

Shortly after the Restoration, the Book of Common Prayer once more underwent revision, and in 1662 was issued in its present form. The changes which were made at once declared and established the supremacy of the last translation of the Scriptures. As we have already seen, the Psalter of the Great Bible was left undisturbed, but in the Epistles and Gospels, and in all the longer portions of scripture which are read in the occasional services (as 1 Cor. xv. 20—58; Acts vi. 2—7; xx. 17—35, &c.), the version of 1611 was uniformly adopted.

In 1856 the subject of revision was brought by Professor Selwyn before the Lower House of Convocation of the Province of Canterbury, but his proposals met with little favour. The desirableness of the appointment of a Royal Commission was urged upon the House of Commons, but without effect. Meanwhile the general interest in Biblical studies was continually advancing. The merits of our translation, on the one hand and on the other the amount of improvement absolutely required, became more fully understood from year to year. Some specimens of a revised version by five clergymen (the present Bishops of Gloucester and Salisbury, the late Dean Alford, the Rev. W. G. Humphry, and Dr. Barrow), published about this time, showed that reverent regard for the Authorized Version might coexist with an earnest desire for its improvement, and helped to prepare the way for the remarkable change in public opinion which has recently taken place.

In February, 1870, both Houses of the Convocation of Canterbury unanimously passed a resolution to the following effect:—"That a Committee of both Houses be appointed, with power to confer with any Committee that may be appointed by the Convocation of the Northern Province, to report upon the desirableness of a revision of the Authorized Version of the Old and New Testaments, whether by marginal notes or otherwise, in all those passages where plain and clear errors, whether in the Hebrew or Greek text originally adopted by the translators, or in the translation made from the same, shall, on due investigation, be found to exist." The mover and seconder of the resolution in the Upper House (the late Bishop of Winchester and the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol) had limited their proposal to the New Testament, but on the motion of the Bishop of Llandaff it was at once agreed to extend the inquiry so as to include the whole Bible. Eight members of the Upper and sixteen of the Lower House were appointed the Committee of the Convocation of Canterbury. The Northern Province declined to co-operate with the Southern in this inquiry, on the ground that the time was not favourable for revision, and that the risk was greater than the probable gain. Early in May the Committee presented a report recommending that a revision of the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures should be undertaken, on the principle of departing as little as possible from the general style and language of the existing version, and "that Convocation should nominate a body of its own members to undertake the work of revision, who shall be at liberty to invite the co-operation of any eminent for scholarship, to whatever nation or religious body they may belong." A Committee was accordingly appointed, consisting of eight members of each house, and the first meeting was held on the 25th of May. It was then resolved that two companies should be formed for the revision of the Authorized Version of the Old Testament and the New Testament respectively; that the company for the revision of the Authorized Version of the Old Testament should consist of the Bishops of St. David's, Llandaff, Ely, Lincoln, and Bath and Wells, Archdeacon Rose, Professor Selwyn, Canon Jebb, and Dr. Kay, together with eighteen scholars and divines, who should be invited to join in the work; and that the company for the revision of the Authorized Version of the New Testament should consist of the Bishops of Winchester, Gloucester and Bristol, and Salisbury, the Prolocutor, the Deans of Canterbury and Westminster, and Canon Blakesley, together with nineteen invited scholars and divines.