



Tyndale with the Children.

William Tyndale.

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WILLIAM TYNDALE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "ALMOST A NUN," ETC. ETC.



PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year
1870, by

WM. L. HILDEBURN, TREASURER,

in trust for the

PRESBYTERIAN PUBLICATION COMMITTEE,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Eastern
District of Pennsylvania.

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WESTCOTT & THOMSON,  
Stereotypers, Philada.  
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Florence H. Crowell.

WILLIAM TYNDALE.

I SHALL tell you in this
little book of a man whom
every English-speaking
child ought to love well.

Do you ask me why?

Because he was the first
man who tried to give Eng-
lish children a Bible in their
own language.

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Before Tyndale's time the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek and Latin, which only wise people could read. Many of you, I know, scowl and pout out your lips at having to learn your Bible lessons. One very bad little boy whom I knew, said, "I wish I didn't have any Bible, so I do!"

No Bible, indeed! Which of you would be willing never

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to read of Moses, of Joseph, of Samuel, of Elijah, or of the Babe of Bethlehem; of the widow's son, and of the girl who was raised from the dead?

How many of my little friends would like never to have learned "The Lord is my Shepherd," "He shall carry the lambs in his bosom," and "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me?" I know you love

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these verses! I know you would not part with them when you sit and think soberly over what they are worth to you. They are worth more than gold or toys or story-books, or anything else that you have.

And now look up to the top of the page at the name—WILLIAM TYNDALE—and think if he was not a good man who first gave to the people our

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dear Bible in our own English words.

When I tell you how, to do this work, he had to be poor, homeless, almost friendless—how he had to hide from wicked men, and have no rest night or day, and grew old and bent and gray while he was yet young, and all for the sake of the work God called him to do—then you will think him better and greater still.

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About three hundred and fifty years ago there was a young man at school in Cambridge, England, who was spoken of very much, simply because he behaved well. When boys are at school we expect them to behave well. Some silly lads get spoken of a good deal because they behave ill; but when William Tyndale was at college, at Cambridge, the students were

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for the most part a rude, noisy set, who carried knives and swords in their belts, and were ready to pull them out and fight at the first word they did not like. They studied little, and drank beer and brandy so freely that they often got drunk. Besides this, the most of them gambled, and swore loudly over their losings and winnings.

If these students went to

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church, it was to hear some priest talk Latin as fast as he could speak, and so soon as he got out of his pulpit he acted as badly as they did. Their Bibles and good books were in strange languages, Latin and Greek, which, as the students were idle, they could not read very well; and thus, you see, without books or preachers, they were little likely to become better.

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Among this throng of noisy youths were to be found a few who kept much together, who were quiet and gentle, and who spent their time over their books. To these young men God was very good. The Holy Spirit—the teacher of all the sons of God—turned their minds to the study of the Holy Bible, and showed them wonderful things in his Law. With the Bible they read the

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works of pious men who lived long ago—soon after the time of Christ and his apostles. Their hearts grew soft and tender; they learned to love God and fear sin, and this love and fear shone brightly out in their lives.

All good and honest men respected these young students. They were sometimes invited to visit at different houses about the country, and

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they were always glad to go for two reasons: First, they could talk of what they had learned in the word of God, and thus be the means of doing good. The other reason was that, as they were poor men and books in those days were scarce and costly, they owned scarcely any themselves, but they found at the houses where they went, here one book, there two or three,

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and at other places seven or eight, and on rare occasions quite a number. These books they would read over and over again, and even copy out large parts of some to carry with them.

Among the books Tyndale found were some written with a pen, and which had never been printed. They were about two hundred years old, and were parts of the Bible

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put into English by a good man named Wickliffe. These parts had been copied by different people at great trouble and expense, and were kept rolled up in linen and silk and shut in boxes. Children were no more allowed to touch them than they would have been to make a plaything of a fine watch or a diamond ring.

These written books set William Tyndale thinking,

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wishing, praying. The fire of love and of hope which had burned in Wickliffe's heart lit a like flame in the breast of Tyndale, and day by day he grew into the true spirit of a Reformer.

