

ful was his translation of the Scriptures. This great work was begun during his concealment in the castle of Wartburg. The New Testament was finished shortly after his return to Wittenberg; and, having received the critical revision of his friend Melancthon, was published in September 1522, and obtained forthwith an immense circulation. Several other versions had been previously printed without exciting much attention, and the numbers issued had been very small. But the people of Germany were now prepared to receive and value the precious gift. The contest with Romanism had been carried on for five years. Information had been widely diffused, and holy zeal awakened. All Europe was in a ferment; some wondering, some hoping, some fearing, some striving. It seemed like the time foretold by the Saviour, "Distress of nations with preplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth," Luke xxi. 25, 26. Luther and his associates had dealt heavy blows at Antichrist, with weapons fetched from the armoury of God. Now, the heavenly magazine itself was opened, and the assault became fiercer and more effective. Nothing tended so powerfully to establish and extend the Reformation as the publication of the German New Testament.

Encouraged by success, Luther continued his labours, and amidst the pressure of innumerable occupations persevered in the work of translation till the year 1534, when the Old Testament was finished, and the whole Bible published. He was assisted in this arduous undertaking by Melancthon, Romeranus, Justus, Jonas, Cruciger, and Aurogallus. They took extraordinary pains with the translation. "Their method was to assemble from time to time, when each came prepared by having pre-

viously studied the particular parts of the Bible then under consideration. Luther, who presided, had always before him the Hebrew Bible, the Latin Vulgate, and his own manuscript version; Melancthon brought the Greek, Cruciger the Chaldee, and the other Professors the Rabbinical writings. Thus they proceeded to examine the whole, sentence by sentence, till after sufficient deliberation it was agreed, either to confirm, alter, correct, or improve the translation, as occasion required: and so desirous were they of producing a correct translation, that they sometimes returned fourteen successive days to the reconsideration of a single line, or even a word."* The happy result of these labours appeared in the admirable fidelity and correctness of the translation; and the purity of its style rendered it a most acceptable present to the German people, who now saw their mother-tongue employed for the noblest purpose, and consecrated to the service of God. So well was it received and so extensively circulated, that in the space of forty years from the publication of the entire volume, no fewer than one hundred thousand copies had issued from the press. Luther and his friends met annually, on the return of the day on which the translation was finished, to celebrate the event; and "the festival of the translation of the Scriptures" was a season of holy pleasure and grateful joy.

The principles of the reformation were introduced into Denmark as early as the year 1521, and were zealously upheld by Christiern II., whose measures so exasperated the prelates and others who were interested in the maintenance of popish corruptions, that a rebellion broke out, and the king was forced to leave Denmark for a season. During his

* Townley's Illustrations of Biblical Literature, ii. 278.