different versions*, as well as various renderings of these important words: the Committee of Delegates resolve, as before mentioned, to offer the version as it now stands, to the Bible Societies of Europe and America; throwing upon said parties, all the responsibility of any action with respect to the version thus offered to them, which they may severally deem it best to take, for the spread of the Gospel in China, &c.” Nothing can be plainer from the above, than that Dr. Boone, at that time, was satisfied with the Delegates' version as it stood, that he contemplated no other, that he even deprecated the

issuing of various versions, and that, in order to avoid this, he proposed that the version should be given out with the blanks, for each individual to fill up in any way he pleased. If, therefore, the great doubts, spoken of by your correspondent, were harboured by Dr. Boone, during the time that the New Testament version was in progress, his conduct in the whole affair is to us strange, inconsistent, and inexplicable.

After the translation of the New Testament was completed, and published (one edition of it through Dr. Boone's instrumentality), he had occasion to meet with the translation Committee, in order to settle what should appear on the title-page of one edition; but not a syllable was then uttered by him, as to the too classical character of the style, nor the least hint thrown out, that possibly it might be necessary to get up another version, in which the style should be more simplified. Putting these things together, therefore, it seems most improbable, that the great doubts alluded to should have been felt by him.

We come now to the consideration of the question, as to who your correspondent in the April number of the Repository is. On the 19th June last, we addressed a letter, through our Secretary, to the Revd. Dr. Bridgman, in which we asked:—

“1. If you are aware of the authority, on which the statements (referred to) by the writer in the Repository were made. 2. If you will furnish us with the name or names of the said authority. 3. If you are cognizant of any letter having been written by any party to the B. and F. Bible Society, with contents as signified in the Repository. 4. If you yourself gave countenance to any such letter to the Bible Society. 5. And if so, upon what ground you have thought fit to keep us totally in the dark, regarding proceedings that affect us so vitally; leaving us to gain information thereof, through the medium of a public periodical, about four months after the fact has transpired.

“We trouble you with these inquiries, 1st, because you are personally connected with us in the New Testament translation; and 2dly, during its existence, you had a seat with us also in the Committee of Delegates, engaged in the revision of the Old Testament.”

To this note, Dr. Bridgman replied, on the 21st June, as follows:—
“The Editor of the Repository can best inform you what letters he has received.

“You are aware, I presume that others, as well as I, hold sentiments like those quoted in your note. * * * * *

“Since your withdrawal, the Committee of Delegates have written to the Bible Societies, and to the local Committees; that they have not written to you, may be accounted for, perhaps, on the ground that they have received no communication from the Committee of which you are Secretary.”

Our Committee again addressed Dr. Bridgman, on the 21st to the following effect:—

“In reply to the note, we addressed you two days ago, you say, ‘The Editor of the Repository can best inform you what letters he

has received ?' It is to us matter of regret, that in dealing with so plain an inquiry, you have not only avoided giving a direct answer, but have written in such a strain as to force upon us the suspicion, that 'thou art the man.'

"Setting aside, however, the question as to the authority, on which those remarks in the Repository are given, you leave us no room for doubting, that they are at least the echo of your own views and sentiments ; for you say, 'you are aware that (others as well as) I hold sentiments like those quoted in your note.'

"Now in reply to this avowal of yours, we must, in the first place, record our distinct denial of any previous information of your doubts, either as to the 'adaptation of the style of the New Testament to the capacity of the great mass of readers,' or as to the best style to be adopted in the new translation of the Old Testament ; for not only have we the most vivid recollection of expressions being used by yourself, in decided commendation of the style of the New Testament translation, but you will find by referring to the printed minutes of the original meeting in Hongkong (in 1843), that the style of the Old Testament was to be in conformity to that of the New.

"With regard to your declaration, that the article in the Repository expresses your views, you must allow us to remark, in the second place, that these sentiments are given in such a manner, as to lead any reader to suppose, that however ignorant the informant of the Repository professed to be, of 'the real causes which led to the withdrawal of the London Society's Missionaries,' he surmised that one, if not the chief cause was, that 'the principles of translation adopted by them, were such as their associates did not approve.' That such was the reason of our withdrawal we deny ; and that you should in any form give countenance to a statement like that, occasions no little surprise in our minds. You must also be quite well aware, that there is no record upon the journal of the Committee of Delegates, before its breaking up, of any disapproval of the principles of translation adopted by the London Society's Missionaries. So that, for you or any party, or person, to give publicity to such statements (whether in a periodical, or in letters to the Bible Societies), without also communicating with us on the subject, we cannot but regard as unfair and uncandid.

"The closing paragraph of your letter is an attempt at some sort of reply to an inquiry (which we threw out rather as an interjection of astonishment), how you could ever think of keeping us ignorant of a letter having been written to the Bible Society containing expressions, such as those published in the Repository ; you say, that they (i. e. the authors of the letter) have not written to you, may be accounted for perhaps on the ground, that they have received no communication from the Committee of which you are the Secretary. But if we mistake not, common prudence, as well as candour, would have suggested that, although such person or persons may have received no communication from this Committee, they were in honour bound, first to explain to us (before committing to writing or to print), the course which they intended to pursue, in explaining to the public the causes of the withdrawal of the London Society's Missionaries,

or in publishing reflections upon the conduct of a Committee, in which those agents occupied a very prominent place."