Tyndale was poor. He could not spend all his time in study and in visiting; he must do something to earn his food and clothes, and he said to his friends that he would

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like to get a place as *tutor*, or teacher, in some rich man's family.

Such a place was found for him where there were several young people. At first, they were afraid of the new master, he was so grave, so silent—he looked so different from other people in his black tasseled cap and his long black gown. And then he was so wise—he knew so many lan-

guages and had read so many books.

Yes, indeed, the children and young folks were afraid of him. They got on the farther side of the room; they turned red in the face, and forgot how to answer when they were spoken to. They twisted their buttons and ground their heels into the floor, all because they were so afraid of the new master. But 

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in a very few days all was changed ; these same young folks were leaning over their teacher's shoulders, holding his hands, sitting on his knee, and talking to him of books and plays.

And how came this ?

Oh, he loved them. His heart was so full of love to God that it flowed over with love to all people, and especially to little children, of

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whom Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

The Bible tells us, "Perfect love casteth out fear," and the love of William Tyndale cast out fear from the hearts of his pupils.

You may think that William Tyndale might be proud because he was so wise—because he had read so many books, and men listened to his words with respect. And

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then he was of a family long well known and held in honor—a family that had been rich and famous, but had lost their home and their property in war. But no; Tyndale was meek and humble as a little child—a *good* child, for I have seen some proud children.

Tyndale spent much time with his pupils, and was always ready to talk with them. When not with them

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he liked best to be alone thinking and studying.

Sometimes his pupils would quarrel, and he would say, "God says, 'Little children, love one another.' " Sometimes they were lazy, and he would tell them, "God says, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise.' " Sometimes they would not learn, and he said, "God says, 'Get wisdom.' "

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Again, they were selfish, and his word was, "Do unto others as ye would that they should do to you."

"Oh, Master Tyndale," the children would say to him, "how do you know what God says?"

"I read in his Bible," said Tyndale.

"Ah, but *we* have no Bible. We never saw one. We could not read it if we had it. How

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do you expect us to do what God says ?”

“ How, indeed !” thought Tyndale, his eyes filling with tears — “ how can they hear without a teacher ? The way of truth have they not known, and God’s law is a sealed book.”

Then would Tyndale go by himself to his little room high up in the stone tower, or to the solemn shade of the thick

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woods, and pray to God, “Oh, help me to help these children; help me to open to them thy word!”

Besides being meek, Tyndale was *brave*. He was not afraid to speak the truth and say out what he thought. Said a great officer to him one day,

“You talk of the need of having God’s law. We have much more need of the laws

of the pope. God's law may be good enough, but the pope's is better."

"Oh foolish and wicked thought!" cried Tyndale, boldly. "The pope is but a man like other men. His laws are full of human weakness and folly. But God is high and lifted up above all the creatures he has made, and his law only is fit to lead the soul in wisdom and peace."

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“Have a care!” said the officer, angrily. “Those words can be punished. If you speak against the holy pope, you may get into trouble.”

“For the sake of the truth,” said Tyndale, “I am ready to go to prison and to death, as good men have done before me. You may send me out of the country with but ten pounds” (fifty dollars) “a year to live on, and so I can study

