

Tyndale's Bible.

A.D. 1536.

WILLIAM TYNDALE was born about A.D. 1484 at Berkeley, in Gloucestershire, and after many vicissitudes, much labour in his holy work, and remorseless persecution, was in the 52nd. year of his life, strangled at Vilvoorde Castle in the Low Countries, on the 6th. October, 1536, and his body subsequently burnt at the stake by order of the Council of Brabant.

Tyndale for some years studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, but migrated to Cambridge to profit himself by the wisdom of Erasmus, a Dutchman, at that time Professor of Greek in that University.

It was for the New Testament of Erasmus that the Vulgate was set aside, although Erasmus himself remained in communion with the Church of Rome. Of this translation Froude says :—"For the first time the laity were able to see, side by side, the Christianity which converted the world ; and the Christianity of the Church, with a Borgia Pope, cardinal princes, ecclesiastical courts, *and a mythology of lies.*"

THE EFFECT WAS TO BE A SPIRITUAL EARTHQUAKE.

For some years Tyndale carried on his cherished pursuit of translating the Bible—first in the quiet repose of his chaplainship in the family of Sir John Walsh, at Sodbury, in Gloucestershire, and afterwards in the house of Humphrey of Monmouth, a wealthy merchant and alderman of London. But persecution still pursued him, and finding, to quote his own words, "That not only 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,*" he sought shelter at Hamburg in 1524.

In this retreat, in spite of opposition and persecution, he is supposed to have put into circulation some 30,000 printed copies of the New Testament, and a few years afterwards William Tyndale, "to whom may be justly assigned a place amongst the great ones of the earth," died by the hands of his persecutors.

Between the time of John Wycliffe and that of William Tyndale the art of printing was discovered, and in A.D. 1526 Tyndale produced the first *printed* New Testament in English. Of the Old Testament Books he translated only the Pentateuch, the Historical Books, and part of the Prophets.

In another respect TYNDALE'S BIBLE differed from all the English versions that preceded it. All of these were translations of the Latin Vulgate, itself a translation. Tyndale for the first time consulted such Hebrew and Greek MSS. as were accessible in his time. Every succeeding version is little more than a revision of Tyndale's; even our present Authorised Version owes to him the ease, beauty and strength for which it is so much admired. "The peculiar genius," says Mr. Froude, "which breathes through the English Bible, the mingled tenderness and majesty, the Saxon simplicity, the grandeur, unequalled, unapproached in the attempted improvements of modern scholars—all are here, and bear the impress of the mind of one man, and that man, William Tyndale."

Although the language of Tyndale's Bible is modern English in comparison with that of Wycliffe, it contains many quaint expressions:—

"And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a *luckie felowe*" (a prosperous man), Gen. xxxix, 2.

"When ye praye, *bable* not moche as the gentyls do" (use not vain repetitions), St. Matthew vi, 7.

“Be not as lords over the *parrishes*” (God’s heritage),
1 Peter v, 3.

“He let it forth to *farmers* (husbandmen), Luke xx, 9.

“Brought oxen and garlands to the *churchporch*”
(gate), Acts xiv, 13.

“The rulers of the synagogue sent to them after the
lecture” (reading of the law), Acts xiii, 15.

“When they had *said grace*” (sung a hymn), St.
Matthew xxvi, 30.

“He sent forth the *hangman*” (executioner), St. Mark
vi, 27.

“I was in the Sprete on a *Sondaye*” (the Lord’s Day),
Rev. i, x.

“Why did the hethen *grudge*?” (rage), Acts iv, 25.

“And every man went into his owne *shire toune* (city)
to be taxed.” St. Luke ii, 3.

“The whole neade not the *visicion*” (physician), St.
Matt. ix, 12.

“Thou shalt find a piece of *twelve pens*” (money), St.
Matt. xvii, 27.

