

some ascribe it to the famous press of Froschorn at Zurich, others to that of Egenolph in Frankfort, whilst the present writer hopes to be able to prove that, like Tyndale's works, it was printed in Antwerp. There are other difficulties also connected with the book; but these are gradually yielding to patient investigation, and need not be enlarged upon here.*

Passing on, therefore, to matters of more importance, it will naturally be asked what is the real merit of Coverdale's work, and in what respects does it differ from that of Tyndale? To these questions very clear answers can be returned. The difference between Tyndale's work and Coverdale's is exactly what might have been anticipated from the difference between the men themselves. Tyndale was, in the best and noblest sense of the term, a hero: "he could see clearly the work to which he was called, and pursue it with a single unswerving faith in God, and in the powers which God had given him." His translation, accordingly, was a genuine version from the original, honestly done to the best of his ability, and pervaded by an unmistakable tone of individuality and originality. Coverdale was a man of a different stamp; not a leader either in opinion or action, but rather a protégé and satellite who needed the support of a patron; and this conscious want of originality and strength shines out from every page of his book. In fact, Coverdale's Bible cannot be recognised as a genuine independent version from the original Scriptures. And, to do him justice, Coverdale himself—though his injudicious panegyrists have praised him at the expense of Tyndale—makes no pretensions to originality, and does not profess to consider himself as in any way specially called or endowed for his work as a translator. He stated on the title-page of his Bible that it was "faithfully and truly translated out of Douche (i.e. German) and Latin into English;" and in his prefatory remarks he frankly acknowledges the profound obligations under which he lay to "five sundry interpreters (i.e. translators), Dutch and Latin, whom, because of their singular gifts and special diligence in the Bible," he had been only too glad to follow, as he "was required." The work had not been undertaken from any inward conviction that it was a special duty to which God had called him, and for which he was specially qualified; on the contrary, he regrets his own "insufficiency in the tongue," and his weakness "to perform the office of a translator," and candidly owns that it was neither his "labour nor desire to have the work put in his hands," but that when he was "instantly required, though he could not do it as well as he would, he thought it his duty to do his best, and that with a good will."

It is a pity that the simplicity and candour of Coverdale have not always been imitated by his admirers, some of whom, in spite of these express declarations, have ascribed to him a learning which he himself disclaims, and to his work that merit of close resemblance to the original which he is at such pains to disavow. Nothing could be farther removed from the gentle spirit of Coverdale than any idea of rivalry with his predecessor in his great work. Of Tyndale, though he abstains from naming him, he writes in terms of admiration and kindly sympathy, and never dreamed of placing his own work in comparison with Tyndale's "ripe knowledge."

Yet, in spite of these disadvantages, Coverdale made some valuable contributions towards the perfecting of our English Bible. There were especially two features in Tyndale's version susceptible of improvement; and both of these were most happily improved by Coverdale. Tyndale, in his anxiety to give a perfectly accurate rendering of the original, was occasionally somewhat indifferent to the rhythm and musical arrangement of his words. His translation is grave and majestic, but it is not unfrequently wanting in smoothness. Coverdale, who must have had a nice ear for "numerous prose,"

* Some copies have a dedication to Henry and Queen Anne, some to Henry and Queen Jane; there are also different title-pages, some printed abroad and some apparently in England; but these points have been all satisfactorily explained by Mr. Fry.