

THE HISTORY OF
THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

BOOK I.—ENGLAND.

Reign of Henry the Eighth.

SECTION I.

FROM THE BIRTH OF TYNDALE, THE ORIGINAL TRANSLATOR, TO HIS EMBARKATION FOR THE CONTINENT, IN PURSUIT OF HIS DESIGN.



HE opening of the sixteenth century, a period so big with interest to all Europe, has been presented in very different lights, both by British and Continental authors. Some have very carefully brought into one focus a number of concurrent events, and then rested in this conclusion ; that if there had never existed such men as those with whose names we have been long familiar, all that occurred, must have taken place. These are believers in what has been styled, the “force of circumstances,” and though there be a power which governs the world independently of man, they rise no higher ; our men of circumstances, can see nothing great in individual character. Other writers, from too fond partiality for their native land, and scarcely looking beyond it, have assigned exclusive renown to their own great men. An Italian, on behalf of his own Italy, assumes the undivided glory of the revival of literature, philosophy, and the fine-

arts ; and then all the refinement or enlargement of the human mind which ensued, he traces to this one source. While a German author, in regard to the revival of Christianity, insists that his country led the van, and by that path in which others only followed. He will perhaps admit Wickliffe, rising in England a century and a half before, to be the morning star ; but, after this, Luther is his sun, or great planet, and other countries have been regarded as stars, revolving in wider or narrower circles around it, like satellites drawn after it by its movement. The figure may be considered beautiful, and please the fancy, but it has the disadvantage of being incorrect. It not only violates the order, but obscures the peculiar character or glory of what actually took place.

“ If,” says an author, whose interesting work is not yet completed, “ If we regard *dates*, we must then confess that neither to Switzerland nor to Germany belongs the honour of having been first in the work, although, hitherto, only those countries have contended for it. That honour belongs to France. This is a fact that we are the more careful to establish, because it has possibly, till now, been overlooked.”¹ And at this crisis, or the opening of the sixteenth century, as far as these countries are concerned, he has proved his assertion. But, on the other hand, if Britain be included, we must be allowed to hold fast by the fourteenth century ; the age of Wickliffe, or the translation of the Sacred Volume, *entire*, into the language of the people. From that period, to say nothing of the New Testament separately, or of various beautiful fragments ; possessing, as we do still, about thirty copies of that Bible entire, seventeen of which are perfect, we trace the effects, from that early age down to the days of Tyndale. The reading of the Scriptures in *manuscript*, however obnoxious to the authorities, will, in the following history, link itself most distinctly with the more eager perusal of those first imported in *print*. Opposition to the latter, will bring out evidence as to both.

All questions, however, as to priority or dates, become of inferior moment when compared with another ascertained fact. If we look at the first quarter of the sixteenth century, Lefevre in France, and Zuinglius in Switzerland, Luther in Germany,

¹ Merle D'Aubigné.

and Tyndale in England, appear before the world, and to the eye of *man* in this order ; they were contemporaries, living in their respective countries ; Lefevre being by far the oldest of the four, and Zuinglius the youngest. But then it is no less evident, that the *first* impressions of these four men were altogether independent of each other. They were individually influenced by a power, though unseen, equally near to them all. From that moment they were already destined to the work assigned them, but not one of them had exchanged a single thought with another. “ Germany,” says the same author, “ did not communicate the light of truth to Switzerland, nor Switzerland to France, nor France to England : all these lands received it from God, just as no one region transmits the light to another, but the same orb dispenses it direct to the earth.” We now speak of the origin, or the one great though secret cause of all.

But the secret and universal Mover being once acknowledged, upon advancing only a single step farther, we instantly discover that a marked distinction has been drawn, between our own separate Island, and all other Countries on the adjoining Continent. In France, but more especially in Switzerland and Germany, there was the living voice, throughout life, of the man raised up, calling upon his countrymen to hear and obey the truth ; and so God had ordered it in England, a century and a half before, in the case of Wickliffe. But, now, his procedure is altogether different, and out of the usual course pursued in other lands. Tyndale had lifted up his voice, it is true, boldly, and with some effect, but he is withdrawn from his native land, and never to return. The island is left behind by him, and left for good. In other countries the man lives and dies at home. Lefevre, when above a hundred years old, weeps, because he had not felt and displayed the courage of a martyr ; Zuinglius dies in battle for his country ; and Luther, after all his noble intrepidity, expires in his sick chamber : but Tyndale is strangled and burnt to ashes, and in a foreign land. Englishmen, and Scotsmen, and Germans, are gathered together against him ; yes, against the man who enjoyed the honour of having never had a Prince for his patron or protector all his days ; men of three nations at least concur to confer upon him the crown of martyrdom, so that, among all his contemporaries, in several points of

view, but especially as a translator of the Scriptures, he stands alone.

Whether, therefore, in England or in Scotland, the consequence has been, that, at this early period, we have no great or powerful character to present, as warring upon his *native* soil, with the darkness, whether of ignorance or error, and leading on to victory. *Our* man is abroad, and is pursued, but cannot be taken, till his work is done; while the Almighty himself, appears as so much the more in immediate contact with this country. The work is, by way of eminence, *His own*. Divine truth, it is granted, is but an instrument, yet *as* an instrument, it was now shown to be perfect for its purpose; and the design goes on, till men of authority, and power, and wrath, are baffled, overcome, and overruled. Moreover, there has been ever since a providential superintendence of this work, an uninterrupted care, lest it should be confounded with any thing else in this Kingdom, all which we are the more bound both to mark ourselves, and point out to other nations.

That the eyes of his countrymen have never been turned towards Tyndale, as they ought to have been long ago, but more especially to that work which God did by him in the midst of our land, is one of those mysteries, which, at this moment, we do not even attempt to explain; but it will be the object of the following pages, to trace the footsteps of our Translator, from his origin to his end; and especially the history of that Version which he first gave to his country.

One fourth part of the sixteenth century had passed away before any portion of the Sacred Scriptures, translated from the original Greek into the English language, was printed abroad, and first conveyed into England and Scotland. We have already glanced at foregoing ages as introductory to this memorable event, but the political and literary condition of England for these twenty-five years, immediately preceding, renders the event itself much more worthy of consideration.

Henry the Seventh, and the first monarch of the Tudor family, having attained the crown by his sword, on the field of Bosworth, had ascended the throne of England in the month of August 1485, and to the close of his life in April 1509, he had reigned as Lord paramount of all his Barons, though not of his Ecclesiastics. It was left for his son, Henry the Eighth, to find out, in convenient season, that he was, as Crumwell expressed it, only half a Sovereign. At the age of eighteen, in 1509, Henry had been

left by his father, the richest Prince in Europe, and with more pretensions to learning than any monarch of that day. His wealth, at his accession, is stated to have been at least one million eight hundred thousand marks, if not pounds; an amount, at all events, equal to many millions of the present time. But whatever his wealth may have been, in the brief space of a few years it was entirely dissipated. This, in its own way, had signalised him, and more especially as by the second year of his reign, he had begun to take a more decided part in the politics of the European Continent, and upon a larger scale than England had ever before done.

On looking abroad, Italy, it may be supposed, still commanded the first notice. The reigning Pontiff for ten years, or from 1503 to 1513, was Julius the Second, a man who, it has been said, "retained in the chill of age, all the fire of youth," and became distinguished for his violent and warlike passions. His statue being to be cast in brass, by Michael Angelo, the artist required to know whether he would have a *book* in his left hand, "No," replied Julius, "give me a *sword*, I am *no* Scholar." Literature and the fine arts had triumphed, but above all the arts, Julius was now absorbed in that of War. Bent upon the deliverance of Italy from every interference with his authority, he commenced with Venice, the growing power of which he was the first to curtail. Having previously applied to Germany, France, and Naples, he had formed the celebrated league of Cambray, and thus succeeded. But having once so far humbled this republic, at the solicitation of Henry VIII., now rising into rank and influence, he consented to peace. So it has been said; but the truth seems to be, that Julius, unwilling that the Venetian state should fall into the hands of any of his allies, left it still powerful, though within its ancient limits. By this period, however, both France and Spain had planted their foot in Italy; Louis the XII. having the Sovereignty of Milan, and Ferdinand that of Naples. The former, jealous at once of his possession, and of the growing ambition of the Pontiff, had opposed, and at last besieged him in Bologna; a high offence, and not to be forgotten. By Julius, therefore, in October 1511, an alliance offensive and defensive, having for its object "the extinction of *schism* and defence of the Church," had been accomplished, when England assumed an unprecedented place in the politics of Europe. This alliance, styled "the holy league," had been signed by Ferdinand, by the Venetian State, and ultimately by Maximilian the Emperor of Germany. But Henry of England had at once assented, Julius having flattered him with no less a title than that of "Head of the Italian League." The real object was to crush France, or compel Louis to let go his hold of Milan. He had hitherto been styled by the court of Rome, "Most Christian King;" but now this appellation was actually promised to the King of England, and no man seemed to be so great a

favourite as young Henry. It was this same Pontiff, also, who about four years before, had sent his Legate to James the Fourth of Scotland, with a Bull of the title "Defender of the Faith;" accompanied by that hallowed *Sword*, which is still exhibited, as a relic, in the castle of Edinburgh. At this period, certainly, there was no prospect that either North or South Britain would ever prove unfaithful to the Pontiff's chair. In the meanwhile, this league against France had embroiled Henry into war with Scotland, as James the Fourth, though married to his sister, now took part with his ancient ally. The result is well known—an expedition to France in 1513, from which Henry returned with but little credit, either to his wisdom or talents; while his arms in Scotland, under Surrey, had proved fatal to his brother-in-law, and the flower of the Scottish nobility, at Flodden field.

In his expedition to France, Henry had been accompanied by an ecclesiastic, his Almoner, about to become by far the most conspicuous man of his day, whether in England or on the Continent. We need scarcely name Thomas Wolsey. Immediately after their return, several remarkable changes were crowded into a little space; thus making way for an era such as Europe had never witnessed, and one in which Henry and his prime Minister were to perform no subordinate part. Fired with ambition, they will stand ready to help each other at convenient season.

While Henry was plunged into war both with France and Scotland, Julius II. died at Rome, and had been succeeded by Leo the Tenth, the youngest Pontiff, and one of the most celebrated, that had ever reigned. Louis of France, who had not only propitiated the Roman See, but been allied in marriage to Mary, Henry's youngest sister, died in 1515, and was succeeded by Francis the First. In the same year, after much solicitation, Leo had raised Wolsey to the rank of a Cardinal, when he began to feel as though he were a second king: and in 1517, by the death of Ferdinand, King of Spain, Charles V. had succeeded to that throne.

At last, or in January 1519, the Emperor Maximilian expired also; when the three young kings, Henry VIII., Francis I., and Charles V., became candidates for the Imperial Crown. The truth is, it had been twice offered by Maximilian himself before his death, to Henry; and had he not doubted the sincerity of the Emperor, and not consulted with Cuthbert Tunstal, he might have accepted the proffer. But "now that the glittering prize was open to competition, he disclosed his wishes to his favourite; and both the King and the Cardinal, reciprocally inflaming the ambition of each other, indulged in the most flattering delusions. In fancy they were already seated, the one on the throne of the *Cæsars*, the other in the chair of St. Peter, and beheld the whole Christian world, laity and clergy, prostrate at their feet. The election of Henry would secure, it was foretold, the elevation of Wolsey; and the Bishop of Worcester, (an Italian, but residing at Rome, whose diocese was *farmed* by

Wolsey,) had been aiming to secure the consent and assistance of the Pontiff in favour of the King of England."

Such, at least, is the representation of Lingard; but be this as it may, Charles, it is well known, was chosen Emperor, to the mortification of the other candidates, and especially to that of the young King of France, who had been most treacherously promised support by Henry, while he himself was striving after the same honour! At this moment, however, Francis found it necessary to pocket the affront, and to fortify himself against the Emperor, he insisted that Henry should fulfil a previous engagement, to pay him a visit in France. To this he consented, and Wolsey, as the consummate master of ceremonies, had the arrangement of the whole affair: but before they embarked, no sooner had they reached Canterbury, than, to the surprise of many, though not of the Cardinal, Charles the Fifth, on board of a squadron said to be bound for the Netherlands, was announced as approaching, merely to pay a visit to his Uncle and Aunt, the King and Queen of England.² In three days, the Emperor had so far gained upon the good will of Henry; while by hints as to the Pontificate, promises and presents, he had secured the ambition of Wolsey in his favour. The King of England with his Cardinal then passed on to Francis, and to the performance of a splendid pageant, in mockery of friendship. The negotiations which afterwards ensued, only prove, that Henry, once disappointed of the imperial dignity, had fixed his eye on the crown of France. In short, his Majesty of England had, in his own estimation, become the arbiter of Europe. With Wolsey at his right hand, he began to feel as though he held the balance between the two Continental rivals, Charles and Francis; while his Prime Minister, the veritable potentate, was about to be courted at one period, and dreaded at another, not only by these Sovereigns, but by the Pontiff himself for the time being.