“The day that followeth *Good Friday*” (*the Prepara-
tion* A.V.) St. Matt. xxvii, 62.

“All men *cannot away with* (receive) that saying,” St.
Matt. xix, 11.

“Thou shalt not *breake wedlocke* (commit adultery),
St. Matt. xix, 18.

“Ye which have followed me in the second generation”
(regeneration), St. Matt. xix, 28.

“I was *herbroulesse* (a stranger) and ye lodged me”
St. Matt. xxv, 35.

“Be ye *herbrous* (hospitable), and that without
grudginge,” 1 Peter iv, 9.

“After three days shalbe *ester*” (passover), St. Matt. xxvi, 2.

“For we are not as many are, which *choppe and chaunge* (corrupt) the word of God.” 2 Corinthians ii, 17.

“Butt the *mynisters* (servants) which drue the water knew.” St. John ii, 9.

“Won beyng of them selves, which was a *poyet* (prophet) of their own.” Titus i, 12.

The text that ends the marriage service in our Liturgy:

“and are not afraid with any amazement”

is rendered by Tyndale:—

“And be not afraid of every shadow.” 1 Peter iii, 6.

We find also the somewhat curious expression of *seeing a sound*:—

“And I turned bace to see the voice that spake to me.”

The Revelacion of St. Jhon i, 12; and this phrase is perpetuated in the Authorised and the Revised Versions.

Of “shall be” Tyndale makes one word—shalbe, and he disguises the word “weightier” in the elaborate garb of “waygthyer” (St. Matt. xxiii, 23). “Anything” is spelt “entinge” in the following chapter, and we also find “tinke” for “think,” “vysselles” for “vessels,” and many other curiosities of spelling.

Tyndale uses the Saxon word “love” in place of the Greek “*charity*” which is found in the Authorised Version. “Now abideth fayth, hope and love, even these thre, but the chief of these is love.” 1 Cor. xiii, 13. And again 1 Peter iv, 8, “For love (charity) covereth the multitude of sins.” Also 1 Cor. 13, 4, “Love suffereth longe and is corteous,” which in the Authorised Version is rendered “Charity suffereth long and is kind.” It seems a pity that

the Saxon word was not retained ; it would have avoided the mistaken idea that the primary Christian virtue to which the Apostle refers was *the giving of alms*, to which the word charity is almost entirely restricted in our modern usage.

Most biographical notices of Tyndale, says Mr. Dore, are taken from John Foxe's Acts and Monuments of Martyrs, but no reliance can be placed on the truth of any uncorroborated statement made by Foxe.

Had this martyrologist been an honest man, his carelessness and credulity would have incapacitated him from being a trustworthy historian. But, unfortunately, he was not honest ; he tampered with the documents that came into his hands, and freely indulged in those very faults of suppression and equivocation for which he condemned his opponents.

The only document known to exist now, in Tyndale's own handwriting, is a quaint, but pitifully pathetic, appeal to the clemency of the governor of the Castle of Vilvoorde, where he was confined for a year and a half before his Martyrdom. The letter was written in Latin, and thus translated :—

“I believe, right honourable Sir, that you are not ignorant of what has been determined concerning me, by the Council of Brabant. Therefore I entreat your Lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here during the winter, you will request the Procureur to be kind enough to send me from my goods, which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh, which is considerably increased in this damp cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin, also a

piece of cloth to patch my leggings; my overcoat has been worn out, my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for putting on above, also warmer caps for wearing at night.

I also wish his permission to have a candle in the evening, as it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. But above all, I entrust and beseech your clemency, to be urgent with the Procureur, that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study.

And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if *any other resolution* has been come to, concerning me, before the conclusion of the winter, I shall be patient, abiding the will of God. Whose spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen :

W. TYNDALE.

“The other resolution” (his death) had already been “come to” by the Council of Brabant, and in the autumn of 1536 the noblest and purest character on the long roll of English Martyrs, met the death he did not fear to face.