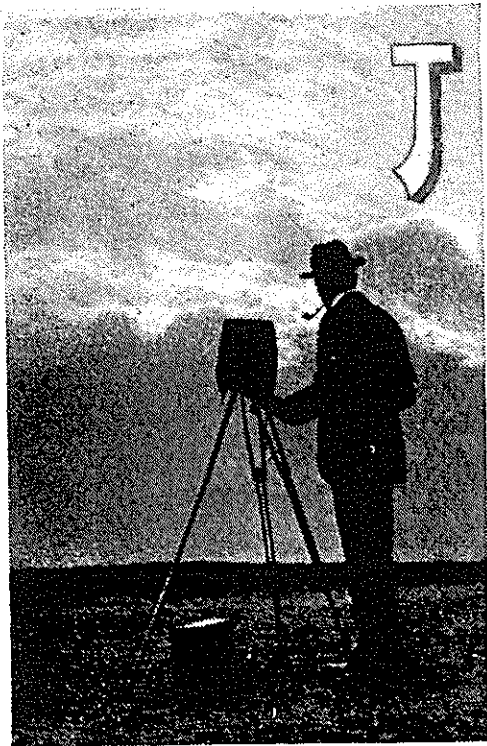


# William Tyndale's Gloucestershire Memorial.



**T**YNDALE'S Monument, Nibley Monument, or The Monument, as it is variously spoken of in its immediate locality, is a memorial erected on North Nibley Knoll to the memory of William Tyndale, one of the reformers who first translated and caused to be printed the New Testament in English from the original Greek and Hebrew.

Tradition affirms that this good man and eminent scholar, of whom the world was not worthy, was born about 1484, in North Nibley, "a little village in Gloucestershire which straggles in picturesque confusion at the foot of the hill" which bears the monument, and is distant from Wotton-under-Edge about 2 miles, his forefathers, it is said, having removed hence from the north, in the times of the wars between the houses of York and Lancaster.

Great uncertainty, however, exists concerning his birthplace, but it is generally admitted that the honour thereof belongs to Gloucestershire. and the weight of evidence goes to show that it was in or near North Nibley, whilst it is an indisputable fact that Tyndale was closely associated with the neighbourhood of North Nibley in later life, if not at the time of his birth, inasmuch as on completing his studies at Oxford and Cambridge Universities, he is known to have lived about 1521 to 1523 as tutor in the family of Sir John Walsh at Little Sodbury, a village about 9 miles from North Nibley, "from the summit of the Cotswold Hill at the back of which Tyndale must often have looked upon the wooded heights of Nibley and Stinchcombe and the level vale beyond, where his relations were then established." It was whilst thus engaged to Sir John at the Manor House at Little Sodbury that Tyndale realised how closed and sealed a book the Bible was to his countrymen generally, not only the illiterate but many of the learned of his times being lamentably unacquainted with the contents of God's holy word. With characteristic thoughtfulness and energy Tyndale applied himself to the sacred work of breaking its seals, opening the Book of Books, and scattering its priceless treasures freely. At first he embraced such opportunities as presented themselves to him for reading and expounding the Scriptures to those about him, including the household and tenantry of Sir John, and the inhabitants of neighbouring villages and the city of Bristol. But it soon became apparent to him that the good seeds sown by his living voice were not allowed to remain long enough undisturbed in his hearers' minds to produce very permanent results, hostile efforts being made to follow in his track and uproot them. Tyndale then conceived the sublime idea of translating and printing the Scriptures so that his fellow-countrymen might read, as well as hear, for themselves the wonderful words of life. "Why," he asked, "should not the people of England have the Oracles of God in their own tongue? If God spare my life I will before many years have passed cause the boy that driveth the plough to know more of the Scriptures than the priests do." When told that "the vulgar cannot understand the Word of God, it is the church that gave the Bible to men, and it is only the church

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that can interpret it," Tyndale replied, "Do you know who taught the eagles to find their prey? That same God teaches His children to find their Father in His Word. Far from having given us the Scriptures it is you who have hidden them from us."

In his noble endeavour thus to meet the great spiritual needs of the times Tyndale experienced most determined opposition. He was accused of heresy, and reported to his Bishop's Chancellor. So rapid and fierce did the force against him grow that, in 1523, Tyndale left Sodbury and sought quiet and shelter in the Palace of Tunstall, Bishop of London, but being there coldly received, and altogether unsuccessful, he eventually found a home with Humphrey Monmouth, a rich London merchant, "under whose roof," it is said, "he lived abstemiously, and studied night and day, being intent on kindling a torch that should illuminate England."

Disturbed again by fierce persecution Tyndale left these shores in 1524, being convinced, as he said, "not only that there was no room in my lord of London's Palace to translate the New Testament, but also that there was no place to do it in all England."

On leaving England Tyndale went to live on the Continent, where his New Testament and Pentateuch were printed and whence, in 1526, and onwards they were smuggled into England. Eventually Tyndale was betrayed at Antwerp into the hands of his enemies, and after sixteen months' imprisonment, in the Castle of Vilvorde, he was strangled and burned as a heretic on October the 6th, 1536.