As proof of the English Cardinal rapidly rising to this dignity, we have only to mark those successive steps by which he had shown himself to be so attentive to his personal aggrandisement; recollecting all the while, that he is to be viewed as the true index to the rising ecclesiastical power of Italy over England. Having in 1515 obtained the red hat of a Cardinal, his Royal Master, now so won by his fascinating manner and luxurious habits, had, in December of that year, made him Lord Chancellor, instead of William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury; for the Chancellor in those days had been uniformly a churchman. Then Leo the Tenth, in July 1518, had in effect transferred to him, within the limits of England, almost all his powers as Pontiff, by creating him his Plenipotentiary or *Legate a latere*. Since the year 1514 he had been

² This was not an accidental visit. On the 8th of April, (1520), Henry had ordered his Ambassadors to fix the time and place.

Archbishop of York, and after that, *farmed* the revenues of Worcester and Salisbury on behalf of two foreigners, Italians, resident at Rome. He had held, *in commendam*, the Diocese of Bath and the Abbey of St. Albans. As early as 1518 he had a settled annuity from the French King, of twelve thousand livres; and in 1520, Charles V. and the Pontiff had granted him a yearly pension of seven thousand five hundred ducats, as the revenues of Toledo and Placencia, two bishoprics in Spain. The epistolary correspondence addressed to him, and still in preservation, proves the height to which he had attained. Louis XII., Francis I., and Charles V., addressed him as their "good," or "good and loyal friend." Maximilian before this, and the Pontiffs, always approached him with marked consideration. The Venetian Republic abroad, had treated him as a vital portion of the Royal power, and the Oxford University at home, had gone so far as to employ in writing the appellation of "Your Majesty!" This occurred before the title was in use to Henry himself! In short, it actually seemed as if that dominant power which had reigned so long over all Europe, had been gathering into strength, and lighting on the head of one man in England, and that one, merely an ecclesiastic raised from low degree.

In these circumstances, could any event have been more improbable than that England above all other countries, England under her present monarch, would ever be separated from Rome? Independently, however, of all the past, certain events in the year 1521 seemed to have placed such a supposition out of all question. Milan had then been rescued from the yoke of France, and no one was more overjoyed than the reigning Pontiff, Leo the Tenth; but in a few days after, whether from joy, or as has been supposed, by poison, on the 1st of December he breathed his last.

Henry had missed the Imperial crown, but now came his Prime Minister's opportunity for advancement. No sooner had the intelligence arrived, than Wolsey became an eager candidate for the papal throne. His royal master, in pursuit of his own glory, had long and ardently desired the appointment of his favourite. The Emperor had been sounded before, and feigned consent. The preceptor of Charles, however, Florent, Bishop of Tortosa, as Adrian VI., gained the day, and Wolsey had to content himself for the present, with the prolongation of his Legantine authority. Another opportunity, indeed, soon presented itself, by the death of Adrian in 1523. Again Wolsey started, with express orders from Henry as well as himself, that no wealth or substance should be spared to ensure success. But again he was doomed to bitter disappointment, and Julio di Medici, once Bishop of Worcester, was chosen. This was the second time that the Emperor had deceived Wolsey,—and the effects of his duplicity, at the Cardinal's hands, he shall feel for years to come. In the meanwhile, Julio, under the name

of Clement the Seventh, was willing to do all in his power to secure the allegiance and good will of England. To Henry he had sent a consecrated rose tree of fine gold, with a confirmation of his title "Defender of the Faith," first obtained from Leo. To Wolsey he sent a ring from his own finger, with the appointment of Legate a latere, *for life*.

These three Sovereigns, therefore, with Clement VII. as Pontiff, and last, though not least, Cardinal Wolsey, will now engage attention and occupy their own conspicuous places in the great drama, for years to come.

Such had been the chief political movements up to the year 1523,—but was there no stir in the world of letters? Certainly there was; and in England, to a degree hitherto quite unknown. The triumph achieved on the Continent, had already shed its influence on our detached Island. The road to Italy had not been unfrequented by our countrymen, influenced chiefly by thirst for such learning as could there be best acquired. Hence the well known names of Grocyn and Linacre, of Colet and Lilly, of Tunstal, Wakefield, William Latimer, and Sir Thomas More. Wolsey himself wished to be regarded as a scholar—and so did, above them all in his own esteem, the King upon the throne; though neither the one nor the other had ever beheld an Italian sky. Grocyn, the first Englishman who taught Greek at Oxford, and Linacre, at once physician and tutor to Henry VIII., had spent years in Italy under Politian and Chalcondyles, then the most eminent classical scholars in Europe. Colet, though only a Latinist, after his return from abroad, became the founder of St. Paul's school, the first public seminary where Greek was taught; having chosen Lilly for the head master, who had studied the language for five years at Rhodes, under the refugees from Constantinople. Tunstal, an eminent Latin, as well as a good Greek and Hebrew scholar, had been chosen Bishop of London in 1522; and Sir Thomas More, the pupil of Grocyn, was now Speaker of the House of Commons. In short, the court of Henry had become so celebrated for an awakened attention to letters, as to be eulogised on the Continent; and the company round the royal table was regarded as superior to any academy of learning—at least so said Erasmus, though he was rather too complimentary.

At this crisis, therefore, an important question naturally presents itself. Political events gave no promise whatever of any important change. But here were men of great pretensions to polite literature. Now, among all these learned men, already named, or not named, who gave celebrity to the court of Henry, or adorned the royal table, had the idea of giving the Sacred Volume, translated from the original, into the language of the common people, once been mooted? Had the learning they had acquired ever led them to this one point, and as to one that was important, incumbent, or necessary? So far from it, the very proposal would have made them tremble, or have filled the majority with

indignation. Colet, a man to be distinguished from all others then living, might perhaps have hailed such a proposal, though decidedly attached to the forms then existing, but his opinions had rendered him so obnoxious, that, but for the King's personal regard, he might have suffered. However, he died in 1519, and Grocyn, absorbed in Greek only as a language, died of palsy the same year. As for Linacre, who expired in 1524, nothing favourable is upon record. It has even been said, that though enjoying the fruit of several ecclesiastical preferments, he had not begun to look into the Greek New Testament till towards the close of life; and on reading our Lord's beautiful Sermon on the Mount, as in Matthew, coming to that passage,—“Swear not at all,” he cast the book aside, saying, that “this was either not the Gospel, or we were not Christians.”³ But with regard to the rest of these scholars, when the Book of Life in the vulgar tongue once comes into England, Tunstal and More, Wolsey and the King, will not fail to render themselves conspicuous as its bitterest and most determined opponents.

Neither the political nor literary condition of England, under the dominant sway of Cardinal Wolsey, affording the slightest indication of the Sacred Scriptures being about to be given to the people, but the reverse; in justice to that event it is necessary to observe also, the nature of that connexion which had existed for ages between Britain and Rome, more especially since it was now as intimate and powerful as ever. Indeed, under Henry VIII., it arrived at its climax. This connexion sustained a peculiarly complicated character. There was the Annate, or first fruits, payable by the Archbishop down to the lowest ecclesiastic, upon election to office—the Appeal to Rome—the Dispensation from it—the Indulgence—the Legantine levy—the Mortuary—the Pardon—the Ethelwolf's pension—the Peter's pence for every chimney that smoked in England—the Pilgrimage—the Tenth—besides the sale of trinkets or holy wares from Rome! Here were not fewer than twelve distinct sources of revenue! These altogether were operating on the inhabitants without any exception, and with as much regularity as the rising and setting of the sun. It was a pecuniary connexion of immense power, made to bear upon the general conscience, which knew no pause by day, no pause by night; falling, as it did, not merely on the living, but on the dying and the dead!

³ Cheke—“De pronunc. Græcæ Linguae.” Fuller indeed tries to soften this, but Cheke was almost a contemporary.

In no other country throughout Europe, without exception, was it so probable that this system, in all its oppressive and fearful integrity, would be maintained. Under an imperative Monarch, originally educated as an *ecclesiastic*, and who now gloried in his acquaintance with scholastic divinity; with a Prime Minister so well known to every foreign Court, and who himself breathed with ardour after the Pontificate, England had become the right arm or main-stay of this system. Nay, as if to render this still more apparent, and so fix the eye of posterity, the King upon the throne had resolved to distinguish himself as the reputed author, in support of this singular power; and he became at once the first and the only Sovereign in Europe who was understood to have lifted his pen in defence and defiance. For this feat in reply, though not an answer to Luther, it is well known that Henry had obtained from Leo X. his highly prized title of "Defender of the Faith."⁴

If, however, the reader should now wish to know, whether there was any part of this Island, by way of eminence, where the power and pressure of Rome was more strikingly apparent; any ground which seemed to be "all her own;" he must look down to the west of England. In a district of country, extending from above Kidderminster to a little below Bristol, lay what was *then* styled the diocese of Worcester. Embracing the county of that name, as well as the whole of Gloucestershire to the borders of Somerset, we need to say nothing of its beauty, since a richer variety of scenery, or finer studies of the picturesque, can scarcely even now be found. It is of more importance to remark, that, even at this early period, there was no part of England in a better state of cultivation, if, indeed, there was any to equal it. This may very easily be imagined from the fact, that, to say nothing of the Cathedral at Worcester, with all its appendages, within the county of Gloucester alone there were not fewer than six Mitred Abbeys, viz. Gloucester, Cirencester and Winchcombe, Tewkesbury, Hailes and Flaxley; the three first Abbots having seats in Parliament as peers of the

⁴ The title of "Most Christian King," taken from the King of France, had actually been conveyed to Henry, by the warlike Julius II., through Cardinal Bainbridge.—*Rymer's Fœdera*. But Leo professed to know nothing of this, or would not recognise the transaction, and annulled all that his predecessor had done against Louis. The present title to Henry was no more than that which James IV. of Scotland had received, fourteen years ago, from Julius. Not being hereditary, it had died with him, though we shall find James V. irritating his uncle, by assuming that of "Defender of the Christian faith;" intended, perhaps, as a hint to Henry, after his defection. Neither was the title now conveyed to England meant to be hereditary: it became so only by an Act of Parliament in 1544, and though the statute had been repealed, the title was retained even by Philip and Mary. So it has continued to the present hour.

realm. But, besides these, there were many other Houses, styled Religious, of almost every grade and denomination. If, from the days of King John and Henry III., England had seemed to the eye of the Pontiff, like a "garden of delight and an unexhausted well," no judges as to the most pleasant and productive spots, were superior to the Monks; and these in this quarter were so numerous, as to have given rise to the common and profane proverb—that such a thing was as certain, as that "God was in Gloucestershire." And who were the Bishops, then in full power over all this Goshen or Gerar, and enjoying its fruits? Not one of them an Englishman, resident within our shores! Since this century commenced, or rather from the year 1497 to 1534, they were actually four Italians, in regular succession. The two first had been resident with a witness; but as for the two last, there was no occasion, since Wolsey, the Cardinal and Legate of England, transacted all their business. Indeed, for a period of half a century, or from 1484 to 1534, the connexion of this district with Italy is particularly worthy of notice, more especially on account of what then and there took place. The reader will discover presently, that there is one important reason for his attention being first directed to these Italian Bishops, and to their intimate and profitable alliance with England.