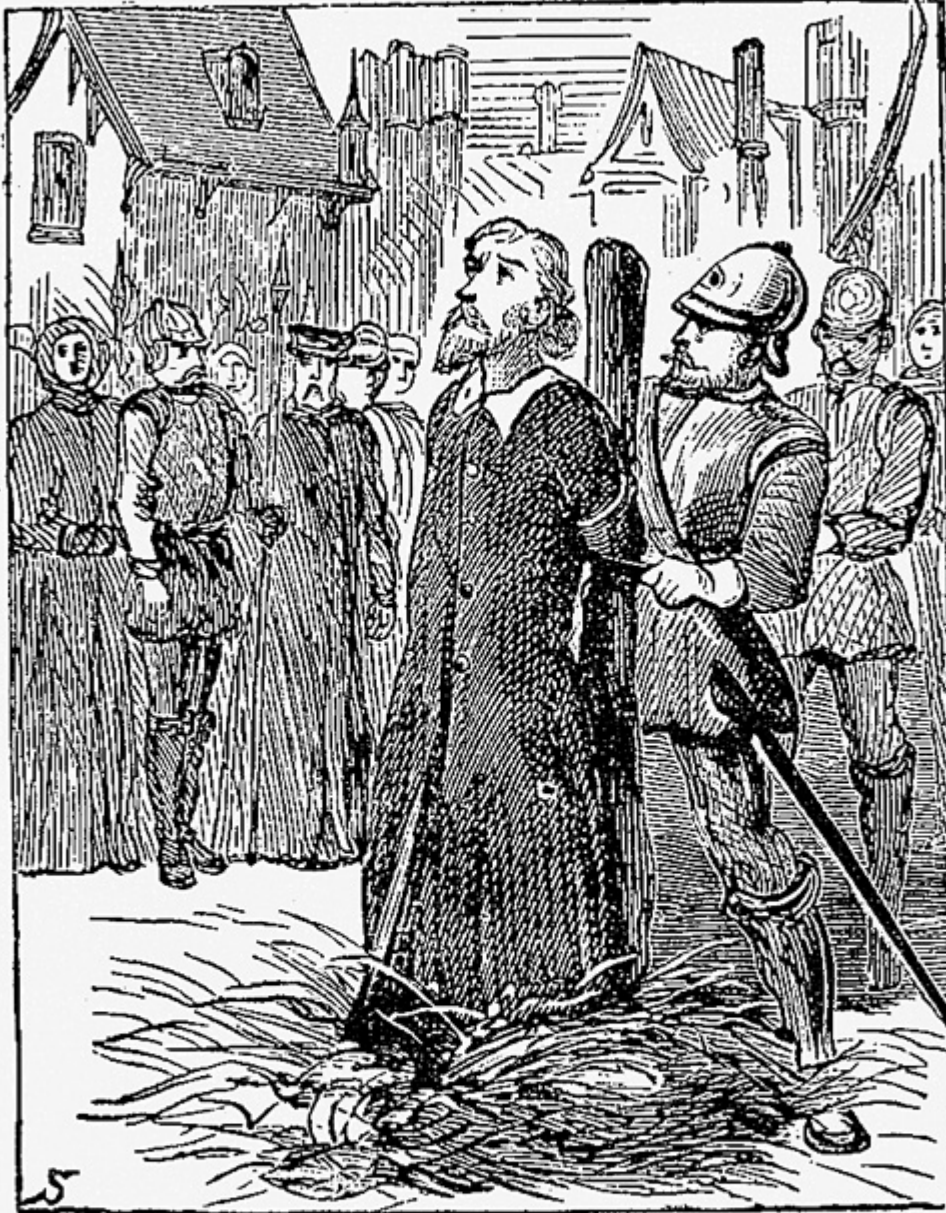
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God's law, pray to my Father in heaven, and teach little children, I will be content."

"Look out—look out! you may lose your life," said somebody.

"That will be as God wills," said Tyndale. "If I have a work to do for him, he will keep me alive until I finish it."

"You are a heretic," said people to him.



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“I am a servant of God, and believe his word,” said Tyndale, nothing alarmed.

“What!” cried those who heard him, “do you pretend to be wiser than rich men, who have more money in a day than you do in half a year?”

“It is not money,” replied our Reformer, “that makes men wise, but it is the work of God’s Holy Spirit in the heart; and the Holy Spirit

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is given to those who ask him."

"Don't talk of the Bible," said a Romish priest. "The Bible is the source of all the evil and mischief that has been done in the world."

"Never!" cried Tyndale. "The law is holy, just and good, and, by God's grace, I hope before many years to put that same Bible in the hands of every plough-boy, of every

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day-laborer and every little child in all the land.”

This giving the Bible to his countrymen became the great desire of Tyndale’s heart. He preached and he taught, but ever this one thought was chief in his mind, “The Bible—free and plain and cheap—the Bible for the poor.”

A good and wise man named Erasmus talked to Tyndale of this translating

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the Bible into English, and Tyndale resolved to give up all other work and devote himself entirely to that, trusting to God to provide him food and shelter while he did this labor of love and faith.

There was in London a bishop named Tonsal, a man who loved books and was kind to students, often giving help and home to poor scholars.

