

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

VILTORDE AND WILLIAM TYNDALE.

Under Belgium's red, black, and yellow flag—the ancient colors of "fair Brabant," oldest among all the states of the Netherlands—there is no older town than Vilvorde. It is famous for an old church noted for its pointed arches and for its mediaeval castle, now become the military penitentiary. Many a peccant soldier thinks of Vilvorde as a place of solitude and sorrow. Less so did Tynedale, "the prisoner of Jesus Christ," amid his "books and parchments," in 1536. To my mind Vilvorde always suggests the idea of a candlestick, in which burns brightly the light whose beams are now at the end of the earth. Across the channel, over against the captive, I see a remarkably wicked king of England opening his eyes at this light.

Vilvorde lies on the railway between Brussels and Mechlin. Having traversed by rail the fertile and grassy plain, traversed also by the winding river Senne, I reached the ancient town one summer toward the end of July. I was less interested in church edifice and penitentiary than in the spot within the shadow of its walls where William Tynedale, translator of the English Bible, ascended to heaven in a chariot of fire.

How may we thank God for his great gift to the English-speaking part of our race! He sent this man into the world, and endowed him with a spirit that no fire could burn. Tynedale first, from the original languages, put the Word of God into the English tongue, Wycliffe having translated from a translation. So thoroughly did he do his work, so richly inspired, we may say, was he, that to this day, after all recensions and revisions, it is substantially Tynedale's English Bible that we read. An intense Englishman himself, Tynedale so loved his native tongue, knew it so well, was so loyal to it, and "Englished" Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek so thoroughly, that, while others have done excellently, he excels them all.

The beauty of diction, the rhythm of the language, the consummate glory of the English Bible as a successful translation, has been most justly lauded for centuries; but it is not every English-speaking colonist outside of England, or even native Briton, who appreciates how intensely English the version either of 1537 or 1611, or even the revision of our own decade, is. Indeed, unless he is familiar with the ways and habits of the plain people, with manners and customs, with work and wages, with the prevalent ideas on all subjects common in England of the Tudor era and before, he cannot appreciate the thorough Englishness of the English Bible.

For example, when we read of the capitalist in grapes agreeing with the laborer in the vineyards for "a penny a day," it seems, from our standard of wages and values, absurdity, if not oppression. Yet when standing in the Chapter House of Southwell Cathedral, whose chisel work shames that of the whole world—for the very highest modern chisel work shows inferiority when placed beside theirs—I asked the verger, familiar with the old records, what such workmen, absolutely unione in their craft, were paid. He answered, quoting from the local records, "A penny a day and a bag of meal."

Scholars who know so well that our Bible is something more than a mere version of bald literality, will recall "Long live the king," "God forbid," and many other alien and alienating Hebrew and Greek renderings which are English, and not merely Hebraized or Graecized expressions in our tongue.

Vilvorde, by its suggestions of age and of mediaevalism, helped me to picture the England of Tudor times. Is it any exag-

geration to consider that Tynedale, in the influence of his work, was the greatest Englishman of the sixteenth century,—that epoch of great men? His story in outline is this: Born in 1484, he was educated at Oxford, but the magnet Erasmus drew him to Cambridge. As tutor at the Manor House of Sir John Walsh, near Bristol, he became well acquainted with the Scriptures and resolved to put the languages of the Word of God, dead to English people, into his own living tongue. Going to London in 1523, to carry out his purpose, a year's experience showed him that he could never print the Bible in England, for neither the king nor the church rulers wanted it.

Printing was not free in England until long after Milton's "seraphic plea" for liberty of the types. It was a reserved monopoly of the government, like coinage, and to print without permission meant prison and death. Yet Tynedale believed that his nation needed God's Word, and he determined, by God's help, that the boy who drove the plow should know more of the oracles of God than the ignorant ministers of religion. On the continent printing was free. So, crossing the sea, he printed in 1525, partly in Cologne and partly at Worms, his first edition of six thousand copies of the New Testament in English in two forms. The next year these were in England and widely read. For the first time our fathers saw their language in print as the vehicle of inspiration. Other editions followed. In spite of the prohibitive edicts of Tunstall, who bought up all he could find, and with them kindled a big bonfire at Cheapside in 1539. Those who gave up their Bibles to be burnt were called "traitors," from which has come our word "traitor." John Frith, who had aided Tynedale, was in 1534 lured to London and promptly reduced to ashes. In those days, whenever the public said "The bishop hath played the cook," it was "because the bishops burn whom they lust and who-soever displeases them."