In the year 1484, Innocent VIII. had been elected Pontiff. It was by his authority that John de Lilius, or Giglis, LL.D., an Italian of Lucca, was sent into England. He came as Questor, or *Collector*, for the Apostolic Chamber, and it was not long before he had thoroughly feathered his own nest. From time to time he became Rector of Swaffam in Norfolk, of Langham in Suffolk, and of St. Michael, Crooked Lane, London; Prebendary of St. Paul's, York, and Lincoln; Prebendary, and afterwards Dean of Wells; Archdeacon of London and of Gloucester, or, in all, ten different appointments; in return for which, since he came as Questor-general for the Pontiff who sent him, he could have done little else than collect the revenues. From Innocent, moreover, de Lilius had received a most scandalous commission; authorising him to pardon the most heinous offences, such as robbery and murder, usury, simony and theft, or every species of crime; and to dispense with the *non*-restitution of goods acquired by any fraud, upon *condition* that part of such gain should be handed to the Pontiff's commissioners or their deputies! Nor can we suppose this man to have been negligent in employing this power to his own, as well as his master's emolument. At last, loaded with fruit, it was time to return to Italy, though his connexion with England was not to be broken off; so far as emolument was concerned, far from it. He became Henry's Solicitor in the Court of Rome; and no sooner was the diocesc of Worcester vacant by the death of Robert Morton, than de Lilius, the Archdeacon of Gloucester, became Lord of the Sec. To this he was appointed by Alexander VI., on the

30th of August 1497, and, as Bishop of Worcester, he died at Rome on the 25th of August next year.

This man, however, had been assisted as Collector by a nephew, Sylvester de Lilius, who had remained in England behind him, and now for his usefulness and activity in this employment, he was advanced by Alexander VI. to succeed his uncle, and as Bishop of Worcester, at once. Appointed on the 17th March 1499, he continued in England for thirteen years; but in 1512, Julius II. having summoned the fifth Lateral Council, Henry VIII., "the head of the Italian league," could not do less than send him to Rome. What then could become of his occupation in England or of his see? There was no difficulty; here was Cardinal Wolsey always at hand, and he will now have not a little to do with the Counties of Worcester and Gloucester, as long as he lives. He was appointed Commendatory for Sylvester, and farmed the diocese for him. The Italian never returned from Rome, where he soon showed himself to be a most base and ungrateful character. Continuing to receive the fruits of his residence and appointment in England, he lived for nine years, and died at Rome, 16th April 1521. It is but very recently that the secret has been discovered, though the fact appears to be, that he there lived to subserve the purposes or pleasure of Wolsey, his agent in England, rather than those of the King, whose orator he professedly was. In the second year after his return to Rome, the English Cardinal Bainbridge, when writing to Henry direct, has the following passage:—"During the time of my abode here in this Court, I neither can nor will desist, to signify unto your Highness, such things as I shall perceive that be dissonant, either to your Grace's honour, or wealth of your realm. As touching my Lord of Worcester, your Grace's orator, he doth use continually the company of the Protector of France, both in the city, and also in Vines (Vineyards) and Gardens without the city, both by day and night, whereof right honourable men, your Grace's friends, hath at sundry times advertised me; and that he is more familiar with him than with any cardinal of Rome. It is perfectly known to every Englishman within this city, that nothing can be more odious unto him, than to hear of any success of your Grace's causes, or for to hear of any honour spoken of your realm or subjects, either by writing from England or other places, upon your most noble acts and victories obtained. From Rome, the 20th day of May 1514." Whoever was the perpetrator, the writer of this letter was dead in less than two months, and by poison. The real date of Bainbridge's death, was July the 14th; and there can be no question now, that the Italian Bishop of Worcester was deeply, if not chiefly concerned in the murder of the English Cardinal.⁵ Wolsey succeeded Bainbridge as Archbishop of York, and Sylvester de Lilius at

⁵ See Ellis' Original Letters, I., pp. 99-113.

Rome went on to receive the fruits of his bishopric, till his death in 1521.

De Lilius once dead in Italy, there was no occasion for *sending* another Italian to England. The Pontiff, it appears, might now exercise his right of nomination, and at once secure the see. Under Leo X. abroad, and Wolsey, as farmer of the district, at home, the transfer was easily adjusted. There was a soldier of the order of St. John of Jerusalem, a Florentine, who had been raised to be a Cardinal. He was not only Archbishop of Narbon and Florence, but moreover the Chancellor of the Roman Church both in spirituals and temporals; and as if all this had not been more than sufficient, the English vacancy was handed over to him! On the 7th of June 1521, Leo X., by his provisory Bull, made him Bishop of Worcester in England. The nod of the Pontiff was all-sufficient security, and therefore the very next day, Leo empowered Thomas Wolsey to take possession of the see for him, and to act in his name. It actually seemed as if all the most conspicuous men in the great following drama, must be brought into contact with this particular *spot* in England. For who was this soldier? It was no other than the cousin of Leo, Cardinal (Julio) di Medici, educated by Lorenzo his uncle, and so well known as the future Pontiff, Clement VII.!

It was but a few months before Julio found an opportunity of serving the English administrator of his English diocese. Leo died in December 1521, when the most active in Wolsey's favour to procure the Pontiff's chair itself, were the Cardinals di Medici and Sion. They had both left the army, to be present in the conclave; but, as already stated, the ancient preceptor and friend of Charles V. stood in the way, when Wolsey was outvoted by Adrian VI. The Italian Bishop of Worcester then thought it prudent to tender his resignation, and not damage his reputation or influence under the reigning Pontiff; taking care, at the same time, to recommend one of his own countrymen, Jerome de Ghinnuci, already Bishop of Asculum. This change, however, did not take place till the 27th of October, nor was the see filled up till the 20th of February 1523, when it was conferred on Ghinnuci, now domestic Chaplain to Adrian, and Auditor-General of the Apostolic Chamber. Thus, it once more appeared, as if this district of country, in particular, must ever stand in close and profitable union with a man at the ear of the Pontiff, while Wolsey went on to farm it as before. Little, however, was he aware, that the same man who had professed to be so warm in his favour at Rome, in January 1522, would in less than two years, for ever cut him off from all prospect of the Pontificate. Julio, the former Bishop of Worcester, became Clement VII. on the 25th of November 1523; but still Cardinal Ghinnuci held the diocese, and that until 1534.

In these transactions, therefore, and within the compass of this dis-

strict alone, the reader has, singularly enough, met in his way not fewer than seven Pontiffs, from Innocent VIII., and the notorious Alexander VI., down to Leo X., and his nephew, Clement VII.⁶ Here, in short, was the finest spot in all their English garden, and under Wolsey, as Cardinal, and Legate, and Commendatory, it had now certainly exhibited the climax of their power. In no other diocese of all England were the influence and authority of Pontiffs, and Cardinals, and foreign ecclesiastics in such full display. By way of eminence, it had been, as it were, *given up* to Italy. Added to all this, we need not, must not, dwell on the shocking immorality which every where reigned triumphant, and under the desecrated name of religion. A specimen has already been given in the vile commission granted by the first of these Pontiffs. "The mind," says Turner, "must have renounced both its judgment and its conscience, not to have called for some reform;" but the fact was, that, in the language of sacred writ, "both the mind and conscience were defiled." "On no part of Europe," he adds, "can we fix our eye in the reign of Henry VIII., but we meet in what was styled the ecclesiastical order, with the same picture of arraigned depravity." But as far as our own island was concerned, that great power which ruled the earth, filled with hostility to all change, and more especially to the Word of God, seems to have gathered itself into a focus before our eyes, while it rested, like an incubus, on this diocese of Worcester.

Let any one now direct his attention to the first quarter of the sixteenth century; let but the state of our native land be surveyed, but more especially the counties of Gloucester and Worcester; and so far from there being any, even the slightest token of the Divine Word being about to be laid open to the common people; the political state of England, and the literary, such as it was, but, above all, her intimate and complicated connexion with Italy, decidedly forbade the idea of such a thing. Where, then, throughout all England, was any individual to be expected, sufficiently bold to cherish the noble design?

Now, it was such a time as this; it was in the midst of hostile circumstances, nay, it was in the very spot, or diocese, to which we have already pointed, that a man according to God's own heart had already been found! It was in the centre of this diocese that he was born! From about the year 1484, this district, above all others, had fallen under the power of Italy, or, like a ripe fig, into the mouth of the

⁶ Or Seven Pontiffs, in only fifty years, from 1484 to 1534.

eater ; but it may now be added, " about which time William Tyndale was born."

Great characters have not unfrequently been raised from an obscurity which has baffled all research. So it has happened emphatically in the present instance. Not only are the statements hitherto advanced altogether erroneous ; but even after the utmost diligence, whether in searching the Parish Registers themselves, the Visitations in the Herald's Office, or the manuscript stores of our British Museum, still there hangs, at least, some degree of obscurity over the precise year of Tyndale's birth, as well as his immediate parentage. Without, therefore, encumbering the page, we now confine attention to what appears to be morally certain ; and for the additional confirmation of our narrative, refer to an article at the close of this work.

Among the picturesque beauties of Gloucestershire, where the prospects pointed out by the topographer amount to nearly forty in number, there is one from the top of Stinchcomb Hill, fifteen miles south-west of the city, which commands the Severn, from Gloucester to Bristol ; having the Vale of Berkeley, with its venerable castle, on the left bank of that river, and the Forest of Dean, Chepstow, and the Welsh mountains, on the right. From this point more than seven counties are visible, and about thirty parish churches ; but to every admirer of England's best hope, her Sacred Volume, the spot acquires by far its deepest interest, from his having immediately below his eye, the birth-place of its original Translator. There can be no question that Tyndale was born within the hundred of Berkeley, whether at the village of Stinchcomb itself, or more probably at North Nibley, two miles to the left, now also full in view. His family, however, stands long in connexion with *both* villages.

Before the birth of our Translator, his progenitors, for two, if not three descents, had lived under the western brow of Stinchcomb Hill, where, for a limited period, they had passed under the name of *Hitchins*. The removal of the family into Gloucestershire, as well as the temporary assumption of this name, have been ascribed to the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, and such may have been the occasion ; but the temporary adoption of the name of Hitchins, may just as probably have arisen from a deadly *local* family feud

which long agitated the very spot where they now dwelt. The violence of the civil wars had loosened the authority of government, and this part of the country afforded one of the most striking proofs; for though, in the contentions of York and Lancaster, the neighbouring castle of Berkeley had no share, yet it had suffered greatly from the disputed title to its possession, between the heir of the Barony, and Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick. Perhaps there never existed, in the history of England, a hereditary family contention equal to this; as it continued to smoulder on for nearly two hundred years, from 1417, and in its earlier stages burst out with great violence. Mutual reprisals had been made again and again, till a final period was put to such a mode of settlement, by the fierce contest on Nibley Green in March 1470.⁷ This is indeed the only event by which the village itself has *hitherto* been distinguished. Now, the Tyndales were then living at Stinchcombe; and as the number, on both sides, amounted to 1000 men, most of whom were gathered, in one night, from the lands of Berkeley hundred, *they* must have taken part in the fray. While, therefore, the quarrel was at once local and personal, between William, the seventh Lord Berkeley, and Thomas, Lord Lisle, then living at Wooton under Edge, it must be observed that the former was on the Lancastrian side of politics, and, as tenants at least, so were the Tyndales. The consequence was, that although Berkeley was victorious, the encounter being fatal to Lord Lisle himself and 150 more; and although Government was prevented from taking cognizance of the

⁷ It was after the death of Thomas, the fifth Lord Berkeley, in 1417, that this contest began. In 1418, Richard Beauchamp, who had married his daughter, and sole heiress, "lay before Berkeley Castle with an armed force, fully determined to destroy it, but was diverted from his purpose by the intercession of the Bishop of Worcester and the neighbouring gentry." — *Frym's M.S.* It sustained at this time several sieges, which were as frequently raised. After Warwick's decease, the quarrel became hereditary. All decision by the sword terminated on Nibley Green in 1470, but the tedious process of law continued till the 7th of James I. 1609-10, or 193 years from the commencement of the dispute! Meanwhile, the successful combatant at Nibley did not fail to give sufficient proof of his devotion to his party; for in December 1487, having quarrelled with his brother Maurice, on account of his marriage, he assigned the castle and manor, with other Lordships, to Henry VII., and his heirs-male, so that the property did not return to the right heirs till the death of Edward VI. Still the legal process went on till its settlement under James I.; and yet, even now, it must still be noticed as a notable proof of "the glorious uncertainty" of the law; that if *modern* decisions may be applied to the subject, the Barony of Berkeley, created by the Writ of Summons in the 23d Edward I. is now in *abeyance* between the descendants and representatives of the three daughters and co-heirs of Elizabeth, the ancient Countess of Warwick; and the Barony possessed by the present Earl of Berkeley, is that created by the Writ of Summons to James de Berkeley in 1421, or 9. Henry V. — *Nicolas' Synopsis, pref. xxi. xxx. and p. 60.* See the printed cases of the present Earl Fitzhardinge, and of Sir J. S. Sidney on the Earls, for all the facts and arguments on the subject.

result at the time, owing to the far greater affairs of the civil war, still afterwards Lord Berkeley had to humbly sue for forgiveness from Edward the Fourth, the royal head of the house of York. At all events, from whatever cause, the name of Hitchin had been assumed by this branch of the Tyndale family, for years, as will appear presently.

