

the narrow seas, and they into the main ocean; and thus the ashes of Wycliffe are the emblem of his doctrine, which now is dispersed all the world over."

It is not too much to say that the appearance of Wycliffe's translation was the greatest occurrence in the history of the church in England since the preaching of Augustine. Men's minds were in some measure prepared for the seed that was thus sown, and the effect was striking and immediate. The Anglo-Saxon versions to which we alluded in our last chapter seem scarcely to have circulated beyond the religious houses in which they were made; in fact, it has been conjectured that they were intended rather to teach the clergy the Latin of their services than to make known to the people the meaning of what was read. Wycliffe's work, although it could only be multiplied by the laborious process of transcription (printing being still a thing of the future), was widely circulated over the length and breadth of England. Everywhere men eagerly bought and read the sacred manuscripts; everywhere Wycliffe found disciples who sympathized with his opinions; until it became a common saying, that if you met two men on the road, one of them was almost certain to be a Wycliffite. Even now, after the ravages of time and violence for nearly four centuries, no fewer than a hundred and seventy copies of the whole, or part, of his translation are in existence in public or private libraries.

As to the character and merits of Wycliffe's version, two remarks must be carefully borne in mind: (1) it was made entirely from the Latin Vulgate, and not from the original languages: and (2) it has had no influence of any kind whatsoever upon our present version, which was made from the original languages, without any consultation of what Wycliffe had done. Being thus only a translation of a translation, Wycliffe's work necessarily laboured under considerable disadvantages, which were somewhat increased by his adhering too strictly to the literal sense and the grammatical order of the Latin. It is sometimes obscure and often vague; and to us, accustomed to our noble version, it seems quaint and rude; yet it was, even as a literary work, superior in grace and dignity to anything that had yet appeared in English prose, and to his contemporaries it was a priceless blessing. A short passage, selected from one of the most familiar chapters of St. John's Gospel will enable the reader to form a tolerable estimate of the general style of Wycliffe's work, as well as to judge of the progress which the English language had made, between the age of Aelfric (A.D. 996) and that of Wycliffe (A.D. 1383.)

- St. John xv. 1—8. 1. I am a verri vine, and my fadir is an erthe tilier.
 2. Ech syoun that not beryage fruit in me, he schal do away it; and ech that berith fruit he schal purge it that it more bere fruit.
 3. Now ye ben clene for the word that I have spoken to you.
 4. Dwell ye in me and I in you; as a braunche may not make fruit of himsilf no but it schal dwelle in the vyne; so neither ye no but ye schulen dwelle in me.
 5. I am a vyne, ye ben the braunches; He that dwelleth in me, and I in him, this berith moche fruit, for withouten me ye moun no thing do.
 6. If any man schal not dwelle in me, he shal be sent out (Latin mittetur) as a braunche, and schal wexe drye, and thei schulen gadere him, and thei schulen sende him into the fier, and he burneth.
 7. If ye schulen dwelle in me and my wordis schulen dwelle in you, what ever thing ye schulen wilne ye schulen axe, and it schal be do to you.
 8. In this thing my fadir is clarified (Latin, clarificatus est) that ye bringe moost fruyt (Latin, plurimum), and ye may be maad my disciples.

A few years after Wycliffe's death John Purvey, one of the ablest and most active of the Reformer's friends, undertook to revise the translation and remove some of the awkwardness produced by its servile adherence to the order and idiom of the Latin. This work Purvey effected with remarkable good sense, upon principles which he has himself carefully explained; and his