

English language, and must remain undescribed. The "Messenger's" friends must have been great gainers by the last conflict it raised, that it is so ready to offer insult to the Catholics of Nova Scotia.

GREGORY XVIth's LETTER ON THE CIRCULATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

We have heard some misconception and read a great deal of misrepresentation affecting the Pope's Letter to the Italian Bishops. We advert to the Holy Father's document to-day, in order that our readers may not be imposed upon by the many mistranslations and mutilated extracts pervading the American Press. It is wonderful with what elasticity some consciences are endowed, if the propagation of Anti-Catholic opinions be an object of exertion. A Public Instructor, who fears human frailty so little, that he writes his piety upon his forehead, and challenges for his virtues the strictest scrutiny, should take prudent care not to 'bear false witness against his neighbour.' Yet it frequently happens that 'Churchmen'—Christian Messengers? &c., &c., seem to think a mistake impossible, if Catholic absurdity or impiety be the subject to be treated of.

The Pope's Government has lately had occasion to direct attention to the efforts of 'Bible Societies' in Italy. These 'Bible Societies' had been repositories of innuendoes, proselytism, and acted as agents in political revolution. The Bibles which they circulated were not subject to any revision by the legal authorities. They contained or might have contained numerous errors against Catholic Faith. His Holiness felt himself called upon to interfere: first, as the head of the Church, to prevent when and where he could the circulation of spurious editions of the Scriptures: Secondly, as a Temporal Prince to prevent the dissemination of sedition, under the plea of Religious zeal.

In most of the Protestant publications of the United States, from which Colonial Papers copied this interference of the Pope is called a 'prohibition to the circulation of the Scriptures.' It is assumed as a triumphant proof of our hostility to 'the correct influence of the sacred volume. We are anxious to show the sincere, who may have been deceived, that no foundation exists for the imputation. And we hope that the careless and malicious, who may have co-operated in the slander, will have common decency enough to withdraw it!

It is strange, that at a period like the present, when Bible learning is so extensively encouraged, any are found bold enough to accuse our clergy of opposition to it. We feel surprised at the credulity of Readers and can account for the errors of writers, only by the estimate formed of those for whose instruction they labour. The same Prints will announce to you a 'New Edition of the Bible by Father Mathew, with the approbation of the Bishops of Ireland' and subsequently, proclaim to the world that the Catholic clergy oppose the circulation of the Scriptures; and that the Pope has issued a Bull prohibiting all Catholics to read them.

Nothing can exhibit the folly of supposing Gregory the Sixteenth's Letter condemnatory of the circulation of the Scriptures more clearly than the fact of an issue of four or five new Editions by the Irish Bishops within the last four years.

However, we fortunately possess evidence in the Letter itself that His Holiness has been misinterpreted, when hostility to the sacred volume was ascribed to him. The following passage follows his reference to a rule which says, that the reading of the sacred scriptures ought to be permitted to those only who "would be judged to increase in Faith and Piety by their perusal."

"This rule was subsequently accompanied with new precautions on account of the continual artifices of heretics, a declaration being added by the authority of Benedict XIV., that the reading of vulgar versions approved of by the Holy See

or published with notes taken from the Holy Fathers of the Church, or from leading Catholic writers, should be considered as permitted."

By this it appears that the approval of the Church is alone required to make the use of any edition permissible. What the Sectarians, however, require is, that their Editions, which the Church authorities deem replete with error, should be allowed to circulate. It is hard to require from the Pope an abandonment of his duty to God for the love of Republican Knight Errants and New York Printers. His Holiness thus speaks of the calumnies heaped upon him for doing his duty:

"With the view the said Bible Societies incessantly calumniate the Church, and this holy See of Peter, as if shy endeavoured for many ages past to deprive the faithful of the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; although there are numerous and splendid proofs even in latter times, of the extraordinary zeal of the Sovereign Pontiffs, and of the other Catholic Bishops, after their example, to instruct the Catholic nations fully in the Divine Word, both written and handed down by tradition.

"From these efforts of the bishops, in concert with the solicitude of this supreme See of Peter, through the divine blessing, some rash Catholics, who unwisely had countenanced the Bible Societies, discovering their designs, withdrew from them, and the body of the faithful remained free, from the threatening contagion."

Could His Holiness write a Letter prohibiting the use of the Scriptures, and in the same Letter call the ascribing of such conduct to him a calumny?

What does the Holy See prohibit then?—for the Letter prohibits something. As we remarked before, the 'New York Society,' and others, formed a project for the Religious and Political revolution of Italy. To accomplish this fine end they inundated the country with Agents—and Bibles. The Agents were seditious—the Bibles interpolated and corrupt. The Pope prohibited—not the Bible—but their Bible. A man does not prohibit all medicine—if he prohibit what he deems poison, assuredly. Here the letter speaks for itself:

"You are also fully aware that great diligence and skill are necessary for the faithful translation of the oracles of the Lord into a strange tongue—so that either through the unskilfulness or design of so many translators, the most serious errors easily creep into the numerous versions published by the Bible Societies; which errors, in consequence of the number and variety of the translations, may long pass unnoticed, with injury to many persons. It matters little or nothing to these Societies, that men, reading the Bible rendered in the vulgar tongues, fall into this or that error; provided they be gradually emboldened to claim for themselves the free judgment of the meaning of the Scriptures, and to despise divine traditions preserved in the Catholic Church, as taught by the Fathers, and to reject the authority of the Church herself."

The last view which we deem useful is the one pointed out by the Pope himself in the following passage. The Sectarians aimed at the overthrow of the Popehood. This was a necessary consequence of the subversion of Catholicism, which followed from their perpetually brawled principle of self-interpretation. As a temporal Prince then, he was bound to extinguish the false lights of seditious imposture, and we hope he will succeed.

"For it is manifest, and proved by the long experience of past ages, that there is no easier way of withdrawing nations from fidelity and obedience to their princes, than by introducing indifference in religion, which sectaries propagate in the name of religious liberty.—Nor, indeed, do these new members of the Christian League dissemble it; for although they declare themselves unwilling to excite sedition, yet by claiming for each one of the humblest class the right to interpret the Bible, and by establishing throughout the Italian nation an unqualified liberty of conscience, as they term it, they acknowledge that the political liberty of Italy will also follow as a matter of course."

It is impossible to comprehend the principle by which they