To him went Tyndale to

ask for a preaching-place, where he might preach Sundays and earn enough to support himself while he worked on his translation of the Bible. The bishop met him kindly at first, saying he was happy to see so good a scholar and so wise a man; but when Tyndale told him what he wanted and what he meant to do, the bishop was not quite so friendly. He put him off from

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day to day, saying, “Come again—come again; I’m busy, I’m tired, I’m sick — come again.”

Ah, dear children, in putting off Tyndale, Bishop Tonsal was putting off Jesus and his work; and you know Jesus says, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.”

After several weeks spent in

this kind of waiting, the bishop told Tyndale he could not do anything for him—he had too many people to take care of; and if he looked about London, very likely he would find safer and better-paying work than translating the Bible.

As you may suppose, Tyndale felt very sad at this; but he left his cause in God's hands, and God raised him

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up a friend who was neither afraid nor cold-hearted, as the bishop was. This new friend was a rich merchant of London. When he heard how the bishop had treated Tyndale, he went to the Reformer and said, "Never fear; keep up a good heart—all will be well. Come to me; I have in my house a safe and quiet little room. It shall be to you the prophet's chamber. I love

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learning, and I love the word of God, and I am willing to bear your expenses while you write the Bible in our native tongue.”

Tyndale went to live with this merchant. He also found some churches where he could preach the gospel on Sabbath days; and there were good people who met in secret to pray, and with them he met, and at the houses he could

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teach the little children. His friend, the merchant, had a copy of Wickliffe's part of the Bible, written on vellum, and made very beautiful in gilt and blue letters.

Tyndale wrote busily on his Bible day after day. It was a great work, you know, to put the exact meaning of the Greek and Hebrew into the English tongue, and have it such good, pure English that

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the wise would like it, and yet so plain that the poor and ignorant would know the full meaning of it.

Tyndale would soon have got weary and discouraged had he not had help and comfort from God, and felt that he was doing his service.

Tyndale had a friend named Fryth, who was a man of like feeling with himself; and Fryth went every day to Tyn-

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dale's little room in the house of the rich merchant to help him write. Tyndale was so glad of the merchant's kindness, so glad of his little room, so glad of Fryth's help, that he said he was almost too happy, and that his heart sung all day long.

These two friends had one chief desire. They said the "one wish of their hearts was that all the English people

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could have that good word of God which is able to make men wise unto salvation.”

These were days when men were being killed for speaking the truth. These were days when men could not trust each other—days when bishops and priests were killing people for no other reason than because the people wanted to pray in their own words, and could say the Command-

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ments, the Lord's Prayer and some of the Psalms.

For some time Tyndale kept on his work in the very centre of London, out of everybody's way, safe and unfearing in his little room; but as the book grew and grew under his hands, his safety passed away, his enemies found him out, and good William Tyndale fled across the sea, that he might end his great work in peace.

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He took with him his books and his papers, and left England in a vessel loading for Hamburg. The merchant with whom he stayed paid his fare, and gave him fifty dollars to bear his expenses in the land where he would be a poor stranger. So you see what Tyndale had said about being an exile, with fifty dollars a year and liberty to teach children and to write, came true.

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Other friends raised fifty dollars for him, but he left it with the merchant for the time of his need. "Ah," he said, "the priests of the Jews had our Lord buried; the priests of Rome bury the Bible, his last will and testament, but the resurrection is at hand, and from the banks of the Elbe it shall come forth of its grave in power."

At Hamburg, William Tyn-

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dale began his writing again, but he had no friend like Fryth ; and while he was wanting some one to help him, there came along a priest named Roye, who said he loved God and the Bible and wanted to help, and he knew Greek and would work hard.

Tyndale was in a great hurry to get his work done, for he felt that hundreds were dying without the word of life.

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He told Roye he might help him. Roye was a bad man; he was a great rascal, and was telling lies. But this Tyndale did not know; he thought evil of no one, and he believed Roye.

Roye was idle; he would not work. He robbed Tyndale of his small amount of money, and when the books of Matthew and Mark were ready for the printer, Tyndale's money

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was gone. He took a room in a mean little garret, and ate but one meal a day.