According to a modest work published by John Bellows, Gloucester, entitled William Tyndale, the Bible Martyr, and His Memorial, to which the writer of these lines is much indebted, a memorial to William Tyndale was first suggested in 1847, by the author of Annals of the English Bible, and revived in 1861 by a few gentlemen living near North Nibley, who considered that the time had come for a memorial to be set up to this glorious martyr, that a Tyndale tower would serve to tell to the hills and vales of Gloucestershire that the one great thing for the elevation of the population is God's own precious Word, and that no more suitable place for such a monument could be found than the Knoll on which it stands, commanding as it does a wide stretch of country once trodden by the feet of Tyndale, and rendering the memorial visible from more points of view than perhaps any other spot could ensure in his native county, including the village in which he is said to have been born, the surrounding vale, the trains traversing the railway line in the distance and the ships upon the Severn which communicate with lands beyond the sea.

"The memorial is a cenotaph, consisting of a square tower, 26 feet 6 inches square at the base, rising to 22 feet, and by gradations to 16 feet, 6 inches, and diminishing two feet above that. Its height is 111 feet, exclusive of the terminal which is a small but elegant gilded cross. The entrance is on the east side, and within is a staircase ascending to a gallery. The tower is terminated with a machiolated cornice, sustaining a pyramidal roof vaulted within. The cenotaph is constructed of stone taken from Hampton quarry, near Stroud. Mr. S. S. Teulon, of Craig's Court, London, was the architect, and Mr. Whitfield, of Wotton-under-Edge, the builder. The total cost was £1550."

The foundation stone was laid by the Hon. Colonel Berkeley, on the 29th May, 1863, and the ceremony of inaugurating the memorial was conducted on the 6th of November, 1866, by the Earl of Ducie, in the presence of a vast concourse of people, including the Revs. John Austin, Morton Brown, D.D., Robt. Eden, M.A., J. P. Hewett, deputation from the British and Foreign Bible Society, G. S. Spencer, and Mr. Curtis Hayward, who delivered addresses appropriate to the occasion.

Over the door of the monument is a stone bearing the inscription—  
"Erected A.D. 1866, in grateful remembrance. William Tyndale, Translator of the English Bible, who first caused the New Testament to be printed in the mother tongue of his countrymen. Born near this spot, he suffered martyrdom at Vilvorde, in Flanders, on October 6th, 1536."

The chamber of the monument contains a black letter copy of Tyndale's

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New Testament, presented by the Rev. G. S. Spencer, of Wotton-under-Edge, and also a copy of an autograph letter of William Tyndale's, presented by the Rev. James Thomas, of the Bible House, London. The letter, originally written in Latin, has neither date nor superscription, but it was doubtless written by Tyndale at Vilvorde in the winter of 1535, and was addressed to the Governor of the Castle. The following is the translation:—

“ I believe, right worshipful, that you are not ignorant of what has been determined concerning me (by the Council of Brabant), therefore I entreat your Lordship and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I am to remain here (in Vilvorde) during the winter, you will request the Procureur to be kind enough to send me from my goods which he has in his possession, a warmer cap, for I suffer extremely from cold in the head, being afflicted with a perpetual catarrh, which is considerably increased in the cell. A warmer coat also, for that which I have is very thin, also a piece of cloth to patch my leggings; my overcoat has been worn out; my shirts are also worn out. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will be kind enough to send it. I have also with him leggings of thicker cloth for putting on above; he also has warmer caps for wearing at night. I wish his permission to have a candle in the evening, for it is wearisome to sit alone in the dark. But above all, I entreat and beseech your clemency to be urgent with the Procureur that he may kindly permit me to have my Hebrew Bible, Hebrew Grammar, and Hebrew Dictionary, that I may spend my time with that study. And in return, may you obtain your dearest wish, provided always it be consistent with the salvation of your soul. But if any other resolution has been come to concerning me, that I must remain during the whole winter, I shall be patient, abiding the Will of God to the glory of the grace of my Lord Jesus Christ, whose spirit, I pray, may ever direct your heart. Amen.—W. TYNDALE.”

The Knoll upon which the tower stands belongs jointly to the freeholders of North Nibley and Lord Fitzhardinge, and by mutual consent a portion of it was made over to the Trustees of the Memorial Fund, who, with very few exceptions, have since then passed away. The present trustees are:—The Right Hon. the Earl Ducie, Lord Lieutenant of the county; the Right Hon. the Earl Fitzhardinge, Berkeley Castle; Colonel Sir Nigel Kingscote, K.C.B.; the Vicar of North Nibley for the time being (ex officio); Charles N. Hooper, Esq., Eastington; H. L. G. of the Bible Society; Arthur S. Winterbotham, Esq., Norman Hill, Dursley; Charles Prevost, Esq.

As the tower occupies an exposed position, the wind and weather reaching it from the Bristol Channel act destructively upon it, and twice since its erection extensive repairs have been successfully carried out, and it is now in a good state of preservation. Persons desirous of ascending the monument can obtain admission from the warden, Mr. W. V. Woodward, North Nibley.

REV. JAMES HARDYMAN.

