

England—while he was a mercer in the City—he had seen, or he might have seen, Lollards and Wickliffites burned at the stake in smithfield, and noble ladies doing penance in white sheets, for offences ecclesiastical. He knew that the promulgation of Wickliffe's Bible was prohibited by law ; and though there were other manuscripts of the Scriptures in being, it was impossible for him or any one else to be certain that these were not made up in part from Wickliffe's version ; so that to print any one of them was to run the risk of a prosecution that might lead to imprisonment, if not to death.

One of the last works upon which Caxton was engaged was entitled " The Art and Craft to know well how to die," the translation of which from the French he finished on the 14th of June, 1490. The book begins abruptly, plunging at once into the very marrow of the subject : " When it is so," says the writer, " that what a man maketh or doeth it is made to come to some end, and if the thing be good and well made it must needs come to some good end ; then by better and greater reason every man ought to intend in such wise to live in this world, in keeping the commandments of God, that he may come to a good end. And then out of this world full of wretchedness and tribulations, he may go to heaven unto God and his saints, unto joy perdurable." At this time the persevering old printer, who had printed some 18,000 pages, of which he had himself written several thousands, was verging towards fourscore, and in this year he buried a relative, Maude Caxton, whom it has been conjectured was his wife. At the close of the following year he had fulfilled the work allotted him to do, and was peacefully gathered to his rest. This date of Caxton's death, says Mr. Blades, is confirmed by a manuscript quoted by Ames : " There is wrote down in a very old hand in a *Fructus Temporum* of my friend Mr. Bellard of Cambden in Gloucestershire, ' Of your charitee pray for the soul of Mayster