To the above communication, the following reply was received from Dr. Bridgman, dated June 23rd.

"At the time of your withdrawal, we asked for the *reasons* of your doing so; but none were given, except that that was the only alternative. Now it so happens, that I have never, that I remember, expressed any surmise, regarding what might have been the motives or reasons which led to that course. If the Editor of the Repository entertained any 'surmises,' he, I doubt not, will be quite ready to give reasons for so doing.

"From the fact that I do not refer to other points in your letter, I beg you not to infer that I do not take *strong* exceptions thereto."

This is the last note we have received from Dr. Bridgman; and, as we can get no satisfaction from him, we are compelled to resort to the expedient of addressing you, and of publishing our letter.

Before closing, however, we will now bring forward the evidence upon which we ground the charge we have made against Dr. Bridgman, as being the source from whence the information contained in the April number of the Repository is drawn.

First, that article contains a copy of "the resolutions passed in London, which were forwarded to the Committee of Delegates, by the Revd. George Browne, Secretary of the Board of Revisors of the Chinese New Testament, connected with the British and Foreign Bible Society, accompanied with a short note, in which he remarks," &c.

Now these resolutions, and especially the short note accompanying them, were addressed to the Revd. Dr. Bridgman, as Secretary of the Committee of Delegates on the New Testament. It was therefore the property of said Committee, and entrusted to the Secretary with the other documents belonging to the Committee. That Committee never authorized their Secretary to make this part of their correspondence public: yet here we find it in a monthly periodical. How came it there? Either it must have been inserted by the Secretary, without the authority of the Committee, or it must have been surreptitiously obtained by some other person who has corresponded with the Editor of the Repository. We cannot easily believe that a fraud has been practiced. Dr. Bridgman must, therefore, have communicated it to the Repository, which identifies him with the authorship of the article.

The same article contains another "note signed by the Revd. Mr. Milne," and received by the Recording Secretary of the Committee of Delegates on the Old Testament. That Recording Secretary is Dr. Bridgman. Again we ask, how came this note also into the hands of the correspondent of the Repository? unless the Recording Secretary (to whom it was addressed, and in whose keeping it was deposited), and the correspondent of the Repository constitute one and the same individual. The charge of authorship is thus, we presume, brought home to the Revd. Dr. Bridgman, who had better have acknowledged it at once, and not force others to prove it before all.

We subjoin a few remarks regarding Chinese style, of which there are several varieties.

First, there is the *antiquated style* of the ancient classics, in which the Delegates do not pretend to have written, and in which if they had attempted it, they could not have drawn up the version.

Secondly, there is the *classical style*, in which the commentaries on the sacred books are written, as well as all works making the least claim to correctness, propriety, and chasteness, in regard to composition; such as works on history, moral philosophy, political economy, geography, natural history, and medicine. All the sects of religion in China have employed this style, in elucidating doctrines or inculcating duties; all foreigners attempting to introduce their religious views into China have done the same, whether the Jews or Mohammedans, or Nestorians, or Roman Catholics; all proclamations and notices, regarding government or commerce, indeed all shop-bills and advertisements, which are pasted on city walls, house doors, temple gates, &c. &c., are without exception in this style; it is in fact *the chaste and correct style of the language*, and no person would deem his productions fit for the public gaze and worthy of perusal, who did not write in this style. The Delegates therefore aimed at the chaste and correct style above described, without a dissentient voice having been raised against it by a single member of their body. The Chinese are in the habit of committing much to memory, but they would never think of committing to memory anything that was not written in the above style. Its peculiarity is strength and conciseness; but conciseness in Chinese does not necessarily involve obscurity; on the contrary, the profuse employment of words, sometimes renders a sentence obscure, and the reader has frequently more difficulty in comprehending a verbose than a concise composition. The Delegates on the New Testament have endeavoured to employ a scholar-like style, which while it offends not the good taste of the literati, is readily intelligible to the mass of the people, or to those at least who have any acquaintance with letters. As it respects plainness, the Delegates have no objection to place their version side by side with the commonest document, which is at the same time correctly drawn up, and intended to communicate information and instruction to the people, and (except as far as the newness of the doctrine, or the strangeness of the allusions contained in Scripture, make it obscure), they feel confident that their version will be found equally intelligible. The Delegates are by no means certain that the style which they have employed will be so readily understood by foreigners, only partially acquainted with the Chinese language; but as they did not write for such, they have no need to concern themselves regarding any difficulty they may find in comprehending it. Some foreigners would no doubt prefer to see the New Testament translated in such a style as has been employed by Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese, in the Scriptures and tracts hitherto published by them: which, for the sake of distinction, we may denominate the *foreign style*, or as Sir John Davies calls it, the *Missionary style*. We would say then, let the Delegates' version, together with a work in the said foreign style, be placed in the hands

of Chinese, not previously acquainted with our system, and if they understand the latter better than the former, the Delegates will readily confess, that they have mistaken the matter, and will with all humility and diligence, proceed to remodel the whole of what they have written. But if the version which they have produced, be drawn up in the usual style of all approved works, and be such as any native, familiar with standard authors, can readily understand, we would say, that is just the style which should have been chosen, and the style which should continue to be employed in the translation of the Old Testament.