The family of our Translator is to be traced to an ancient Barony, by tenure, which, however, in *his* name, became extinct so early as the beginning of the thirteenth century.⁸ From the second son of Adam, the *last* Baron de Tyndale and Langeley, in Northumberland, or Robert Tyndale, who removed southward in the reign of Edward I., who settled at Tansover, or Tansor, near Oundle in Northamptonshire, and was living in 1288, there gradually sprung different families; so that, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, respectable proprietors of the name of Tyndale were living at Tansover and Deane, in Northamptonshire; at Hockwold, in Norfolk; at Pull Court, in Worcestershire; and at Stinchcombe and North Nibley, in the county of Gloucester; as there were soon afterwards at Eastwood, in the same county; at Bathford and Bristol, in Somerset; at Mapplestead, in Essex, and, still later, at Bobbing Court, in Kent. All these families claim descent from Robert of Tansover; and even that of our William Tyndale has been supposed, by no inferior genealogist, to have sprung from him.⁹ This it certainly had done, though in a very remote degree, as we shall presently meet with ground to believe that there was some affinity between it, and that of Tyndale of Pull Court, a branch of the house of Tansover.

Of the family resident at Stinchcombe and North Nibley, we have two distinct genealogies. The first, under the head of *Hunt's Court*, Nibley, is to be found in the account of the hundred of Berkeley, drawn up by Mr. Smythe, the factor of Lord Berkeley, resident in the old manor house of Nibley. The second genealogy is founded upon a *deed* under the reign of Henry VIII., the best of all evidence;¹⁰ while, so far as the latter goes, and the authority quoting it, there is a perfect agreement with the former as to the descents, viz.:—

⁸ The Barony of Tyndale then passed *jure uxoris* to Nicholas de Bolteby, who died in 1272, whose son, Adam, died in 1281.—See Nicolas' Synopsis, and the admirable genealogy of G. B. Tyndale, Esq. of Hayling, in Burke's Hist. of the Commoners, iv. p. 546.

⁹ Mr. Jekyll's genealogies, quoted in the Biog. Brit.

¹⁰ Rudder's Gloucester, under Stinchcombe, p. 695.

- I. Hugh Tyndale, father of John, f. of Thomas, f. of Richard, f. of Richard, f. of Thomas.
 II. Thomas, f. of Richard, f. of Richard, f. of Thomas.

The first individual mentioned by Mr. Smythe, is said to be Hugh Tyndale, *alias* Huchens, the name which, for a season, the family had adopted. This is confirmed by Tyndale himself, who, in his first publication, gave both names—"William Tyndale, otherwise called Hitchins,"—though ever *after*, he used only the former. Whether John Tyndale ever resumed the name without the *alias*, we have no evidence; but to a certainty *Thomas* did, and, after his example, so did our Translator. "Some of his ancestors," says Bigland, "having taken an active part in the Lancastrian cause, migrated to Stinchcombe, in this county; and, as it appears from the Register of *North Nibley*, bore, for concealment, the name of Hutchins or Hitchins, but resumed their own in the reign of Henry the Seventh."¹¹

But why should the neighbouring parish of North Nibley be introduced? This brings us to the deed already mentioned, or the second genealogy, and the following fact. "Thomas Tyndale," the first man of that name, "died sometime before the 33d Henry VIII., or 1541-2, as appears by a deed of *that* date, to which Edward Tyndale, of Pull Court in Worcester, was a witness."¹² And, still using the deed, the writer proceeds,—“By Alicia his wife, daughter and sole heir of Thomas Hunt, (of Hunts' Court,) he had five sons, Richard, *William*, Henry, Thomas, and *John*, and one daughter, Elizabeth.”¹³

To the admirers of Tyndale, it would no doubt be gratifying, could we now positively affirm, that they have the entire family, parents and children, before them; but unfortunately owing to recent, though very loose assertions, the question may return,—was this Thomas Tyndale his brother only, and these sons his nephews? Or have we thus on record,

¹¹ Bigland's *Glos.*, p. 293. He is generally one of the best authorities, though we have not been able to verify the quotation, the Register, as now examined, not extending farther back than 1560. We have stood on the ground still pointed out as the site of *Hunts Court*, in the village of North Nibley, but no house worthy of the name now remains.

¹² This Edward Tyndale was the youngest son of Sir William Tyndale of Hockwold, and he was the son of Sir Thomas Tyndale of Deane, the fifth in lineal descent from the first Robert of Tansover. This Edward, too, was the brother of Sir John of Hockwold, of William the ancestor of the Tyndales of Bathford, as well as of Robert, who died without issue. Thus, as far as being party to a will bespeaks affinity, there is ground for the conjecture of Jekyll.

¹³ The writer, as already quoted, then informs us, that this Thomas was father of Richard, f. of Richard, f. of Thomas, who died in 1637, as appears by the probate of his *will*. To these we can now add, father of Thomas, f. of William, who, at the age of 80, died in 1748. See the Article on the Parentage and early years of Tyndale at the close of this work.

the Father of the martyr, and of his brother John, who, we shall find, was persecuted and fined by Sir Thomas More? If any one should suppose the former only, then there is actually no positive evidence to show that Thomas had a brother, much less two, and these named William and John; while, upon the other hand, this family of Thomas happens to be at once the *first* and the *only* one, throughout this genealogy, where *all* the children are named. Bigland has told us, that the family resumed its name in the reign of Henry VII., and therefore after his accession in 1485, what was more likely to induce the change, and follow in the train of this marriage? The Tyndales had been upon the Lancastrian side, and that was now finally triumphant. But be this as it may, here is the family to which the martyr belonged, and from it we are able to come down, without any obscurity, nearly to the present day. The estate in North Nibley was sold indeed, in the reign of King William, when the proprietor, Thomas Tyndale, Esq., removed into Kent, but the family was not extinct till so recently as the year 1748, and the collateral connexion is still traceable. As for the female line, from a great-granddaughter of the first Thomas Tyndale, a descendant is now living in the City of London—John Roberts, Esq., Temple.

The year of our Translator's birth, could it be positively ascertained, might help us to fix his parentage; but as nearly as it can be, it seems to harmonise with the idea of Thomas being his father. Tyndale himself, unrelentingly persecuted, was cautious of ever saying one word respecting his relatives. Even his younger brother John became involved, in consequence of receiving letters from him, and not delivering them up! But the future martyr would have borne the pelting of the pitiless storm all alone, sooner than involve his family in distress; and more especially that father, to whom he had been indebted for the expenses of his education. His keen and voluminous opponent, however, Sir Thomas More, provoked his triumphant answer; and if we knew the year of the Lord Chancellor's birth, Tyndale himself will help us to fix, very nearly, that of his own. In the course of his writings there may be some other references; but we shall quote only one passage in the defence of his translation, quite to the point.¹⁴

¹⁴ We do not refer to the tract published by Tyndale in April 1533, on the "Supper of the Lord," where he repeatedly twits Sir Thomas with being "the old man," with his "old eyes and spectacles;" because this seems to be nothing more than his retort to the Chancellor, for having again and again alluded so contemptuously to his friend Fryth, as "the young man."

It is now generally understood, that Sir Thomas More was born in 1480, and most probably in the spring of that year, as this harmonises with the statement of Erasmus, who says 1479, their year running on to the 25th of March. In 1497 More was sent to Canterbury Hall, Christ Church, Oxford, where he studied Greek, as well as Latin, under Linacre and Grocyn, for two years. Now, what says Tyndale, when defending his translation of the New Testament from the Greek? "He," Sir Thomas, "rageth because I turn *χαρις* into favour and not *grace*; and that I use this word knowledge (in the sense of acknowledge) and not *confession*, and this word repentance and not *penance*. In all which he cannot prove that I give not the right English unto the Greek word. These things to be even so, M. More knoweth well enough; for he understandeth the Greek, *and he knew them long ere I.*" Since then Tyndale was brought up to learning from his youth, and at Oxford afterwards, there can be no question, that this is the language of a *junior* scholar, at least by four or five years, and that consequently the birth of Tyndale must have been correspondingly later. Now, without having observed this, it is rather a curious coincidence, that the first gentleman, well qualified, in our own day, and most solicitous to ascertain the point, has fixed upon the year 1484. "Probably," he says, "Tyndale was born about 1484." This was the younger brother of Mr. Roberts just mentioned, or Mr. Oade Roberts of Painswick, the correspondent of Lysons; and had the *Magna Britannia* been finished so as to have included Gloucestershire, a place would have been found for his information. Mr. R., indeed, imagined in 1814, that Tyndale might be the son of Hugh, and then in 1818, the son of John; but as he maintains, not merely from Bale, Atkyns, and other authorities, but from *domestic tradition* in Gloucestershire, where he himself resided, that our Translator was born *at North Nibley*; then, if we are to believe the *deed* already quoted, and so attested, we seem to have the entire family of Thomas Tyndale once more brought in view.¹⁵ A very strong probability, therefore, is now presented, that our first and eminent Translator, was the son of Thomas Tyndale, by Alicia Hunt

¹⁵ We quote from the letters of Mr. O. Roberts, in the British Museum. (See Lysons' *Topog. Coll.* 9458. Plat. fol. 59, 62.) His surviving brother informs me, he died in 1821.

of North Nibley; that his brother John was the youngest son by the same mother, and that Tyndale himself was born in the year 1484, 5, or 6. This would make him about the age of fifty at his death; and this exactly corresponds with the full persuasion of old John Foxe in 1573, when he published the works of Tyndale, Fryth, and Barnes. "In pursuing whereof," says he, "thou shalt find, gentle reader, whether thou be ignorant, what to learn; or whether thou be learned, what to follow, and what to stick to. Briefly, whatsoever thou art, if thou be *young*, of John Fryth; if thou be *middle age*, of William Tyndale; if in *elder years*, of Dr. Barnes, matter is here to be found, not only of doctrine to inform thee, of comfort to delight thee, of godly ensample to direct thee; but also of special admiration, to make thee to wonder at the works of the Lord."

But if the obscurity of our Translator's parentage must still remain, nay form emphatically a part of his singular history, and as the only point which will not be distinctly proved, there is one curious fact, of which there is now no doubt. As the Marquis of Berkeley had conveyed his castle and estates to Henry VII., descending as they did to Henry VIII., Tyndale was nurtured upon ground held immediately by the *crown*, which was afterwards *farmed* for Italian bishops, by Cardinal Wolsey! And before he is driven from his native county, we shall find him brought, by persecution at least, into remote contact with the most conspicuous characters, who were about to figure even in the great drama of European politics.

The education of our Translator was now to be provided by his parents, and being afterwards a man of such inflexible perseverance, there can be no question that he had availed himself of every literary advantage placed within his reach. Owing, however, to the imperfect view, too often taken, it becomes necessary that we should first glance at those opportunities, then so providentially presented to a student, and more especially to one so ardent in pursuit of learning.

It has been dwelt upon by Warton, in his history of Poetry, as a historical fact, that the revival of *classical* learning gave a temporary check to *vernacular* composition in England, and that, in the commencement of the sixteenth century, the culture of new languages introduced a new course of study. This "temporary check," however, was only with a view to further progress, in the true sense of the word, and Oxford as well as Cambridge will present us with illustrations.

About the year 1460, the disposition to acquire Greek and Latin, as well as to promote its cultivation, had been shown by William Selling, a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, the man who afterwards introduced Linacre to Politian, at Bologna. On returning from Italy, he brought with him no inferior collection of Greek and Roman manuscripts, which he had there collected; though, to his regret, they were soon after accidentally consumed by fire at Canterbury. Cornellius Vitellius, an Italian from Tuscany, first taught Greek at Oxford, as a schoolmaster in Magdalen College. Grocyn, a native of Bristol, was his pupil, and after visiting Italy, where he perfected his knowledge of languages, he became, on his return to Oxford, the first voluntary lecturer in Greek, before the year 1490. Linacre and William Latimer followed in the same course, and all the three taught, more or less, within the walls of Magdalen.

