

the best scholarship the world has ever known was lavishly expended. In the instance of our English Bible at least, the result is most gratifying. The English Bible, whether the version be that used by the Catholics or the Protestants, approaches perfection in literary style; although the "authorized" version—the so-called King James Bible—is generally conceded even by Catholics, to be in numerous minor details of diction somewhat superior to the so-called Douai version used by the Catholics themselves. Be that as it may, the language of either version of the Bible furnishes a convenient and reliable model of the English language. A competent critic has said that if one were to figure the whole range of English prose style in the form of an arch, one would put the style of the Bible as its keystone; and one would put it there, not only because it is the highest point and culmination of prose writing, but also because it binds the whole structure together. This remark is notably well considered. If we consider the arch thus imagined, we shall have, on the one side, the writing which tends more and more to the colloquial, which, beginning with such finish and exquisite vigor as Dryden crystallised in his matchless productions, runs off into the slack and hasty style of journalism; on the other side, we shall have such more splendidly and artfully colored prose as Sir Thomas Browne's, or the ponderous thought of Dr. Johnson, degenerating in the hands of lesser men into precocity and pedantry. Thus our linguistic arch would appear, with the Bible for its keystone—a keystone of pure gold. If we accept the Bible as a model of English, we can fold our hands in the comfortable feeling that here at any rate, is one question of literature settled for good; the standard of English prose style is the standard of the Bible; that style so clear and so noble that it seldom leaves any improvement to be desired. The conclusion to be drawn is that the literary student should make himself master of the Bible, and the earlier in life he begins to do so the better it will be for him. The Bible, it is said, is assailed from all quarters. Its historic credibility is impugned, its prophecies explained away; its miracles treated as myths; its inspiration reduced to the level of poetic insight; its distinctive doctrines controverted and denied. The reigning Pope has, time and again, requested Catholics