

# Frederick Henry Ambrose Scrivener.

M.A., LL.D., D.C.L.

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL BROWN, D.D., ABERDEEN.

THOUGH my personal acquaintance with this eminent biblical scholar dates only from the year 1870, when the New Testament Revisers began their work, I was familiar with his biblical works for twenty years before that, and in more or less sympathy with his principles of New Testament criticism, both as to the Greek text and the rendering of it for popular use. From year to year, as the revision work went on, I found myself, with some important exceptions (to which I may refer in the sequel), on the same side with him in almost every division.

Dr. Scrivener was born in London in the year 1813, was educated at St. Olave's Grammar School, Southwark, and graduated at Trinity College, Cambridge. He then took orders and became assistant-master of King's School, Sherborne. In that position he must have remained at least ten years, for I have before me a volume which he published while there, so late as 1845, entitled *Supplement to the Authorised Version of the New Testament*, with a very long Introduction, showing that he had for years before plunged into what became his life-work, and given to it every hour of his spare time. I next find rector of St. Gerrans, Cornwall, a poor living at the south-western extremity of England. A devout Christian, he no doubt discharged the duties of his parish with characteristic conscientiousness; but as this left him abundance of time for his favourite studies, he devoted it all—not now to the translation, but—to the *text* of the Greek Testament; taking long and to him expensive journeys to where MSS. were to be found. In 1853 he published a collation of twenty Greek MSS. of the Gospels, deposited in the British Museum—the *reading* of which is so trying to the best eyes (and *his* eyes were singularly good for such a purpose), costing him no doubt a great deal of time and trouble; but he stuck at nothing to reach his object.

What Dr. Scrivener went through in the next few years in this line of study would appear almost in-

credible, but for an enthusiasm which grew with his years, and an invincible tenacity of purpose. In 1861 appeared the first edition of his great work, *Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament* (meaning its *text*), a study in which English scholars early distinguished themselves, but, since then, long neglected in this country. To those who read and mastered the contents of this volume, it was like the opening of a new world; for the best expositors had paid no attention save to the text that lay before them, and in our Divinity Halls it was unknown. After this he undertook to re-edit the *Codex Cantabrigiensis* (or *Codex Beza*)—a MS. whose text was so peculiar that it lay almost unknown. It had been found in the monastery of St. Irenæus, at Lyons. On one occasion, the Huguenots being victorious over the dragoonades, the city was sacked, and a soldier entered that venerable pile of the third century, and found this MS. It was presented to Theodore Beza, as the most distinguished scholar of the French Protestant Church. In his admirable Greek Testament, of which five editions were published, he occasionally refers to its readings, but was shy of using it; and he presented it to Queen Elizabeth, in testimony of his gratitude for her services to the Protestant cause, and by her it was presented to the library of the University of Cambridge. On the preparation of this work he must have spent years; for it has been executed (as I have elsewhere said) “with such critical care, skill, and accuracy, including a valuable, critical introduction, and a large body of important annotations, as leaves nothing to be desired.”<sup>1</sup> In the same year, our indefatigable scholar published *A full Collation of the Codex Sinaiticus, with the*

<sup>1</sup> It is entitled, “*Codex Cantabrigiensis*, being an exact copy, in ordinary Greek type, of the celebrated Græco-Latin MS. of the Four Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, written early in the sixth century, and presented to the University of Cambridge by Theodore Beza in 1581. Edited, with a Critical Introduction, Annotations, and Facsimiles, by the Rev. F. H. Scrivener, M.A., Cambridge (4to, 1864).”

*Received Text*; to which is prefixed a Critical Introduction (of 72 pages), and facsimile specimens of the hand in which both this and two or three other MSS. are written (12mo, 1864).

When in 1870 the monthly meetings of the Old Testament Revisers began, Dr. Scrivener, you may be sure, would be duly there; nor so long as he remained at St. Gerrans did he miss one meeting. In fact, after his removal, he was the most regular of all the members. The nature and value of his services in this work it is not for this place to speak of, but I am safe in saying that every member would say of them that they were invaluable.

In 1874 he issued a second edition of his *Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, thoroughly revised, enlarged, and brought down to the present date. It was dedicated to the authorities of the University of St. Andrews, who did honour to themselves by conferring on him the honorary degree of LL.D., enabling his friends henceforth to call him Dr. Scrivener.<sup>1</sup> At a later period, the University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of D.C.L.

At length, in 1876, it was said to him, "Friend, go up higher." The vicarage of Hendon, Middlesex, became vacant, and being in the gift of the Duke of Portland, one who valued him much ventured to write on his behalf, knowing that she had no claim on his Grace but what she could say of himself and his work, his need of such promotion, while many applications for it would doubtless reach him from personal friends. To his surprise, as he told me himself, the Duke wrote, saying, "thoroughly believing what she wrote, he had infinite pleasure in giving the living to her friend." Accordingly, one evening, on receiving his letters, and finding one to be from a man of business, he felt rather uneasy; but, not aware that he owed anything, he opened it hesitatingly, and found it to be a presentation to him by the Duke of Portland of the Vicarage of Hendon.