But above all other men, Erasmus from Holland, considering what he accomplished in 1516, cannot be overlooked. He first reached England in the close of 1497. He had come to commence his studies in Greek. Elated with what he had found, when writing to a friend in Italy, in December of that year, he says,—“Here I have met with humanity, politeness, learning; learning not trite and superficial, but deep, accurate, true old Greek and Latin learning; and withal so much of it, that, but for curiosity, I have no occasion to visit Italy. In Grocyn I admire an universal compass of learning. Linacre’s acuteness, depth, and accuracy, are not to be exceeded.” Pursuing his study of Greek, under Grocyn, throughout 1498 and part of next year, he was now acquainted with Thomas Wolsey, just appointed Bursar or Treasurer to Magdalen College, with John Claymond, its future President, and, Jortin asserts, with Thomas More, now at Canterbury Hall. He then proceeded to Paris, where, he tells us himself, that his application to Greek had almost killed him. In a letter to Dean Collet in 1504, he informs him that he had “closely applied to Greek for the three last years.” Two years after this he paid a visit to Cambridge, and in 1508 went to Italy. Returning to Cambridge in 1509, he there became the first Greek preceptor in that University; and some months afterwards we find him informing Servatius, the Prior of a Dutch Convent, where he had once resided, that he was so engaged. He explained there the grammar of Chrysoloras, and was to read lectures on that of Gaza. Four intimate friends, he tells us, above forty years of age, had begun to study Greek. Erasmus remained in England nearly five years, or till the beginning of 1514, and eight years after this, Richard Croke, who had been the pupil of Grocyn, succeeded as the regular Professor of Greek in Cambridge. This residence of Erasmus must have had more effect than has ever been fully explained; and considering how certain individuals acted afterwards, it is curious to see how high he stood in public favour. But caressed by Henry VIII., invited to Cambridge by the Chancellor,

Fisher of Rochester, patronised by Warham the Archbishop, though not one of them foresaw the result; we can understand the ground on which Stillingfleet has denied that Luther or Zuinglius had much influence in awakening the English mind. He says, "it was Erasmus especially among us in England," and here he certainly appears to be correct. The credit of being one of the first learned men in Europe, who argued strongly for learning being cultivated, *with a view to the benefit and instruction of the common people*, can never be taken from Erasmus.

His influence in England may be estimated by the opposition displayed against him. Lee, afterwards Archbishop of York, and Standish, provincial of the Franciscan friars, the future Bishop of St. Asaph, were loud and bitter opponents. Invectives against the learned languages were uttered from the pulpit, and hence the proverb—" *Cave a Græcis, ne fias Hæreticus; Fuge literas Hebræas, ne fias Judæorum similis.*" "Beware of Greek, lest you become a heretic! Fly from the Hebrew letters, lest you become like Jews!" *Græculus iste*, the phrase first applied by Standish to Erasmus, became, for a long time afterwards, the phrase for an heretic. All these men, however, were proceeding under the guidance of a higher power; for even Erasmus, now past fifty, and in the most memorable year of his life, or 1516, speaks with timidity respecting the study of Hebrew—a proof, by the way, that it was cultivated. After observing that literature began to make a great and an happy progress; "but," says he, "I fear two things; I fear that the study of Hebrew will promote Judaism, and that the study of philology will revive Paganism!" And by this time there certainly were Italians, many of whom, says Jortin, were writing in the style and manner of *Pagans*. The fulness of the time, therefore, was now come, to show what the vernacular tongue, the tongue of the common people, could do.

Meanwhile, in 1516, the New Testament, in Greek and Latin, with the notes of Erasmus, had come forth, printed by Froben at Basil. It soon spread far and wide. He received the congratulations of his friends, but it raised up a host of enemies; and one of the colleges in Cambridge, though only one, actually forbade it to be brought within its walls! In Oxford no such fear had been displayed, though even there great caution was demanded. It was, however, only the next year, when Fox, the Bishop of Winchester, had determined to found his college at Oxford, that of "Corpus Christi," so that all things were, at least, working *together* for good. Two Professors, for Latin and Greek, were constituted, with competent salaries. The books in Greek were expressly specified by the Founder, and these, says Warton and others, "were the purest, and such as are most esteemed, even in the present improved state of ancient learning." The Greek lecturer was ordered to explain the best Greek classics; but there was one curious circumstance connected with this foundation, and especially these lectures,

which must not be omitted. So long before as the year 1311, at Vienne, in Dauphine, Clement V., (the man who first appropriated to himself the first year's revenue of all the benefices in England—the origin of the first fruits,) from a superstitious veneration for Hebrew and Greek, because they formed part of the *superscription* on the cross of Christ, “enjoined that professors in Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic, should be instituted in the universities of *Oxford*, Paris, Bononia, (Bologna,) Salamanca, and in the Court of Rome.” It was actually under the influence of this injunction that one of the Greek exiles claimed a stipend for teaching his native tongue in Paris; and Fox, therefore, that he might not appear to be countenancing any dangerous innovation, was obliged to cover his institution under the mantle of this authority! The reason given was not satisfactory to all, but learning flourished; though little had Clement V. imagined what effects would follow from his canonical decree, so far as it was now pled.

With regard to Hebrew learning at this early period, it is by no means sufficient to direct the eye only to John Reuchlin, the well-known promoter of this language, however eminent his services. Throughout the year 1498, he remained at Rome, perfecting himself in Hebrew, under Abdias, a Jew. But to say nothing of Hebrew manuscripts, in England as well as the Continent, the art of printing had been applied to the language more than twenty years before this, in the Psalter of 1477. Then came the Pentateuch, and other books at Bologna, in 1482; the Prophets, at Soncino, in 1486; the Hagiographa, at Naples, in 1487; and in 1488, there was printed at Soncino the first edition of the Hebrew Bible entire. Nay, within the compass of a single year, and that so early as 1494, there were published not fewer than *four* editions of the Hebrew Bible, which almost immediately disappeared, so great was the interest awakened for Hebrew learning. In short, and without mentioning single portions of the Sacred Volume, by the year 1526, there had been published *fourteen* editions of the Hebrew Bible, in folio, quarto, and octavo, with and without points; and it is especially to be remembered, that Divine Providence had so over-ruled the whole, that not one of the Sacred Originals, whether in Hebrew or Greek, had ever been restrained by any Government, however absolute!¹⁶

Indeed, at this moment, so far from such restraint being imposed in England, it was quite the reverse: as not one man of high authority

¹⁶ These Bibles are dated, Soncino, 1488; three in 1494, fol. 4°. 8°, and in the same year at Brescia, an octavo. The identical copy of this last, from which *Luther* translated, is still preserved in the Royal Library at Berlin. The Complutensian in 1515. Then followed the Soncino of 1517, three editions in 1518, and one in 1521, 1524, 1525, and 1526. Not fewer than the half of these, from 1518, were printed by a native of Antwerp, the first printer of the Christian profession, in this language, the celebrated Daniel Bomberg, whose press, almost equally with that of Aldus, was the ornament of Venice. He is said to have retained about a *hundred* Jews, as correctors of the press, the most learned he could find. Other editions need not be here mentioned; but Bomberg went on printing till his death, in 1540.

appears to have *foreseen*, that the cultivation of the original languages would inevitably lead to a translation of the Sacred Volume into the vulgar tongue. Wolsey himself, only two years after Fox, had begun to encourage classical learning, by founding at Oxford, in 1519, not only a chair for Rhetoric and Latin, but one for Greek, with ample salaries; while his royal Master was also favourable to the progress of letters. Thus, in this very year, we know from the epistles of Erasmus, that a preacher having harangued at Oxford, with great violence, against the opinions inculcated by the *new* Professors; and his arguments having been keenly canvassed by the students, a just detail was laid before His Majesty, then residing at Woodstock, by Sir Thomas More, and Pace of Fox's College, when Henry interposed his authority, and transmitted to the University a royal mandate, commanding, "that the study of the Scriptures, *in the original languages*, should not only be permitted for the future, but received as a branch of the academical institution."

We have, now, however, gone over the precise period in which our first and future translator of the Scriptures resided, both at Oxford and Cambridge. Such a combination of advantages fully explain the source of those attainments in learning, which he was afterwards to turn to such powerful account.

Tyndale was brought up, from his earliest years, at Oxford, and as a scholar, where, after a lengthened residence, he proceeded in "degrees of the schools;"¹⁷ or, as Foxe has said—"By long continuance, he grew up and increased as well in the knowledge of tongues, and other liberal arts, as especially in the knowledge of the Scriptures; insomuch, that he read privily to certain students and fellows in Magdalen College some parcel of divinity, instructing them in the knowledge and truth of the Scriptures." His education "in grammar, logic, and philosophy, he received," says Wood, "for the most part, in St. Mary Magdalen's Hall," immediately adjoining the College of that name. At this Hall, first called *Grammar* Hall, from the attention paid to classical learning, and where Grocyn, as well as W. Latimer and Linacre, had lectured, the members stood, as they do now, on the same footing with those of the other Colleges; their course of study, tuition, length of residence, examination, and degrees, being precisely the same as the rest of the University. In those early days,

¹⁷ "Whether he took a degree," says Wood, "doth not appear in our Registers," and for the best of all reasons—the Registers do not go so far back, as he himself has told us elsewhere.

however, these Halls, having no exhibitions nor endowments for scholarships, many of the students lived at their *own* charge; and since no man has ever once been mentioned as patronising Tyndale, throughout his whole life, the presumption is, that his expenses while at College must have been defrayed by his parents.¹⁸ Tyndale's zeal, however, had at last exceeded the endurance of his contemporaries, and exposed him to some danger. There is no ground for supposing that he was expelled; "but," says Foxe, "spying his time, he removed from Oxford to the University of Cambridge, where he likewise made his abode a certain space," and, it has been vaguely conjectured, took a degree. At all events, his residence in that city had terminated by the year 1519.

Possessed of such an education as he must have then acquired, as well as of such an ardour to improve, we cannot here disturb the narrative by any discussion as to its merits or extent. Sufficient evidence of both will occur in the following pages. We only remark here, that the incontrovertible proof of Tyndale's erudition, whether as a Greek or Hebrew scholar, is to be found in the *present* version of our Bible, as read by millions. "The circumstance of its being a *revision* five times derived, is an advantage altogether peculiar to itself, and doubly valuable from that circumstance."¹⁹ While, notwithstanding this five-fold recension of the Greek and Hebrew original, large portions remain untouched, or verbally as the Translator first gave them to his country. It is, indeed, extraordinary that so many of Tyndale's correct and happy renderings should have been left to adorn our version, while the terms substituted, in other instances, still leave to him the palm of scholarship. When the incorrect, not to say injurious, sense, in which certain terms had been long employed, is duly considered, the substitution of *charity* for love, as Tyndale translated, of *grace* for favour, and *church* for congregation, certainly cannot be adduced as proofs of superior attainment in the original Greek.

In a historical point of view, however, and independently of his merits as a translator, it would be of some importance

¹⁸ From inattention to dates, and in the absence of authentic information, many wild assertions have been hazarded as to the early years of Tyndale. Among others, it has been said that he was chosen by Cardinal Wolsey one of those early Canons, selected to grace the opening of Cardinal College! By the time of this selection, Tyndale was beyond seas, in possession of that learning which he had acquired during the auspicious period at which we have glanced. It is a distinguishing feature of our Translator's history, that he never had a patron. ¹⁹ Whitaker.

if we could ascertain what had been the state of his mind, even before leaving the University, in reference to that great system of impiety and oppression, which, single handed, he was afterwards to assail with such decisive effect. Had he already seen through its character? Was he even already engaged in *marking* it, as he never after ceased to do? If he was, this would go a great way in proving him to have been an instrument raised up by God, as independently of Luther, as were Lefevre and Zuinglius. His lectures at Oxford, which must have been about 1517, if not earlier, and his being obliged to desist, certainly say as much as that he was in advance of the age, but how far, from this source, we have no intimation. If Tyndale himself would afterwards give us but one hint, we could not desire better evidence. By those, however, who are familiar with his writings, it must have been observed that he very seldom has introduced his own personal feelings, with any precision as to *dates*, not caring to establish himself, in point of priority, to any man: and yet there is one passage, with which he casually concludes his Exposition of the Epistle of John, which seems to glance as far back as the year 1518, if not to some time before it. He had been exposing the policy of the hierarchy, in raising the cry of sedition or insurrection, in the days of Wickliffe,—“And so,” he adds, “the hypocrites say now likewise, that God’s Word causeth insurrection; but ye shall see shortly that these hypocrites themselves, after their old wont and ensamples, in quenching the truth that uttereth their juggling, shall cause all realms Christian to rise one against another, and some against themselves. Ye shall see, then, run out, before the year come about, that which they have been in brewing, as I have *marked, above this DOZEN years*. This much have I said, because of them that deceive you, to give you an occasion to judge the spirits.”