As early as 1528, at Marburg, Tynedale published his book, small in size, but mighty in potency, on "Justification by Faith." This kindled in political churchmen a blaze of wrath. Sir Thomas Moore was asked to make answer. He did so in seven volumes. Later in the same year, that wonderful piece of superb English, entitled "The Obedience of a Christian Man," was issued. Every one who would see how nobly the English language can be used in defense of truth ought to read this book. It is one in which the mind of Tynedale is most fully portrayed by himself. The supreme reason why Tynedale could translate God's mind so well was that he lived the gospel in his daily life and conduct. His two days of "fastime" in every week were spent in searching out and helping the sick and poor.

The style of this book, "The Obedience of a Christian Man," is the style of the English Bible. We do not know what books Tynedale as a student read most. If we did, we might call these the books which helped to make the English Bible. In translating Deuteronomy 6:7, he wrote: "Let these words stick in thine heart and whet them (that is, use and exercise) on thy children." He says a bishop must be "harborous,"—that is, ready to lodge strangers. He speaks of the "utterside" of the cup, and uses "neverthelater" for nevertheless. He called attention to the fact that Christ had said "Feed my sheep," not "shear thy flock." He speaks, in better English, of the "riotous" instead of the prodigal son.

We owe Tynedale a weighty debt of gratitude because he contended for the literal sense of holy Scripture. He showed that the interpretation of proverbs, similitudes, riddles, and allegories "is ever the literal sense which thou must

seek out diligently." In this he was finding fault with a traditional "four senses of Scripture,—the literal, tropological, allegorical, and analogical"; the second sense pertaining to good manners, the third appropriate to faith, and the last to hope and things above. Yet Tynedale saw in the "Scripture but one sense, which is the literal sense, and that literal sense is the root and ground of all." "Tropological and analogical are terms of their own feigning, and altogether unnecessary." Yet Tynedale believed in allegories, metaphors, and lively illustrations. Doubtless, he counted dullness in the teacher, preacher or translator a sin, and this may help us to understand why Tynedale's translation, after three centuries and a half, has never been superseded. He says, "For a similitude, or an example, doth print a thing much deeper in the wits of a man than doth a plain speaking, and leaveth behind him, as it were, a sting to prick forward and to awake him withal." Yet he was himself, and he counselled all to be, modest of allegory; for he found some preachers taking "an anti-theme of half an inch out of which some of them draw a thread of nine days long."

Tynedale put much of the Old Testament into our dear mother tongue, and lived to leave England until 1536. Then the craft of priest and courtier was linked, as it is too often in the England of our day, to the power in the mug. Tynedale's printers, bribed and made drunken, betrayed him. After two years in the castle prison, he was chained to the "stump-cross" and garrotted. Then the fire was kindled. It was soon "ashes to ashes." These words in a burial service meant more in those days than now.

"Lord, open the king of England's eyes," were Tynedale's last words. The prayer was answered. The next year Tynedale's Bible, varnished with another name, but issued by royal command, was found in every church for the use of the people.

Praise God for William Tynedale, and for the Bible in our own tongue!

A HANDSOME BOOKLET

A new publication entitled "Montreal and Quebec" has just been issued by the Grand Trunk Railway System for general distribution through the several channels at their command throughout the world. The booklet contains a combination of interesting facts about the two most historical and interesting cities of the Dominion, and there are forty pages of good reading matter profusely embellished with halftone illustrations from photographs of scenes recently taken of the principal sights and attractions in the two cities, and in addition short chapters are given descriptive of Montmorency Falls, the miracle-working shrine of Ste. Anne de Beaupre and the attractive features of Levis.

A copy may be obtained without cost by applying to J. Quinlan, D. P. A., G. T. R., Montreal.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

By J. G. Whittier.

Our fathers to their graves have gone,
Their strife is past, their triumph won;
But sterner trials in their honored race
Which rises in their honored place—
A moral warfare with the crime
And folly of an evil time.

So let it be. In God's own might
We gird us for the coming fight,
And strong in him whose cause is ours,
In conflict with unholty powers,
We grasp the weapons he has given—
The light and truth and love of heaven.