

colonized children, until at last it was wrested from her. So that the first Bible in English with an American imprint was not published till more than one hundred and sixty years after the arrival of the Mayflower, or about eighty years ago!

In 1664 (2) the Rev. John Eliot had printed at Cambridge, Mass., the Bible in the language of the Natick Indians. This was the first Bible printed, but not being in the English language, a patent royal or *cum privilegio* was not requisite. In 1743, Christopher Sauer, or Sower, at Germantown, Pa., published the first German edition of the Bible, "after having been three years in the press." But it was not until about one hundred and seventy years after the first English colony had been planted in America (at Jamestown, Va., 1607) that the Bible in the English language was printed. During this long period, as stated, the colonists were dependent upon the press of the old country for their supply of the Sacred Scriptures. After independence had been declared, however, such was the scarcity of Bibles, that Dr. Allison, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and others, memorialized Congress on the subject, and that body, 1777, appointed a committee to confer with printers, with the view of having published 30,000 copies at the expense of Congress, "to be reimbursed by the sale of the books. (Journal, Sept. 11, 1777.) The difficulty of obtaining type and paper induced the Committee to recommend to Congress to direct the Committee on Commerce to import, at the national expense, 20,000 English Bibles from Holland, Scotland or elsewhere, and Congress ordered the importation. But afterward, when the unsettled state of the country and its commerce prevented the execution of this order, Congress resumed the subject of printing, which was referred to a committee of three, in which the Rev. George Duffield, of the Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. William White, of the Episcopal Church, chaplains of Congress, assisted; and the first American edition of the Bible in the English language was printed in 1781-'2, in small duodecimo form and brovier type (3).

This Bible was printed and published during the Revolution; and such were the difficulties attending the undertaking—apart from the disadvantages of the art of printing at that early period, compared with the great improvements and facilities of the present day—that "Mr. Aitken, in the midst of his work, was obliged upon one occasion to remove his type and materials hastily out of the city and bury them under a barn, in order to save them from destruction by the British soldiers." And yet—to quote from a communication which originally appeared in the *Philadelphia Freeman's Journal* of 1781—"under all these disadvantages, a complete, an accurate, and elegant edition of the Bible was published in this very city in four years from the time of the evacuation by the British. The very paper that has received the impression of these sacred books was manufactured in Pennsylvania; the whole is therefore purely American, and has risen, like the fabled phoenix, from the ashes of that pile in which our enemies supposed they had consumed the liberties of America."

As peace soon after occurred, and commerce was no longer in danger, Bibles were imported in such quantities as made it necessary for Mr. Aitken to sell his under cost, and he lost by the operation "more than £3,000 in specie." See his memorial to Congress in 1789, in which he mentions this fact, and asks Congress to grant him "a patent, authorizing him, his heirs and assigns, exclusively, to print the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, for the term of fourteen years, within the United States," under proper restrictions, which memorial, however, was laid upon the table. But his last-mentioned memorial is, and will be, that of having printed the first American edition of the English Bible. And though Congress did no more than superintend by committee the printing of the work, and afterward approved it and recommended it to the people of the country, yet, in only so doing, they showed their profound veneration for, and their high appreciation of, the Sacred Scriptures; and it is to be hoped that their successors in office, as well