Now, this language was published in September 1531; but “*above a dozen of years,*” brings us back to 1518, if not to an earlier period. We leave the reader to form his own conclusion; but, at all events, such a state of mind was in perfect consonance with the course which Tyndale so immediately pursued, with all his characteristic vigour.²⁰

²⁰ Let it here, however, be observed, by the way, that in August 1518, Martin Luther was quietly awaiting the good effects which he imagined his submissive letter to the Roman Pontiff was calculated to produce. He had not seen Melancthon till the 25th of that month; and

Returning to his native county, Tyndale was soon actively engaged, and so continued to be, from Stinchcombe-hill down to Bristol, to the close of 1522. As the place where he lived, only eight miles south from that of his birth, is well known; nay, and the house under whose roof he spent his best and zealous exertions, in discussing and defending the Word of God, is happily *still* in existence,—to all such as may take an interest in the following history, there is not a more heart-stirring spot in all England. The Halls of our Colleges, wherever they stand, have never given birth to a design, so vitally important in its origin, so fraught with untold benefit to millions, and now so extensive in its range, as that which ripened into a fixed and invincible purpose, in the Dining Hall of Little Sodbury Manor House.



Little Sodbury Manor House in 1830.

It was in this house that Tyndale resided for about two years, as a tutor; and adjoining to it behind, there still stands, with its two ancient yew trees before the door, the little Church of St. Adeline, where of course the family and tenants attended. Foxe has said of Tyndale, while at Antwerp, that when he "read the Scriptures, he proceeded so fruitfully, sweetly,

it was on the 31st that he wrote in admiration of him to Spalatin—"I can wish for no better Greek master." Of course, nothing from the pen of Luther had yet reached England; but Tyndale has been giving lectures, some time before, to the students and fellows of Magdalen College, Oxford; and having quitted Cambridge also, is now on his way to Gloucestershire.

and gently, much like unto the writing of John the Evangelist, that it was a heavenly comfort to the audience to hear him;" and so it may have been, under some of his earliest efforts, within the walls of this diminutive and unpretending place of worship. At all events, let it be observed, when his voice was first heard, Luther had not yet been denounced even by Leo X. at Rome, much less by Cardinal Wolsey in England.

"About A.D. 1520," we are informed, that "William Tyndale used often to preach in Bristol." This he did on the great Green, sometimes called the Sanctuary, or St. Austin's Green. "He was at that time resident with Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury, as tutor to his children, and on Sundays he preached at the towns and parishes in the neighbourhood, and frequently he had debates with the Abbots and other clergy who frequented the house."²¹

This small parish, with its manor house and inmates, thus become objects of no little interest, and for the sake not of Tyndale only, but especially of the *design* there formed, as well as of the circumstances that led to it, we must not refrain from giving some farther particulars.

In this part of Gloucestershire there are three contiguous parishes of the same name—Old Sodbury, Chipping, *i. e.* Market Sodbury, and the third, named Little Sodbury, by way of distinction. This last, consisting of about 900 acres, chiefly in pasture, lies on the side of Sodbury hill, and extends to its summit. On the edge of this hill is a strong Roman camp of an oblong square, where first Queen Margaret, and then Edward IV. in pursuit, had rested before the battle of Tewkesbury. Immediately below this camp, on the side of the hill fronting south-westward, stands the Manor House, an ancient building, from which there is a beautiful and extensive prospect over the vale, as far as the Bristol Channel. Four clumps of large trees growing above, objects very observable, are taken notice of through a large extent of country on that

²¹ Memoirs of Bristol, from old authorities, by Seyer, vol. II., p. 215. This House, under Edward II. and III., had been inhabited by the Despencers; by the Stanshaws under Ed. IV., and in the year of Henry the Seventh's accession, or 1485, it came to the family of John Walshe of Olveston, by his marriage to Elizabeth Forster, daughter and heir of the previous proprietor. Henry VII., with an eagle eye to property, as well as the crown, had prevailed upon Ann, the old unfortunate Countess of Warwick, to settle the greater part of her large inheritance on him and his heirs. Hence it was that Henry VIII., through the Berkeley family, as already explained, and now through that of Warwick, had no small stake in the county of Gloucester. Among other property, the manor house of *Old Sodbury* was now in his gift, and hence, along with his knighthood, we shall find it given to Sir John. It may be added, that this explanation accounts for the many repeated gifts of property in Gloucestershire afterwards, both by Henry VIII. and his son Edward, more especially to Sir Ralph Sadler.

side of the hills. In the sketch already given, one of these clumps may be seen on the left, but a nearer view will give a better idea of the house itself.



Less distant View.

Inhabited by different families from the thirteenth century, it was now in possession of Sir John Walsh, Knight, as inherited from his father. Happening to have been Champion to Henry VIII. on certain occasions, and to please his royal master, the heir of Little Sodbury had been knighted, and received from him in addition, the Manor House of Old Sodbury, then in the gift of the Crown. Intimate as Walsh had been, both with the young king and the court, and now given to hospitality, his table was the resort, not only of the neighbouring gentry, but of the Abbots and other dignified ecclesiastics, swarming around him. Thus it was, that, whether in company, or alone with the family, where he was treated as a friend, Tyndale enjoyed one of the best opportunities for becoming intimately acquainted with the existing state of things, whether civil, or ecclesiastical so called. Sir John had married Anne Poyntz, the daughter of an ancient Gloucestershire family in the neighbourhood, a lady who took as warm an interest as her husband in the discussions at their table.²²

²² Lady Walsh was the daughter of Sir Robert Poyntz of Iron Acton, by Margaret, dr. of Anthony Earl Rivers, after whom her brother was named. She was, therefore, the ancestor in a family which, in the male line, became extinct, only the other day, by the death of William

“This gentleman,” says Foxe, “as he kept a good ordinary commonly at his table, there resorted to him many times, sundry Abbots, Deans, Archdeacons, with divers other doctors and great beneficed men; who there, together with Master Tyndale sitting at the same table, did use, many times, to enter into communication. Then Tyndale, as he was learned and well practised in God’s matters, so he spared not to shew unto them simply and plainly his judgment; and when they at any time did vary from his opinions, he would shew them in the book, and lay before them the manifest places of the Scriptures, to confute their errors, and confirm his sayings.” It was not long, however, before Sir John and his lady had been invited to a banquet given by these great Doctors. There they talked at will and pleasure, uttering their blindness and ignorance without any resistance or gainsaying. On returning home, both Sir John and his lady began to reason with Tyndale respecting those subjects of which the priests had talked at their banquet; one decided proof, that some considerable impression had been made. Tyndale firmly maintained the truth, and exposed their false opinions. “Well,” said Lady Walsh, “there was such a doctor there as may dispense a hundred pounds, and another two hundred, and another three hundred pounds: and what! were it reason, think you, that we should believe you before them?”²³ To this, Tyndale at the moment, gave no reply, and for some time after, said but little on such subjects.

He was at that moment busy with a translation from Erasmus of his “*Enchiridion Militis Christiani*,” or Christian Soldier’s Manual, the second edition of which, with a long and pungent preface, had appeared at Basil, in August 1518.²⁴ Once finished, Tyndale presented the book to Sir John and his lady. “After they had read,” says Foxe, “and well perused the same, the doctorly prelates were no more so often invited to the house, neither had they the cheer and counten-

Stephen Poyntz, Esq., of Cowdray Park and Midgham. His daughters are married into the noble families of Clinton, Spencer, and Exeter.

²³ The wages of a Haymaker, under Henry VII., were *one penny* a-day, and under Henry VIII. they had not risen above *three-half-pence*. The money referred to by Dame Walsh, was therefore equal to from £1500 to £4500 of our present money.

²⁴ The first edition, printed in 1502, was composed by Erasmus “to correct the error of those who supposed religion to consist in *mere ceremonies and bodily service*, to the neglect of real piety.” Written originally at the request of a lady, with a view to her husband, it was now translating into English for another couple, on whom it was to have no small effect. The *preface* will reward the perusal of any Oxford scholar in the present day.

ance when they came, which before they had." This they marked, and supposing the change to have arisen from Tyndale's influence, they refrained, and at last utterly withdrew. They had grown weary of our Translator's doctrine, and now bore a secret grudge in their hearts against him.

A crisis was evidently approaching. The priests of the country, clustering together, began to storm at ale-houses and other places; and all with one consent, against one man. Whether the existing Chancellor of the diocese of Worcester had ever feasted at Little Sodbury, does not appear; but it cannot be long before Tyndale will have to stand before him. Fortunately the tutor has left on record his own reflections as to this period of his life.

"A thousand books," says he, "had they lever (rather) to be put forth against their abominable doings and doctrine, than that the *Scripture* should come to light. For as long as they may keep *that* down, they will so darken the right way with the mist of their sophistry, and so tangle them that either rebuke or despise their abominations, with arguments of philosophy, and with worldly similitudes, and apparent reasons of natural wisdom; and with wresting the Scriptures unto their own purpose, clean contrary unto the process, order, and meaning of the text; and so delude them in descanting upon it with allegories; and amaze them, expounding it in *many* senses before the unlearned lay people, (when it hath but *one simple literal sense*, whose light the owls cannot abide), that though thou feel in thine heart, and art sure, how that all is false that they say, yet couldst thou not solve their subtle riddles.

"Which thing only moved me to translate the *New Testament*. Because I had perceived by experience, how that it was impossible to establish the lay people in any truth, *except the Scripture were plainly laid before their eyes in their mother tongue*, that they might see the process, order, and meaning of the text: for else, *whatsoever truth* is taught them, these enemies of all truth quench it again—partly with the smoke of their bottomless pit, (whereof thou readest in *Apocalypse*, chap. ix.) that is with apparent reasons of sophistry, and traditions of their own making; and partly in juggling with the text, expounding it in such a sense as is impossible to gather of the text itself."

Accordingly, "not long after this," says John Foxe, "there was a sitting of the (Italian) Bishop's Chancellor appointed, and warning was given to the Priests to appear, amongst whom Master Tyndale was also warned to be there. Whether he had any misdoubt by their threatenings, or knowledge given him that they would lay some things to his charge, is uncertain; but certain this is, as he himself declared, that he doubted their privy accusations; so that he, by the way, in going thitherward, cried in his mind heartily to God, to give him strength to stand fast in the truth of his word." But let us hear Tyndale's own expressions.

“When I was so turmoiled in the country where I was, that I could no longer dwell there, the process whereof were too long here to rehearse, I thiswise thought in myself,—this I suffer, because the priests of the country be unlearned, as God knoweth, there are a full ignorant sort, which have seen no more Latin than that they read in their Portesses and Missals, which yet many of them can scarcely read. And therefore, because they are thus unlearned, thought I, when they come together to the ale-house, which is their preaching place, they affirm that my sayings are heresy. Besides they add to, of their own heads, that which I never spake, as the manner is, and *accused me secretly to the Chancellor, and other the Bishop's Officers.*”

Here then was Tyndale, in the year 1522, brought to answer for himself; and having already had so many discussions with dignitaries on Sodbury Hill, as well as arguments with the priests in other places, one might have supposed that something decisive was on the eve of accomplishment; but it turned out an entire failure.

“When I came before the Chancellor, he *threatened* me grievously, and *reviled* me, and *rated* me as though I had been a *dog*; and laid to my charge whereof there could be none accuser brought forth, as their manner is not to bring forth the accuser; and yet, *all* the Priests of the country were there the same day.”

Tyndale's future footsteps will frequently discover him to have been a man, who, in the history of his country stood literally *alone*; and here, it should seem, this peculiar feature had already begun to discover itself. As standing before the Chancellor of any diocese, we read of no second individual, in whose appearance there were so many curious coincidences. The reader will now recollect the thoroughly *Italianised* character of the district, as formerly described, and the questions very naturally present themselves—Who was this Chancellor? Who the Cardinal that had recently appointed him? Who was the non-resident Italian Bishop? nay, and who the reigning Pontiff himself, the fountain of all this oppressive authority? The *Pontiff* was Adrian VI., who, to appease Wolsey, had recently made him “Legate a latere” for life; the *Bishop* was Julio di Medici, the future Clement VII., and who, without even visiting England, had been made Bishop of Worcester by Leo X. The man who had lately appointed the Chancellor to the diocese was *Wolsey* himself, who farmed the whole district for his Italian brother; and the *Chancellor*, who had raised himself to this unenviable notoriety by so treating the man destined by Divine Providence to overcome all above him, as far as Rome itself was concerned; was a creature of the English Cardinal, a Dr. Thomas Parker, who

lived to know more of Tyndale's power and talents, than he then could comprehend. Had such men only known who was then within the Chancellor's grasp, with what eager joy would they have put an end to all his noble intentions?²⁵

Escaping, however, out of Parker's hands, the Tutor departed homeward, and once more entered the hospitable abode of Little Sodbury, but more than ever firmly resolved.



