

It is now between three and four hundred years ago that Copernicus lived, that Columbus lived. It is exactly three hundred years since Galileo lived; it is almost that since Raleigh coasted and gave name to the Virginian shore; it is a little more than that since Cartier ascended the St. Lawrence, and since Balboa,—

"With eagle eyes
Stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Looked at each other in a wild surmise,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

These great discoverers and adventurers had, we doubt not, stirring within them impulses from a divine spirit, with which the mental atmosphere of their day was charged, entering into and rousing to action the human souls that were found meet and sympathetic.

§ 2. *Invention of Printing.*

Then and to provide a vehicle from man to man of the marvellous additions to human knowledge, which in so many directions were being made, and as an enduring means of recording the same, Printing was devised: it was put into the heart of ingenious artisans to construct, first, stereotypic tablets in wood;—and then at last, movable types in metal, which, by arrangement and re-arrangement, should be put into any variety of combination, and create duplicates of every mental product, to an infinite extent, rendering thereby common to all men, and imperishable, the theories, the experiences, the conclusions, of each successive generation. It is four hundred years since Coster lived; since Faust lived; since Guttenberg and Schoeffer lived—inventors all; we are fain to think, in whom a divine spirit likewise moved.

But antecedently to these inventions and to these searchings of the round world, and we may well believe, causative of them to a very great degree,—another stirring of men's minds had been taking place, in another direction.

§ 3. *The Sacred Scriptures Translated.*

Among civilized men, we know, religion, so far as it is objectively concerned, has always rested on a sacred literature. A collection of essential books,—a *Bibliotheca divina*—the accumulation of ages, has always been the *litera scripta*, the unchangeable abiding record of principles, the last appeal in all matters of religion, not entirely instinctive and subjective.

Now these essential writings, deposited among the Christianized nations of Europe, had, in the lapse of centuries, first by a silent innovation, and at length by inveterate abuse, become a dead letter. They were preserved indeed and guarded; but it was as the poor African preserves and guards his fetich—superstitiously, and without intelligence. They were kept in tongues not understood of the peoples whom they were purposed to enlighten; nay not understood of the majority among the class who were their professed guardians and expositors.

Where occasionally, as in the case of Wycliffe and others before him in Britain, and in the case of Huss with others before and after him on the Continent,