

as Chaucer's poems were contemporaneous with Wickliffe's Bible, so the age of the Reformation under Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, the day, that is, of Tyndale's, Matthews', Coverdale's and the Geneva Bible, has always been regarded as the palmiest time of English literature; while again, the age which saw Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Southey, and that whole band which made the early part of this century so renowned, was the successor and the inheritor of that in which Wesley, Whitefield, and their fellow-evangelists had carried religious revival over England and America. In more recent days Macaulay came out of the Clapham sect; Carlyle learned his volcanic earnestness in the most intensely spiritual of the Scottish denominations; and Tennyson has but sung to his matchless music the truths which his friend Maurice and he have learned together from the word of God as interpreted by their age. Read over again that paper of rare wisdom and still rarer wit, in the *Eclipse of Faith*, entitled "The Blank Bible," and you will be astonished at the extent to which, as there indicated, the influence of the Bible has gone into our literature. Avowedly religious writers, of course, have been indebted to it for their all; but even those who have had no directly spiritual aim have been largely beholden to its quickening power. Take from Shakespeare those passages of his writings which have been suggested or coloured by the word of God, and you rob him of some of the greenest leaves in his laurel crown. Milton might have been little better than an echo of Homer, and the "Paradise Regained" would have remained among "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." But for it where would have been the "Pilgrim" of John Bunyan, the "Task" of William Cowper, and the finest passages of Wordsworth's "Excursion!" Without it we might have had the passionate and misanthropic shriekings of Byron, but we could not have had the sweet music of his Hebrew melodies. Without it we might have had some of the songs of Burns, and perhaps, also, some of his patriotic odes, but the world would never have seen his "Cotter's Saturday Night." Without it we might have had the weird mysticism of Poe, but we could not have possessed some of the matchless lyrics of Whittier and Longfellow. But what need I more? Take the Bible out of our literature and you not only rob it of its glory, but you destroy it altogether, for if in the years of the past it has seemed to be like a tree bringing forth its fruit in its season, and having leaves for the healing of the nations, the reason has been because it has been planted on the bank of the mystic river which the prophet saw, and because it drew from that its nourishment and strength.

Now what the Gospel has done for the literature of our mother tongue it will do for that of every land to which it is sent. I am not unmindful here of the immense literature of China; even that will be purified and elevated, and more completely utilized when the Gospel shall have pervaded the land in which it grew. But that, like everything about China, is an exceptional case. For in the great majority of instances our modern missionaries have had to reduce language to writing, and have given to the peoples among whom they labour their first specimens of literature in the shape of portions of the word of God. What a wonderful part that book has played in the literature of nations! Luther's Bible first gave fixity to the German tongue. Calvin's writings about the Bible did more, perhaps, than most other things to mould the language of France, which was then in the process of formation, and the work of William Tyndale—for it is the aroma of his style that gives its fragrance to our English Bible—has given a standard to our noble tongue.

Now just what Wickliffe and Tyndale have done for us, in this regard, our missionaries have done for more than 150 different peoples; and who shall tell what the after results may be? Five hundred years ago, when Wickliffe was patiently writing out in his parsonage, on the banks of the Swift, his translation from the Vulgate, who could have foreseen that the literature he was then inaugurating should fill the libraries of England, America, and Australia? And who shall conjecture what shall be in those newly written languages five hundred years hence? The other day, at the unveiling of the