Entrance to Little Sodbury Manor from the East.

It is some alleviation to find that every man in the country was not of the same opinion with the reigning, if not furious Chancellor. "Not far off," continues Foxe, "there dwelt a certain doctor, that had been an old chancellor before to a bishop, who had been of old familiar acquaintance with Master Tyndale, and also favoured him well. To him Tyndale went and opened his mind on divers questions of the Scripture, for to him he durst be bold to disclose his heart. To whom the doctor said—'Do you not know that the Pope is very Anti-

²⁵ Owing to the inaccuracy of several authors, there is some danger of this Chancellor being mistaken for Dr. Thomas Bell, the future Bishop of Worcester, as they have represented him to be Chancellor from 1518 to 1528. This is a mistake. Bell, who in 1518, had succeeded Haniball, now resident in Rome as Wolsey's correspondent, had been superseded by the appointment of Parker, to act for Julio di Medici, and he continued to act as Chancellor or Vicar-General from 1522 to 1535.—See *Wood's Fasti*, by Blisa, p. 70-80, and *Green's Hist. of Worcester*. No, Parker was evidently a man of great passion. He had commenced with Tyndale, and afterwards displayed his fury on another memorable occasion. This was actually the same man who dug up, and then burnt to ashes, the body of William Tracy, Esq. of Todington in Gloucestershire. This cost him a great sum, as will appear in our history under 1531; but he was not removed till 1535, when *Hugh Latimer* became Bishop. Parker died at Salisbury in 1538.

christ, whom the Scripture speaketh of? But beware what you say; for if you shall be perceived to be of that opinion, it will cost you your life;’ adding, ‘I have been an officer of his; but I have given it up, and defy him and all his works.’”²⁶

It was not long after this that Tyndale, happening to be in the company of a reputed learned divine, and in conversation having brought him to a point, from which there was no escape, he broke out with this exclamation, “We were better to be without God’s laws, than the Pope’s!” This was an ebullition in perfect harmony with the state of the country at the moment, but it was more than the piety of Tyndale could bear. “I defy the Pope,” said he, in reply, “and all his laws; and if God spare my life, ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough, to know more of the Scripture than you do!” It was one of those significant bursts of zeal, which will sometimes escape from a great and determined mind. It meant even more than met the ear, for, by this time, Tyndale might have said, with Jeremiah of old, and perhaps did so, “His word was in mine heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

Just so, th’ Omnipotent, who turns—the system of a world’s concerns,
From more minutæ can educe—events of most important use;—
But who can tell how vast the plan—which this day’s incident began?

After this, as might have been anticipated, the murmuring of the priests increased more and more. Such language must have flown over the country, as on the wings of the wind. Tyndale, they insisted, was “a heretic in sophistry, a heretic in logic, and now also a heretic in divinity.” To this they added that “he bare himself *bold of the gentlemen there* in that country, but that, notwithstanding, he should be otherwise spoken to.”²⁷

It was now evident that Tyndale could no longer remain, with safety, in the county of Gloucester, or within the *Italian* diocese of Worcester. He has therefore been represented, by Foxe, as thus addressing his Master: “Sir, I perceive that I shall not be suffered to tarry long here in this country, neither

²⁶ Who could this “old familiar” be, if not William Latimer the Greek Scholar? He retired to Saintberry and Weston-Sub-Edge as Rector, and these were both in Gloucester County.

²⁷ It must be remembered that Tyndale himself was the son of a respectable family, only eight miles distant; that he was now under the roof of Henry’s Champion, and not to mention other gentlemen, that Sir John’s brother-in-law, Sir Anthony Poyntz, was this year High Sheriff of the County.

shall you be able, *though you would*, to keep me out of the hands of the spirituality; and also what displeasure might grow thereby to you by keeping me, God knoweth; for the which I should be right sorry." Searching about, therefore, not so much for an avenue to escape, as for some convenient place to accomplish the determined purpose of his heart, by translating the Scriptures, he now actually first thought of Tunstal, Bishop of London, one of the future *burners* of his New Testament! From Sir John Walsh's intimate knowledge of the Court, there was no difficulty in procuring the best access to him; and so Tyndale must bid farewell for ever to his interesting abode on Sodbury Hill.²⁸ It was his first and last, or *only* attempt throughout life to procure a *Patron*, and he will, himself, now describe his own movements.

"The Bishop of London came to my remembrance, whom Erasmus (whose

²⁸ Before our leaving the House, however, which was then left by Tyndale with *such* intentions for his country's benefit and future glory, its history to the present day must not be withheld from the reader. Of its present aspect the reader has already seen three correct views. Sir John Walsh survived to the year 1546, when he was succeeded by Maurice Walsh, Esq., the *pupil* of Tyndale, then in his seventh year, when his Tutor left Sodbury. He married the daughter of Nicholas Vaux Lord Harrowden; but in 1556 a storm fell on this house. The lightning having entered at the parlour door, forced its way out at a window on the opposite side of the room, supposed to have been that part of the building which is seen on the left; one of the children was killed on the spot, and the *father* himself, with *six* others, were so much hurt that they all died in less than two months! An heir, however, survived, Sir Nicholas Walsh, and, as named after his grandfather Lord Harrowden, probably the eldest son. The manor, as well as that of Old Sodbury, continued in the family till 1608, when both were purchased by Thomas Stephens, Esq., Attorney-General to the Princes Henry and Charles. His eldest son, Edward, was High Sheriff in 1634. In prospect of this he had repaired the Manor House where Tyndale once lived, and hence, on the chimney-piece of the great room or Dining Hall, we have the family arms, having on one side the initials of his father and mother, T. S. : E. S., on the other those of himself and his lady, *W. A.*, and the date "A. D. 1633." Both houses were held by this family till 1728, when, through Sir Henry Winchcombe, they became the property, and Little Sodbury the *abode* of David Hartley, M. D., the author of *Observations on Man*. His great-grandson, Winchcombe Henry Howard Hartley, Esq., of Bucklebury House and of Little Sodbury, being the present proprietor. See *Rudder, Atkyns, Burke's Commoners, &c.*

At the back of this ancient Manor there was a room styled the *Library*, which the writer, with a friend, once visited; and with not a little interest, as the apartment in which Tyndale may have often sat, with his pupils around him; and, as Dr. Hartley is described by his son, to have been "methodical in the order and disposition of his books and papers, the companions of his thoughts," here, also, he may have mused the hours away. But on a subsequent visit this part of the house had been taken down, in apprehension of its falling! Surely it is to be hoped, although the house at present be inhabited by the Farmer on the Estate, and a new erection is said to be proceeding on still higher ground, that not one stone more will be removed. There is an interest said to be attached to Bucklebury House, Herts, in consequence of its being the occasional residence of the well known Lord Bolingbroke, but, in the eye of thousands, this is not to be mentioned in comparison with that which must ever be associated with the Farmer's present abode. Should this note ever meet the eye of the present respectable proprietor, we have no doubt that *verbum sapienti sat est*.

Upon our first approach to this house, in 1830, enquiring, by way of experiment, of a little girl who answered the door—whether she had ever heard of a man named Tyndale, who lived long ago? "Yes, Sir," she replied, "he lived in this house, and translated the Bible here." And in this the child was saying nothing more than our eminent antiquary Camden had said, for so even he imagined—"The learned William Tyndale lived here as Tutor, &c., and here translated the Bible." It is, however, quite possible that Sir John may have heard him read here some specimen of what he was bent upon accomplishing.

tongue maketh of little gnats great elephants, and lifteth up above the stars whoever giveth him a little exhibition,) praiseth exceedingly, among other, in his Annotations on the New Testament, for his great learning. Then, thought I, if I might come to this man's service I were happy."²⁹ Such was his impression in Gloucestershire, when moved by the blind superstition of his country "to translate the New Testament;" and, till now, evidently unacquainted with the state of the metropolis; for "even," says he, "even in the Bishop of London's house I intended to have done it!"

"And so I gat me to London, and through the acquaintance of my master came to Sir Harry Gilford, the King's Grace's Comptroller, and brought him an Oration of *Isocrates*, which I had translated out of *Greek into English*, to speak unto my Lord of London for me. This he also did, as he showed me, and willed me to write an epistle to my lord, and to go to him myself, which I also did, and delivered my epistle to a servant of his own, one William Hebilthwayte, a man of mine old acquaintance. But God, which knoweth what is within hypocrites, saw that I was beguiled, and that *that* counsel was not the next way to my purpose. And therefore He gat me no favour in my lord's sight. Whereupon my lord answered me—"his house was full, he had more than he could well find, and advised me to seek in London, where, he said, I *could not lack a service.*"

This memorable interview between these two individuals, happened about three or four months after Tunstal's consecration as Bishop of London; and before the reader has proceeded much farther in these pages, he will discover a singular propriety in Tyndale having first called upon this man, above all others, previous to his going abroad. All parties agree as to Tunstal's attainments in learning—the specimen presented to him was a translation from the *Greek* of *Isocrates* into English; and, after receiving it, the Bishop replied,—“Seek in London, where *you* cannot lack a service.” If there was any meaning in the words employed, it was this,—“You are a competent translator from *Greek* into *English.*” Tyndale, it is true, was now evidently led, like a blind man,

²⁹ This reference to Erasmus is at once curious and important. His writings Tyndale admired, but saw through the defects in his character. It was in 1530 that Tyndale thus wrote. By “annotations” he could not refer to the *paraphrases* of Erasmus, which were not yet published, but to the preliminary matter before his New Testament, or to the *Capita argumentorum*, &c. But, by thus writing, he incidentally discovers that he had kept his eye on the successive editions of Erasmus' Greek New Testament. The three first were 1516, 1519, and 1522; all of which he may have seen before leaving England, but in none of these is Tunstal mentioned. He is first introduced by Erasmus among his Patrons in his fourth Ed. of 1527; but this, of course, could not influence our Translator when applying to the Bishop in 1523. Tyndale is therefore to be understood as marking, in 1530, the last specimen he had read—“Whom Erasmus praiseth among other in,” &c. They were the other commendations, which moved him in 1523. Thus, in a letter to Sir T. More, as early as 1517, Erasmus makes grateful mention of his pecuniary obligations to Tunstal, and in another that year he says, “scarcely one man in many thousands can be found more upright and obliging;” in one of 1518 he extols him for his knowledge of the learned languages. All this requires to be observed in connexion with a note in Russel's edition of Tyndale's works, l. p. 500; as well as with another, by the Editor of Foxe, as lately published by Seeley, vol. vii. pp. 655, 656. Erasmus had not benefited by the Complutensian Testament previous to his edition of 1527, and thus Tyndale discovers that he probably had the fourth or fifth Edition before him, when correcting his *New Testament* of 1534.

by a way that he knew not; but it certainly was something, to have received such an answer or attestation to his scholarship from such a man, before he proceeded farther with his intended work. It was equal to the Bishop having said, *Go forward*—though, if Tunstal had only divined what was the main object in view, no such answer had been returned; nay, an authoritative stop would have been put to all farther progress.

