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Tyndale's Crusade

Men Played With Death

(Continued from page 15.)

from a quotation of David the psalmist by Tyndale on building, to a question by the mason.

"This here Latin is what the Jews spoke?"

And, as the mason goes, Tyndale's thoughts go rushing on a discovery. . . . "The sayings of the Hebrew prophets had been put into Latin, the sayings of our Lord into Greek. Why not into Mother English so that the common people might read and understand?"

TWO years later he is in Hamburg, engaged on his life's work of translating the Bible into English so that it can be read by the people. There is a price on his head. He works against the laws of Henry the Eighth and the Church.

He is helped in his work of distributing the Bible by the Brethren, a secret band of Englishmen who smuggle the copies of the Bible into England by dead of night and ride far over the countryside dropping the priceless books into the hands of a man who can read them in every hamlet.

The leader of these smugglers, a man unknown to Tyndale, plays with death. In Antwerp they meet. The leader, to Tyndale's amazement, is his bonny-faced, hard-riding, ale-swilling countryman Barnaby.

FROM this point on, the play races ahead in fine pictorial drama. The listener is carried along on the night journey of the smugglers to the English coast. He sees—through the words of the characters—the signals from the shore, the lantern raised three times in the church tower, the call of a seagull. And he hears the thundering hoofs of the horses of the midnight riders on the still night air—coming closer, dying away, coming closer again—as Barnaby rides.

He hears Barnaby's rough male voice as he meets the solitary secret agent in every hamlet.

"Can ye read Mother English?"

"I can make do, the only man in the parish as can."

"Then take this book, and read it to thy fellows. 'Tis a Holy Bible, printed in English."

And so he rides on, to capture and death.

WHILE in Antwerp itself, Tyndale, trapped into a false meeting with Barnaby, is betrayed by a disciple, Phillips, seized by soldiers and taken to the stake for burning.

There is a fine touch of artistry about the last words of each of these men, but I shall not tell it here.

The play ends in a quiet, simple scene that shelves gently down from the high tension of the climax. In an English village a group of common people are met to hear the reading of the gurt big book in Mother English by a mason who once went many years ago to make repairs at Magdalen Hall.

He shuts his eyes and puts his finger into the Bible and reads from the words at which God has placed his finger. It is the sixtieth chapter of the Prophet Isaiah:—

"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord has risen before thee. . . ."