

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.—Heb. iv. 9

John Wycliffe.

ON New Year's Eve, five hundred years ago, the spirit of John Wycliffe returned to God who gave it. The life of this the first of English Reformers, included the long and eventful reign of Edward III., (1327-1377). In the latter part of this reign,

a successful stand was made against the power of the papacy; and he who was the honored instrument in God's hands of bringing this to pass, and of bringing to light the Word of Truth, which had so long been hidden from the people, was—John Wycliffe. Those who would learn (and all Christians should) of the stirring events of his life, have ample opportunity for so doing, as the quincenary of his death has given to the public several valuable works.

In this article we shall confine ourselves to Wycliffe's labors in Bible translation. His idea

was to give the whole Bible in the vernacular to the people of England, so that every man in the realm might read in the tongue wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God.

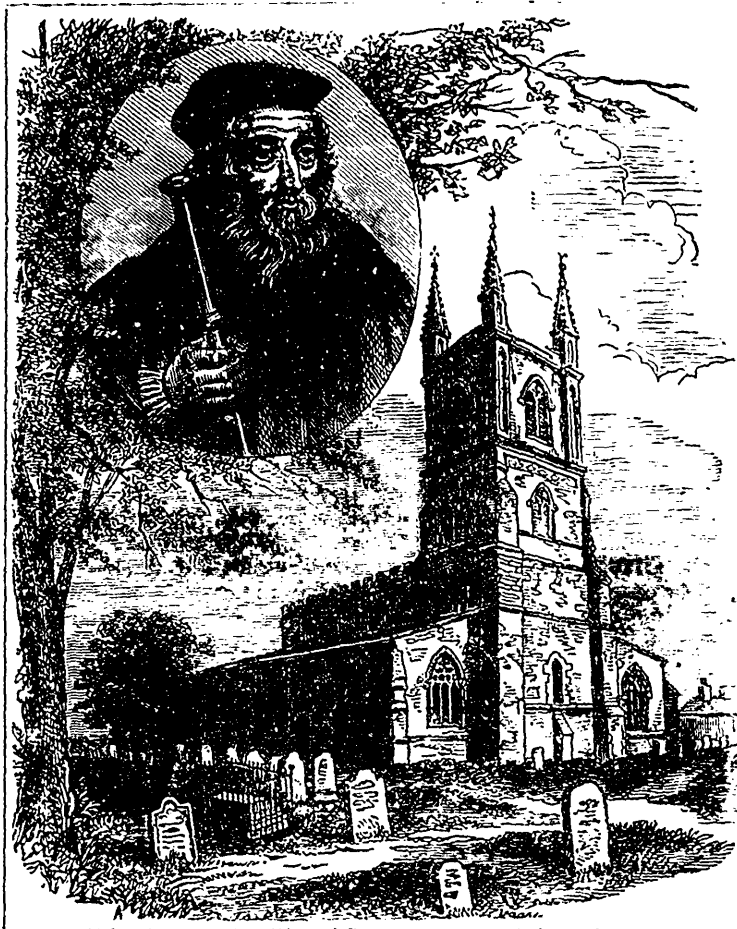
How Wycliffe performed his noble task has been abundantly told in many a treatise on that theme of inexhaustible interest, the English Bible. If there were drawbacks in the execution of the work, it should be remembered that he was the pioneer, and again that, being ignorant

of Hebrew and Greek, he could translate only from the Latin Vulgate. But, indeed, he scarcely needs such apology. For accuracy, perspicuity, and terseness, as well as for frequent and exquisite felicities of expression mingling with the quaint phraseology of other parts, the version may to this day be studied with delight.

The strongest testimony as to his success in introducing the Bible to the common people, is

given by his antagonist, Knighton, who writes:—

"Christ delivered His Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might administer to the laity and to weaker persons, according to the state of the times and the wants of men. But this Master John Wycliffe translated it out of Latin into the tongue Anglican—not Angelic! Thus it became of itself vulgar, more open to the laity, and to women, who could read, than it usually is to the clergy, even the most learned and intelligent. In this way the Gospel-pearl is cast abroad and trodden



JOHN WYCLIFFE, AND LUTTERWORTH CHURCH.

under foot of swine; and that which was before precious both to clergy and to laity, is rendered, as it were, the common jest of both."

Every possible effort was made to hinder its circulation, but still from generation to generation, copies of the proscribed volume were handed down as heirlooms in many an English home, often stealthily circulated from hand to hand; until they were superseded by the invention of printing, and the labors of Tyndale and Coverdale.