

the Holy Scriptures:" and in the same year, the French Parliament declared it to be "neither expedient nor useful for the Christian public, that any translations of the Bible should be permitted to be printed, but that they ought rather to be suppressed as injurious, considering the times;" and ordered all persons who had in their possession copies of the Old or New Testament, or any portions of them, to deliver them up to the authorities. In the Netherlands, the most strenuous efforts were made to suppress the word of God. All copies of the entire Scriptures, or separate books, with notes or expositions of a Lutheran tendency, were condemned to the flames; and whoever should be found in possession of such books, after the issue of the proclamation, forfeited life and goods. The bishop of Geneva, in 1534, directed all French or German Bibles discovered in his territories to be burned, on pain of excommunication for disobedience. Euginas, who published, in 1542, a version of the New Testament in Spanish, was seized by the Inquisition and cast into prison, whence he escaped after a confinement of fifteen months, while his book was placed in the prohibitory Index of the church, and all the copies that could be laid hold of were destroyed. Ten years before, Bruccioli had translated the Scriptures into Italian, and boldly defended the right of all men to read the sacred volume in their own languages. His production met with the same fate, and his name is to be found at this day in the infamous Index, among condemned authors of the first class, none of whose works, on any subject, are allowed to be read. England was not behind in this unholy warfare. The close of the reign of Henry the VIII. was deeply stained with the guilt of persecution. In 1543, a barbarous act was passed, by which all women,

"except noblewomen or gentlewomen," and all artificers, journeymen, apprentices, husbandmen and labourers, were forbidden to read the Bible, "privately or openly;" and if they were convicted of the offence a third time, they were to be burned.*

Nevertheless the word of God "grew and multiplied." The number of editions of the entire Scriptures, or parts of them, published during the first thirty-six years of the sixteenth century, has been already stated to amount to five hundred and sixty-eight. In the next period of the same length, the number was greater, having increased to seven hundred and thirty-seven. Of these, one hundred and thirty-four editions were in the oriental tongues (principally Hebrew) and Greek; two hundred and eighty-eight were in Latin, and three hundred and fifteen in different European languages, chiefly French and German. The whole number of editions issued between 1536 and 1572, was thirteen hundred and five.

The Biblical labours of the reformers deserve the highest praise. They devoted themselves unremittingly to this great work. All their efforts tended to promote the highest reverence for the word of God, to secure a clear and full announcement of its truths, and to provide for the permanence of the blessing. They taught men to honour it as the Divine standard of doctrine, and rule of practice. Their discourses were faithful expositions of the mind of the Spirit, enforced with all the earnestness of sincere love, and expressed in the language of natural eloquence. And whenever they could obtain sufficient funds, they were careful to establish

* Bishop Bonner showed his hatred of the word of God by ordering the texts of Scripture which had been painted on the walls of the churches in his diocese to be entirely effaced, "so that they might not be read or seen."