

be formed from passages picked out here and there and separated from the context, Ambiguous passages are declared in favor of an author hitherto above reproach. In fine, the censors are not to be guided, by caprice or partiality, but shall refer at each step to some of the commonly received rules laid down for such transactions, so as to satisfy their own consciences, guard the good name of authors, whilst rendering service to the Church and the faithful at large.

A catalogue of forbidden books produced under these auspices should, it seems, claim some respect and no little interest. There are several editions: the last is an octavo volume of three hundred and sixty pages with two appendices of eight pages more, and comprises the decrees of the congregation issued up to March of the year 1887. The text is in Latin, the Church's official language. The book is divided into two parts. The first includes a collection of documents relating to the Index. We find there: the "Ten Rules" as they were drawn up by the Council of Trent to regulate the making out of the catalogue; also the observations and instructions of popes Clement VIII and Alexander VII; the long constitution of Benedict XIV already referred to; a mandate of Leo XII; two short declarations of the Congregation of the Index, and a document relative to the latest change of ecclesiastical censures put in force by Pius IX in his constitution *Apostolicæ Sedis*. The second part, the Index proper, contains all the books proscribed since the year 1596. All civilized nations are represented there. Though the volume is of peculiar utility for the clergy and especially the episcopate which, together with the pope, exercises ordinary power of censure, it is, however, intended for general use as the dedication "to the Catholic reader" indicates.

One or two of the documents in the first part, deserve notice here. In one of its declarations, the Congregation of the Index points out that any book proscribed in the language in which it was first written, stands condemned in any tongue whatsoever, into which it may be afterwards translated. In the second, the Congregation re-asserts one of the Ten Rules relative to the printing of the Bible

in the vernacular. The *Edinburgh Review* of 1871, in an article under the heading "Suppressed and Censured Books in England" furnishes some instructive reading. It brings one point out most clearly, namely, the facility with which Scripture is corrupted when rendered into the vulgar tongue. In one English translation about the year 1631, the word "not" is omitted in the seventh commandment, a fault repeated in a prayer book by the same printer. An examination revealed no less than a thousand mistakes in the whole edition. A story of Dr. Usher illustrates the length to which this process was going "The bishop of Armagh hastening one day to preach at St. Paul's Cross, entered a bookstore to enquire for a Bible of the London edition. When he came to look for his text, to his astonishment and horror, he discovered that the verse was omitted in the Bible." The parliament was soon called upon to forbid by repeated acts, certain much corrupted versions, though generally to little purpose, as the sellers found customers for them at country fairs and markets. In the face of this, who can deny the wisdom of the Congregation of the Index in forbidding any translation of the Bible in the vulgar tongue, to be offered for sale or use, without first being approved by the Holy See or edited with notes taken from the fathers of the Church or learned Catholic authors.

In some quarters it is believed that non-Catholics alone figure before this tribunal; nothing could be farther from the truth. All books are examined and treated according to their intrinsic merits, without reference to the name, position, or religion of the author. The books and not the writers are put on trial. The Congregation condemns false doctrine and nothing more. It may and does happen that matter of a dangerous character is printed with the best intentions in the world. Yet, simply because the issues of evil are not one whit lessened thereby, the books, or at least the dangerous elements, may be visited with reprobation. The staunchest Catholics have both felt and acknowledged the justice of this procedure. When the gifted and influential prelate Fenelon found that one of his books had been censured for unsound teaching, he offered without