

SATURDAY EVENING MAGAZINE.

PRICE TWO PENCE.

VOL. I.]

MONTREAL, DECEMBER 21, 1833.

[No. 5.

THOU ART, OH GOD.

Thou art, Oh God! the life and light
Of all this wondrous world we see;
Its glow by day, its smile by night,
Are but reflections caught from thee.
Where'er we turn thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are Thine

When Day, with farewell beam, delays
Among the opening clouds of Even,
And we can almost think we gaze
Through golden vistas into heaven—
Those hues, that make the sun's decline
So soft, so radiant, Lord! are thine.

When Night, with wings of starry gloom,
O'er shadows all the earth and skies,
Like some dark, beautiful bird, whose plume
Is sparkling with unnumber'd eyes—
That sacred gloom, those fires divine,
So grand, so countless, Lord! are Thine.

When youthful Spring around us breathes,
Thy Spirit warms her fragrant sigh;
And every flower the Summer wreathes
Is born beneath that kindling eye.
Where'er we turn, thy glories shine,
And all things fair and bright are thine!

HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE.

The daily uninterrupted possession of privileges and employments, even of the highest order, has ever had a tendency to cause their real value to be overlooked. We, who, through God's blessing, have full and unrestrained access to the hearing and reading of the Holy Scriptures, can but imperfectly estimate the evils resulting from the want of them. Accustomed from our childhood to see the bible in everyday familiar use, we appear to take it for granted that such was the case always, and in every place. We little dream that our forefathers obtained this privilege with the greatest difficulty, and preserved it not without a struggle. So that it may be useful, as well as interesting, to submit to general readers a brief account of the several English versions of the Bible, which have appeared from time to time, and more especially of our present authorized translation.

Writers of unquestionable authority assert, that from the very earliest periods of the church, the Holy Scriptures have been found in the language of almost every Christian nation. This privilege and advantage they continued to enjoy unmolested; until that a new power arose in the western world, claiming unheard-of dominion over men's minds and bodies, and the court of Rome perceived that nothing was more fatal to her assumptions of universal supremacy, than a general and free perusal of the Holy Volume of the Word of God. That which she long had wished, at length she dared to do; and at a synod holden at Toulouse, in France, in the year 1228, the circulation of the Scriptures was, for the first time, forbidden. The immediate cause of this edict was the circumstance that the Waldenses in the Valleys of Piedmont had dared to oppose the Pope's pretensions, and

to assert that the Bible was the rule of Christian faith, and as such, ought to be free and open to persons of every class. This synod, however, contented itself with forbidding laymen to possess the books either of the Old or of the New Testament.

In this, our country of England, the Saxons, its former masters, are known to have possessed a translation of the Scriptures in their own language. A copy of the Gospels of this version is remaining in manuscript in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The historian, the Venerable Bede, who flourished in the seventh century, is said to have translated the entire bible; and King Alfred is reported to have done the same thing; though the greater part of these, his holy labours, have not survived to our times.

From the time when the religious orders multiplied in England, the friars were ever found most vehement in forbidding the use and knowledge of the Scriptures; probably, not only in obedience to the orders received from their superiors at Rome, but likewise, as historians assert, from a wish to conceal their own utter ignorance of them, and general want of learning on every subject. There were, however, some noble exceptions.

During the reign of Edward the Third, about the year 1340, Richard Hampole, an Augustinian monk, translated the Psalter into the English of that day. In the same king's reign, and that of his next successor, flourished the renowned John Wicliffe, who was educated at Oxford, being a fellow of Merton College, and afterwards Master of Balliol; at a later period he became Rector of Lutterworth, in Leicestershire. Wicliffe translated afresh the whole Bible, about the year 1380. But this praiseworthy work did not escape without violent opposition raised against it. About twenty years after its appearance, the priests attempted to suppress it; and actually procured a bill for this purpose to be brought into the House of Lords. But the truth found a patron in John Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, uncle to the king, who is reported to have stood up boldly in his place, and to have said, 'We will not be the refuse of all men; for that other nations have God's law (which is the law of our belief) in their own language;' 'which he affirmed (as the story sayth) with a great oath agaynst them, whatsoever they were, that began the bill.'

A few years later, in 1407, Archbishop Arundel published a Constitution, forbidding any person to translate any part of Scripture; and also, to read any translations of it whatsoever. It is melancholy to think, that several persons, both men and women, were actually burned for transgressing this order.

The fifteenth century gave birth to the wondrous art of Printing; which, by God's blessing, was made a mean of multiplying bibles in all languages, with great rapidity, and at little comparative cost. About 1455 appeared the bible in Latin; * 1460 in German; 1471 in Italian; 1475 in Flemish; 1478 in Spanish; 1488 in Bohemian, &c. &c.

* It was the Latin Bible of 1462, which, by the surprisingly rapid multiplication of copies, gave rise to the accusation of magic against Faust, its printer; from whence sprung the story, so well known formerly to our children, of 'the Devil and Doctor Faustus.'