Meanwhile, and on the contrary, by the *advice*, and therefore the authority, of the Bishop of London himself, Tyndale was now authorised to seek for some situation throughout the metropolis. No ecclesiastic, however, afforded him any permanent abode; but, in a little time, and for fully the last six months of this year, namely, 1523, he was most kindly entertained under the roof of Mr. Humphrie Munmouth, a wealthy citizen, and future Alderman of London, when he used to preach at St. Dunstan's in the West, Fleet Street. Although he sought in vain for a situation, "almost a year," yet the residence itself was not without its value in future life. It had a similar effect upon him, which a visit to Rome had upon some others, and tended not only to ground him more firmly in his views of divine truth, but to inflame his zeal for translating the Scriptures. He had opportunity for more closely observing many things which he had never seen before; and, in reference to the scene around him, witness his own language, in 1530:—

"And so in London I abode almost a year, and marked the course of the world, and heard our preachers, how they boasted themselves and their high authority; and beheld the pomp of our Prelates, and how busy they wore, as they yet are, to set peace and unity in the world; though it be not possible for them that walk in darkness to continue long in peace; (for they cannot but either stumble, or dash themselves at one thing or another, that shall clean unquiet all together;) and saw things whereof I *defer* to speak at this time; and understood, at the last, not only that there was no room in my Lord of London's palace to translate the New Testament, but also, that there was no place to do it, in *all England*, as experience doth now openly declare."³⁰

There is here not a little expressed, but far more implied, when coming from such a man as Tyndale. Had he been nothing more than a scholar, and merely the translator of the Scriptures, it would have been out of place to have noticed

³⁰ Preface to the Pentateuch, 1530. Tyndale drew from the life, or from what he had seen, and hence the power of all his writings. He was now publishing his "Practice of Prelates," and therefore *deferred* to say more in this preface.

other affairs. But since all his other writings were so powerful at the moment, as to excite the dread of these very Prelates, and thus enjoyed the honour of public denunciation; since he was the first, if not the only man, who gave such a masterly exposure of the whole policy of Wolsey, and now, without knowing it, was about to enter on a twelve years' war with the powers of darkness; we owe it not only to himself, but more especially to the Scriptures he translated, to watch the course of Divine Providence in the world. It may only be remarked here, once for all, that for seven years to come, while Henry VIII. had one object in view, his Prime Minister, Cardinal Wolsey, was frequently pursuing another. There was almost always an under-plot, which may now be detected; and it is not difficult to do so, throughout this present year, or 1523.

While Tyndale abode in London, searching, but in vain, for a convenient place or opportunity to translate the Scriptures, but at the same time "marking the course of the world," the affairs of all Europe seemed to hinge mainly upon only two individuals, one abroad, the other at home, or in England. The former, the Duke of Bourbon, distinguished for his military skill; the other we need scarcely name, Wolsey, rising higher still, through the extent of his ministerial power. The former, unquestionably, panted for the throne of France, the latter as certainly for the Pontifical Chair. They were the two instruments raised up by the Supreme Ruler to agitate the nations at this time, while neither the one nor the other was ever to reach the object of his ambition.

It was in the beginning of this year that Bourbon was agitated into determined treason, not without great provocation. Though the ablest General and the Constable of France, the King having, instead of him, preferred to the command of his army the Duke of Alençon; and besides other offences, the Lady Regent, as nearest of kin, having claimed the estates of his deceased wife, which would have reduced him to poverty; Bourbon now meditated that revenge which he could only gain by revolt. The resentment once felt, was soon conveyed to the ear of Wolsey, and by the month of May, he had concluded that treaty by which the Duke professedly bound himself to acknowledge Henry VIII. as King of France, and, of course, to dethrone his own Sovereign. So late as September he was again oscillating in suspense, but at last he decided, and in the fall of the year, Henry was dreaming in the hope of his wearing the crown of France.

The subject will again force itself on our notice, and before the arrival of Tyndale's New Testament; but in the meanwhile, as for Wolsey, all this was merely one subordinate arrangement. The monarchs of Europe,

and especially the Emperor and the King of France, wished to secure or enlarge their dominions, but the English Cardinal longed to rule them all. They might reign over the bodies of men, but in the autumn of 1523, he was in ardent expectation of ruling both sovereign and subject, in mind and body. Having been disappointed of the Pontifical Chair after the death of Leo the Tenth in 1521, before that Tyndale left London he must have known of Wolsey's second failure by the election of Clement the Seventh; not that the Cardinal had given up all hope of the prize, but blaming the Emperor, his suspicion of him was changing into positive enmity. He must, however, conceal his resentment from his Royal Master. He will gradually alienate Henry's affection from the Emperor, but, in the meanwhile, actually expressed great satisfaction with the elevation of Clement!

In few words, the world was hastening into greater ferment. The King of Denmark and his family, driven from the throne had fled into England, and news had arrived, that Solyman, the greatest Emperor the Turks ever had, having for many months besieged the Isle of Rhodes, had taken it by storm. This island being the great resort and succour of the European nations when sailing to the east, this event turned out to be only the commencement of those ulterior operations which agitated all Europe; while as to England itself, discontent was prevailing throughout the kingdom, through Wolsey's determination to raise immense pecuniary supplies for foreign war.

But before that Tyndale embarked for the Continent, was there no other step already suggested, which might operate in direct hostility to such a design as that which he contemplated? Yes, there was, and in this very year, one of the most powerful and magnificent character. It may be regarded as the climax in the triumph of literature, or as a phalanx in opposition. The attempt too is the more worthy of notice, since it has often been loosely regarded as the only redeeming trait in Wolsey's character. We refer to the establishment of Cardinal College, Oxford. "He patronised letters," it has been said, "and may be classed among the benefactors of the human mind." But even in the cultivation of letters, we must observe the end in view, and in order effectually to secure us against all unfair or even harsh conclusions, we shall take the explanation from the best of all authorities; or from the devoted friend of Wolsey, the Confessor of Henry VIII. and his Almoner, John Longland, the Bishop of Lincoln. Immediately after explaining Wolsey's

whole intentions to the King, his letter is addressed to the Cardinal himself, and dated so early as January 5, 1522, *i. e.* 1523. The explanation once given, he proceeds:—

“ I assure your Grace, the King doth consider all this in the best manner, and so doth report it unto your Grace’s honor, better than I can with pen express. Saying that more good shall come of this your honorable foundation than any man can esteem ; with many good words much rejoicing in the same, as I doubt not but he will express at length unto your Grace at your coming, which I shewed him should be on Monday next. I ascertained him over this, your pleasure concerning the *secret search* ye would this term make in divers places, naming the same to him, and that *at one time*. And that ye would be at the Cross, (Paul’s Cross,) having the Clergy with you, and there to have a notable Clerk to preach before you a Sermon against Luther, the Lutherans and their defaulters, against their works and books, and against introducing their works into the kingdom : And then to have a proclamation to give notice that every person having any works of Luther or of his *factors* making, by a limited day to bring them in, under pain of the greater excommunication, and that day past, to fulminate the sentence against the contrary doers ; and that, if, after that day, any such works be known, or found with any person, the same to be convicted by abjuration ; and if they will contumaciously persist in their contumacy, *then to pursue them by the law* (ad ignem) *to the fire*, as against an heretic. And that ye purpose over this, to bind the said Merchants and Stationers in recognisance, never to bring into this Realm any such books, scrolls or writings. Which, your godly purpose his Highness marvellously well alloweth, and doth much hold with that recognisance, for that some and most will *more fear that*, than excommunication.

“ And his Grace thinks my Lord of Rochester to be most meet to make that Sermon before you, both because of the authority, gravity, and doctrine of the person. His Highness is as good and gracious in this *quarrel of God* as can be thought, wished, or desired, and, for the furtherance of this godly purpose, as fervent in this cause of Christ’s Church, and maintenance of the same, as ever noble Prince was.”

After flattering Henry as extolled throughout all Christendom for his “ notable wark maad agaynste Luther,” he goes on to say,—

“ It may please your Grace, of your merciful goodness, among all these great affairs, to remember *this matter* to his Highness, to animate him in this cause of Christ, of Christ and his Church, for the depression of the enemies of God. The world is *marvellously bent against us*, and it is *the King’s Grace and you* that must remedy the same. God hath sent your Grace amongst us, to advance his honor, and maintain his Church and faith ; for whom we are all most bound to pray, and for your most noble prosperous estate long to endure.”

The same day after dinner, Longland went with the Lords into the Queen’s Chamber, where the King followed, and said to the Queen,—“ Madam, my Lord of Lincoln can show of my Lord Cardinal’s College at Oxford, and what learning there is and shall be, and what learned men in the same.” Upon which signal the Bishop went over the same ground once more, and amongst all, continues Longland:—

“ I shewed her of the notable lectures that should be there, and of the execrations of learning, and how the *Students* should be *limited* by the Readers *to the same* ; likewise in the *exposition of the Bible*. And her Grace was marvellous

glad and joyous to hear of this your notable foundation and College, speaking great honor of the same."³¹

We need now no farther explanation. The curtain has been withdrawn; we have seen into the interior, and as far as the Professor's chairs. The Bishop has exultingly poured out all his incense, and the sequel will more fully prove, that we have had before us, no other than a grand systematic attempt, under the guise of learning, to retain the human mind in bondage; to prevent, if possible, the entrance of divine truth into England, and thus so far retard its progress in Europe. Here, it will be found, was, in embryo, what may be styled the first Jesuit College; projected, too, in the very year when Ignatius Loyala was no farther than Rome, imploring the benediction of the Pontiff, and seven years before he came begging into England. Well might Lord Herbert say, that the Cardinal thought, "since *printing* could not be put down, it were best to set up learning *against* learning, and by introducing able persons to dispute, suspend the laity betwixt fear and controversy—as this, at the worst, would yet make them attentive to their superiors and teachers!" The remark will force itself upon us again, but was this then a "benefactor of the human mind?" On the contrary, others will see here nothing else than a splendid but vain project to perplex the understanding, nay, to blind the minds of them that believed not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

It ought, however, to be here observed, that all the dark purposes, divulged in this memorable letter, were literally fulfilled. There was the *secret search*, and at *one* time; there was the sermon delivered, and by Fisher, the man pointed out, and the books were burnt; *but then*, it is a most remarkable fact, that all these we shall see deferred—nay, deferred for exactly three years, or till immediately after Tyndale's New Testaments had arrived in the country! Wolsey, it is true, will have quite enough to divert him all the time, but it was just as if Providence had intended that the writings of no human being should have the precedence, but that His own Word, being so treated, should thus enjoy the distinction of exciting the general commotion of 1526. The burning of the *New Testament* was to be the head and front of their offending.

We have now done with Tyndale upon English ground; and, disappointed of employment, he also was done with "marking the pomp of our Prelates," or hearing the whole fraternity "boast of their high authority." But certainly

³¹ MS. Cotton Vitell, B. v. p. 8. Nor must the character of the writer of this letter be forgotten. No wonder than he wrote, as he evidently did, *con amore*. This was the same man who, in 1521, not two years before, had tormented his whole diocese; burning all such as had relapsed, and severely punishing those who were convicted of reading certain parts of the Sacred Scriptures, in English *manuscript*, or of even possessing the ten commandments! After he had written this letter, he was down at Oxford preparing for the Cardinal's buildings; and while Tyndale was busy at the press in 1525, Longland was preaching, on the foundation stone of Cardinal College being laid. Wood's Annals, by Gutch, li. p. 24. Wood's Athene, by Bliss, i. p. 164.

when he was to be seen walking up Fleet Street, from the hospitable abode of Mr. Humphrie Munmouth, to preach at St. Dunstan's in the West, nothing in this world could have been more improbable, than that in a short time he was so to agitate the whole hierarchy of England, and the city which he was now about to leave for ever!

Here, then, and before he embarks, let us pause for a moment. The copies of the Sacred Scriptures in the English tongue, now far exceed in number, not only that of every other nation, but they have been supposed to surpass the number in all other languages when put together! With us they are familiarly enumerated by millions, and myriads of our countrymen have lived in peace, and died in joy, full of the genuine consolation thus imparted! As far, therefore, as *human* agency was employed, it becomes a sacred duty to trace this, the highest favour of Heaven, up to its source; and certainly it is not a little singular, at the distance of nearly three hundred and twenty years, that we should be able to contemplate the origin of the whole, within the bosom of one disappointed and neglected, if not despised individual! There was, indeed, one young man, his own convert, with whom he may have communed on the subject, John Fryth, whether in London, which is most probable, or at Cambridge, but he was *not* to accompany him; no, nor even an amanuensis. Solitary and alone he went out as far as we yet know, and, with the exception of the port to which he sailed, like the patriarch of old, "not knowing whither he went." By faith, it may be truly said, he left his native country, not unmindful of it, but, on the contrary, loaded with a sense of genuine pity for its inhabitants, from the king downward.

SECTION II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT IN ENGLISH PREPARING BY TYNDALE, FOR CIRCULATION IN HIS NATIVE LAND; AND IN TWO EDITIONS FROM THE PRESS BY THE CLOSE OF 1525.—STATE OF ENGLAND IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THEIR RECEPTION.

We are now entering upon a war of opinion, and one of paramount importance to this kingdom, which, as far as our first