He wanted to send his book to England to be printed. Just then a vessel came in, and the captain brought Tyndale fifty pounds more.

“This is from God!” cried Tyndale. “Now I can pay all I owe, and can go to Cologne, where the best printers may be found.”

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He went to Cologne, but after him went Roye, who would not leave him while he had some money. Roye wanted to help spend the other fifty pounds.

At Cologne the bishop had just forbidden the printing of the Bible or good books, but our Reformer was not going to turn from his purpose. He went secretly to a printer and engaged him to print six

thousand copies of the Bible in square form. Then he was afraid so large a number might be seized, and he concluded to have only half so many. The printer did his work at night. As page after page of the Bible in English went to Tyndale, his heart was full of joy; all his troubles were forgotten. He sang hymns, and could not sleep for happiness.

But now his smiles were turned to tears and his songs to weeping. A wicked priest named Cochloëus, a man who hated the Bible, was at Cologne. He found through a drunken printer — see what mischief strong drink is always doing! — that the Bible was being printed. This priest, finding by careful questions where and how this was being done, got an order from

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the town council to stop the work and burn the leaves printed.

But just in time the printer heard this. He told Tyndale. Tyndale hurried to the office and began to gather up the printed leaves, more valuable than gold. They were ready for binding. It was night. Tyndale told Roye to get their clothes and books and come to the river. While all his ene-

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mies were asleep, Tyndale, guarded by his Father in heaven, found a boat belonging to a friend, who gave it to him gladly, put his Bible leaves in, and quickly began to row with Roye up the great river Rhine, carrying with them the best blessing and hope for England.

Five days they rowed or sailed before the mild, warm breezes. At night they drew

their boat to some shelter on the bank, and slept and watched by turns. At last they reached Worms, another great city. On a summer morning, Roye tied up the little boat at Worms, and Tyndale, sitting down on the bank, laid his precious leaves down upon a stone. Here he sat while Roye went through the city looking for a room where they might live.

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At Worms, Tyndale found a pious printer, who was glad to help print the Bible for Englishmen, and who advised Tyndale how best it should be done. The Bibles were bound at last, and now they could not be openly sent to England, for the priests would get them and burn them.

They were hidden in vessels under silk and lace and velvet, and so taken to England and

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hidden in the storehouses of Tyndale's merchant friend.

Good men sold them through the country, and some they gave away. Still, the books kept coming from Worms; and as the good men in England spread them more and more the priests were very angry, and put some of these men in prison, fined others, and sent others still exiles far from their homes. Fryth was put

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in prison, but he got away and went to Tyndale in Germany, saying, “ Good news ! All England is reading the word of God ! ”

Bishop Tonsal offered to buy all the Testaments Tyndale had—he wanted to burn them. Tyndale sold them for a great sum of money, saying to Fryth, “ Let him burn them ; then everybody will hear and wonder and wish to

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have one, and I can print ten times as many with the pay, and send them all over England.” This he did. Thousands of Bibles and Testaments were bought and burned by the bishop, and tens of thousands more were printed and sold by Tyndale or given away to the poor who were not able to buy them.

At this time a famine broke out in England, and the Ger-

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mans sent over shiploads of corn, and under the corn they hid Bibles, so that their vessels brought food both for souls and bodies.

In Germany, Tyndale spent two days of the week in visiting the sick and the schools, four in attending to his Bible business, and Sabbath in preaching. At last, when he had nearly finished translating the Old Testament, Tyn-

dale was seized ~~and~~ put in prison by means of a bad Englishman named Phillips, who went over to Germany.

He was kept in prison a year, but he had his pen, paper and books, and got ready an edition of the Bible in a cheap form fit for the poor. Then when this was done, he said, "Now is my work finished, and I wait only for dismissal." He meant dismissal

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from earth, and this came right soon.

The court of Brussels condemned him to be burned as a heretic, and on the sixteenth of October he was led out to the public square, and first strangled and then his body burned.

“O God,” said Tyndale, as he died, “be pleased to open the eyes of the king of England.”

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The good man was gone—
gone from earth to heaven.
He had done what he could,
and the Lord blessed his do-
ings until he made ready our
English Bible.