Dr. Scrivener's last crowning work was the issue of a third edition of his *Introduction to the Criticism of the New Testament*, so "thoroughly revised,"

<sup>1</sup> Strange it seems to us that it was left to the scholars of a Scotch University to recognise the eminent services of this English scholar; and while the dignitaries of the Church had livings in their gift, that would have done much for Dr. Scrivener, he was allowed to remain so long at St. Gerrans.

and so immensely "enlarged," being a volume of more than 700 pages, and brought down to the latest date, 1883, that it will remain a monument of his ripe and varied learning, of the extent and range of his reading in every direction bearing on his subject, and his absorbing devotion to that "Word, which through life had been a lamp unto his feet and light unto his path."

I should have referred to his Annotated Paragraph Bible, which has been revised, and his edition of the Greek Testament, with the various readings in footnotes, now in constant use among students.

At one of the monthly meetings of the Revisers he invited me to spend a night with him at Hendon, while his wife was yet alive; but she died in the year 1877. I after that lunched with him. At a later period he took a paralytic stroke, from the effects of which he partially recovered. A meeting of the surviving revisers of both companies having been called for a special purpose, to meet at Westminster in May last, Dr. Scrivener posted a letter to his brethren, intimating, to their surprise, his intention to be present, and stating what he meant to propose. I was so delighted at this, that I wrote to ask whether he would be able to see me once more if I came out to Hendon. That letter, however, was never given him. For, as his daughter wrote me, he had taken another and more severe stroke, and of course would not be at the meeting. He died peacefully (as one of his most valued friends wrote me) on the morning of the 26th ult., having, by the mercy of God, had three weeks of restored consciousness and memory for converse with his children!

I said that with two important exceptions, to which I might refer in the sequel, I was found on the same side with Dr. Scrivener in almost every division. But I have left room only for a word or two about one of them—the exclusion of the doxology from the Lord's Prayer in Matt. vi. 13. Dr. Scrivener having read out as usual the textual evidence on both sides, the discussion which followed made it evident how the vote would go; Dr. Scrivener admitting that the evidence against it was very strong, though not conclusive. On which I remember saying I could never believe that the doxology stood in the Lord's Prayer, as He uttered it, else Jerome would never have left it out in his revision of the Old Latin Version (the Vulgate). When Pope Damasus in 382

urged him to revise the Latin Version, he refused, because if he changed anything the people would curse him, as it was their *Bible*. And when at length he yielded, he determined to change nothing save where fidelity to the original obliged him. And surely of all things the Lord's Prayer would be the last thing he would lay his hands on to change a word of it. Yet the doxology does not stand in the Vulgate, as it came out of Jerome's hands. And not only so, but Origen in the third century, the greatest biblical scholar of

his day, knew nothing of the doxology. For in his treatise on Prayer, he comments on every clause of the Lord's Prayer, and closes with "Deliver us from evil" without a word about a doxology following. As a prayer, of course, no one would utter it without a doxology. But our Lord needed not to prescribe any form for that, as the Old Testament and the Jewish prayers all end in such forms, and it gradually crystallised in the present form. Dr. Scrivener gave way, but not convinced.

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## Renderings and Readings in the Revised New Testament.

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR ALEX. ROBERTS, D.D., ST. ANDREWS.

THERE is reason to fear that, during the decade which has elapsed since the Revised Version of the New Testament was published, it has not risen in public estimation. This is very much to be regretted, as it undoubtedly contains many important improvements on the Authorised Version. But the sad fact exists, that probably no such lamentable failure of a literary kind is to be found in the annals of this century as is presented in the history and fate of the Revised Version. When we call to mind the years of patient labour which were spent over the work, and the names of those illustrious scholars (many of them now departed) who took part in it, language almost fails to express the sorrow which is felt on account of the little practical fruit which has resulted from so much learned and protracted toil.

Yes; it must be sorrowfully owned that the Revised New Testament is, to all intents and purposes, *dead*, if not buried. An occasional reference may be made to it in the pulpit, and it may sometimes be consulted in private devotional reading, but it has taken no hold on the popular mind, and has utterly failed to replace the imperfect, yet dearly loved, Authorised Version in the affections of the community. Let me give an illustration. I recently met with a very intelligent gentleman, who casually remarked that he had just bought a handsome copy of the New Testament; and, in answer to a question which I ventured to put to him, he added:

"Oh! it was the Old Version that I bought; I should never think of spending money on the new one." Cases of this kind abound throughout the country, and thus the Revised Version, with all its wealth of learned and important emendation, has been practically consigned to oblivion and neglect.

But, however much the fact referred to is to be deplored, it is nevertheless one which admits of a very easy explanation. The reason of it is, I believe, to be found in the vast amount of unnecessary change which was made by the Revisers. To ensure success for their work, not a word of the Authorised Version ought to have been altered, except under the pressure of a clear necessity. All the familiar rhythm and melody of the old translation should have been sacredly preserved, unless some very decided gain was to be made by a change of rendering, or faithfulness urgently demanded the adoption of a different text. But that plain principle has been violated over and over again in the Revised Version. The most finical alterations have been admitted, with no appreciable benefit, and simply to the irritation of the reader. Take the following out of many other examples. In the Lord's Prayer, as recorded by St. Matthew (vi. 13), instead of the words, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," we find in Revised Version, "And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*," where, to say nothing of the substitution of "the evil one" for