Thirdly, there is the *free style* of the novels. Works written in this style are loose and diffuse, resembling what we should denominate in English *light reading*; and are called by the Chinese *seaou-shwō*, or small talk. In this style, no sober writer draws up his composition, and persons who are fond of reading works in such a style, are condemned by Chinese moralists. The Delegates felt that it would be beneath the dignity of the Sacred writings, and be likely to damage the reputation of the work, if it were drawn up in such a style; they therefore avoided it.

They have also avoided the use of mere colloquialisms, which are called by the Chinese *t'hoo*, provincialisms, and *sūh*, vulgarities; while they have endeavoured, as much as possible, to set forth the meaning of Scripture in such expressions as are sanctioned by the best authors. It has been said, that 'to the poor the Gospel is preached,' and that the poor form the majority of the population, on which account we ought to adapt our style to the comprehension of the poorest and meanest in the land. This we admit, but not to an extent whereby we should sacrifice chasteness and propriety: the Créole version of the New Testament has found but little favour, and although it might have been approved of by the half-informed persons for whom it was designed, we think it would have been better to have aimed at raising them up, so as to understand the simple, but dignified style of the English version, rather than sink the majesty of Scripture, by adapting its expressions to the usage common among Creoles.

Fourthly, there is the *conversational style*, called the Mandarin colloquial. A specimen of this is to be met with in the paraphrase of the Sacred Edict, translated by Dr. Milne. The Sacred Edict itself consisted of sixteen aphorisms, delivered by one emperor, and enlarged upon by his successor, in the same number of essays, written in a chaste and correct style, much admired by the literati: these were subsequently paraphrased by a Mandarin, in a very colloquial style, resembling the slang employed about the public offices. It is not however, to be confounded with the official style, which is as concise as that employed in books. Regarding the style employed by the Mandarin, Dr. Milne, in his preface to his Sacred Edict, remarks: "Wang-yew-po wrote a paraphrase on the whole book, and simplified the style. By numerous proverbs, quaint sayings, colloquial phrases, and provincialisms, he rendered the sense easy, and the style acceptable, to the people; for in every country, we find, that these qualities, though not approved by the learned,

take much with others, and have a certain point and force, which would in some measure be lost, were the same ideas expressed in a more elegant and finished style." See Preface to Milne's Sacred Edict, pages viii, ix. We are not aware of any other work, of a moral or hortatory character, written in such colloquial style, and as it stands alone, uncountenanced by writers of any school, the Delegates never once entertained the thought of imitating it in the version of the New Testament.

We may, in conclusion, refer to some opinions, which have been expressed by others regarding the style of the Chinese version of the New Testament.

In the Repository for August, 1850, page 464, the Editor says, "So far as we have examined the revised version, it is decidedly superior to former ones, for clearness of style and close translation, and with a few corrections can safely be offered to the Chinese as a fair rendering of the New Testament."

In the October number for the same year, page 548, a correspondent (whom we deem to be identical with the correspondent in the April number of 1851.) says, "We rejoice to know that several very able and competent judges have declared themselves highly pleased with the version."

Dr. Legge, speaking of the version of the New Testament, says, "I admire, the style of the new version highly; I am charmed with it; the old translations are not worthy to come into mind along with it." Writing regarding the intended version of the Old Testament, he says, "Our local Committee thought of a resolution on the style to be adopted for the Old Testament, and it was proposed to instruct their Delegates to make the best version they could, and to advise all the other Delegates to do the same. Let the style be befitting the subject, idiomatic, and without any pedantry of unusual words; if these be avoided, then the better the style, the more classical in its finish, the more plain will it be to the mass of people who can read. I admire the conciseness of good Chinese exceedingly, and say, be as concise as you can, only do full justice to the ideas of the original." We again quote the Repository vol. xix. page 548, "A variety of opinions there doubtless will be; and it will be strange indeed if all are favourable. We say, give it a full and fair trial; and to such as have the ability we say, improve it all you can." To this we add, that we shall be glad of suggestions and remarks as to particular renderings, and thankfully avail ourselves of them; but the *general style* we think the best that has yet been constructed, and until we can discover a better, shall retain it. Others may, if they please, construct versions in the *patois*, or the *colloquial*, but if we want the Bible ever to be regarded as a *book* in Chinese, not to say *the book*, it must be drawn up in a *chaste and correct style*.

W. H. MEDHURST.

JOHN STRONACH.

WILLIAM C. MILNE.

Shanghai, August 1st, 1851.