

WYCLIF'S ENGLISH.

The quincentenary of Wyclif naturally suggests to English scholars the part he took in promoting the development of the English language. He was born about 1324, and died in 1384. After producing a large number of homiletic and polemical works in English, he completed about 1380, with the assistance of others, his well-known translation of the Bible, the version of the New Testament being his own personal work. The recent researches of English scholars have made clear the influence exerted by that version on later translations,—including both the Authorized Version of 1611 and the Revised Version of 1881,—and through them on the English language generally. The nature of that influence can best be exhibited by a comparison of passages, and for this purpose I select the text of the Lord's Prayer, as given in the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, beginning with the earliest rendering of the same passage into Anglo-Saxon :—

ANGLO-SAXON (about 900 A.D.)

Fæder ure thu the eart on heofonum, si thin nama gehalgod ; to-becume thin rice ; gewurthe thin willa on eorþan swa swa on heofonum ; urne daghwamlican hlaf syle us to dæg ; and forgyf us ure gyltas, swa swa we forgyfath urum gyltendum ; and ne gelæd thu us on costnunge, ac alys us of yfele. Sothlice.

WYCLIF'S VERSION (about 1380 A.D.)

Oure fadir that art in heuenes, halwid be thi name ; thi kyngdom cumme to ; be thy wille don as in heven and in erthe ; gif to ys this day oure breed ouer other substaunce ; and forgeue to vs our dettis, as we forgeue to oure dettours ; and leede vs nat in to temtacioun, but delyuere vs fro yuel. Amen.

TYNDALE'S TRANSLATION (1525 A.D.)

O oure father, which art in heven, halowed by thy name. Let thy kyngdom come, Thy wyl be fulfilled, as well in erth, as hit ys in heven. Geue vs this daye our dayly breade. And forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve them which treaspas vs. Led vs nott in to temtacion, but delyvre vs from yvell. Amen.

TYNDALE'S TRANSLATION (1534 A.D.)

O oure father which arte in heven, halowed be thy name. Let thy kyngdom come. Thy wyl be fulfilled, as well in erth, as it ys in heven. Geue vs this daye oure dayly breede. And forgeve vs oure treaspases, even as we forgeve oure trespassers. And leade vs not into temptation ; but delyver vs from evell. For thyne is the kingdome, and the power, and the glorie for ever. Amen.

COVERDALE'S BIBLE (1535 A.D.)

O oure father which art in heauen halowed be thy name. Thy kyngdom come. Thy wyl be fulfilled upon earth as it is in heauen. Geue vs this daye oure dayly bred. And forgeue vs oure dettes, as we also forgeue our detters. And lede vs not in to teptacion ; but delyuer vs from euell. For thyne is the kyngdome, and the power, and the glorie for euer. Amen.

THE GENEVAN BIBLE (1557 A.D.)

Our Father, which art in heauen, halowed be thy name. Let thy kyngdom come. Thy wil be done euen in earth, as it is in heauen. Geue vs this day our dayly bread. And forgeue our debtes, euen as we forgiue our debtors. And lead vs not into tentation, but deliuer vs from euill. For thyne is the kingdome, and the power, and the glorie, for euer. Amen.

THE BISHOPS' BIBLE (1567 A.D.)

O our father which art in heauen, halowed be thy name. Let thy kyngdom come. Thy wyl be done, as well in earth, as it is in heauen. Geue vs this day our dayly breade. And forgyue vs our dettes, as we forgyue our detters. And leade vs not into temptation, but deliuer vs from euill ; for thyne is the kingdome, and the power, and the glorie, for euer. Amen.

THE RHEIMS NEW TESTAMENT (1562.)

Our Father which art in heaven, sanctified be thy name. Let thy kingdom come ; thy wil be done, as in heauen, in earth also. Geue vs to-day our supersubstantial bread. And forgiue vs our dettes as we also forgiue our detters. And leade vs not into tentation, but deliuer vs from euil. Amen.

THE AUTHORIZED VERSION (1611 A.D.)

Our father which art in heauen, halowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heauen. Geue vs this day our dayly bread. And forgiue vs our debts as we forgiue our debtors. And lead vs not into temptation, but deliuer vs from euill. For thyne is the kingdome, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

THE REVISED VERSION (1881 A.D.)

Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. Amen.

To Wyclif's Bible, and to Langland's "Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman," we owe, in great measure, the preservation of the Teutonic element of the English language. These two churchmen lived and wrote about the same time, and their writings became very popular with the masses, so much so that neither the French influence of the Court nor the Latin influence of the Church could do more than impart a certain amount of variety to the vocabulary. The great majority of the words in common use continued to be drawn from the

degenerate and despised Anglo-Saxon, which in the course of centuries had suffered the loss of most of its inflections through phonetic decay. A strenuous effort was made in 1542 to replace the versions then in use by one containing a large infusion of Latin words and phrases. The author of this proposition was Bishop Gardiner, who made it to Convocation and had it endorsed by an order from Henry VIII. At one meeting of the revisers he presented a list of words from the Latin New Testament, and expressed his desire "that for their genuine and native meaning, and for the majesty of the matter in them contained, these words might be retained in their own nature as much as might bee ; or be fitly Englished with the least alteration." Amongst the hundred or more words so selected are to be found dignus, adorare, simplex, pater, idolum, tyrannus, episcopus, apostolus, virtutes, sanctus, servus, &c. The design of Bishop Gardiner was frustrated by Cranmer, who obtained the King's consent to announce to the revisers that their work should be examined by the universities, and the project then dropped.

The revisers who prepared the text of the Authorized Version reverted in many passages to old English forms, and rejected latinisms introduced by Tyndale or the Genevan translators, so that the English Bible gives us in reality, not the English of the beginning of the 17th century, but that of the end of the 15th. From a literary and philological point of view this is a matter of the greatest importance, no other in the history of modern languages and literatures being comparable with it except the translation of the Bible by Martin Luther into one of the popular dialects of Germany. In some passages the Revised Version of 1881 compares unfavorably with the Authorized Version in respect of the English element in its vocabulary. For example, in the third chapter of II. Peter we read :

This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write unto you ; and in both of them I stir up your sincere minds by putting you in remembrance ; that ye should remember, &c.

The language of the Authorized Version may be a less accurate rendering of the original, but it is certainly a more English one :—

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you ; in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance ; that ye may be mindful, &c.

M. A.

OUR PARIS LETTER.

If you had been with me one afternoon you would have cried Eureka! you would have declared you had at last the dreams of the wildest dreamers realized.

I chanced to pass the Bourse one day. It was towards five or six in the afternoon. I saw a crowd under the lamps, which were already lighted at that hour, though it was early autumn. As I have learned by experience, a Parisian crowd is generally assembled by the veriest trifle ; so I do not know what led me to seek the motive for this gathering which had just caught my eye. As I drew near, I observed that far from being one crowd, with one object of interest, it was rather an assemblage of crowds of very differing sizes. There were groups of two or three, and there were groups of thirty or forty ; and the groups kept forming and dissolving with an uncertainty of movement that was confusing. Several small ones would suddenly break up and tumble into a large one, and just as suddenly the large one would crumble away and go spinning off in detached groups over the open space. What is the meaning of all this shifting and changing ? What brings the people together ? I edge my way in among the crowds. Here right close by is a group of four, and the four are as follows : first, a working man with very dingy clothes, an apron, a ladder strapped to his back, a pail in one hand, and working tools in the other. By his side stood another workman, holding a tub over his shoulder with one hand, and working tools in the other. He also had dingy clothes, apron, and dusty face. Opposite these two, making the square complete, stood two faultlessly dressed gentlemen, with a comfortable well-to-do appearance that contrasted sharply with the pair opposite. These two men were Bourse speculators. But what are the four doing ? They are surely not there to play at forming squares, rhombuses, or other geometrical figures, with a view to illustrate Pestalozzi's Natural System of Education, or persuaded by the eloquent vagaries of a Ruskin ? It would not be easy for us to believe that ; and yet the fact outdoes the fiction. Those men are in earnest debate over a redistribution of taxation, government control of manufacturing, and other questions of national and human interest. With perfect independence of mind, the poor laborers are arguing their opinions on great shanges they think are needed. With no apparent thought of difference of clothes, difference of social standing, the two well-to-do gentlemen are seeking to persuade and to calm. The victory passes from side to side, but even if at the close it be decided for neither, we may feel assured that both sides will be blessed in that wrestling, more than they know.