

word of objection or opposition, yet whispers were heard, and a few bold individuals broke through the restraints which superstition had erected, and expressed themselves in language which could not be mistaken, as to the evils which prevailed.

About the beginning of the sixteenth century the noble Patrick Hamilton was born. He was the first that was honoured, in these times, to proclaim the doctrines of the Reformation to his countrymen. Having previously gone to the continent to prosecute his studies, he became acquainted with Luther and Malancthon, who were highly pleased with his knowledge and zeal, and thought he might be of great service in promoting continental reformation. But although good prospects presented themselves to him when abroad, he was seized with a desire to be useful at home, in checking the progress of error,—in detecting and exposing prevailing superstitions,—and in proclaiming the pure gospel of salvation. He therefore returned to Scotland, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friends abroad, who warned him of the danger of re-visiting his country at this time, when both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities were madly opposed to the doctrines of the Reformation. He, however, went and laid himself out to propagate the great truths of christianity wherever he had an opportunity. This excited the rage of his enemies ; and the Popish clergy very speedily planned and accomplished his ruin. In 1528, he was committed to the flames, in the 24th year of his age. Like Stephen, he was honoured to be the first, who in this age, died in the Redeemer's cause among his countrymen. But the blood of this martyr was the seed of the Church in Scotland. His cruel death was the means of increasing inquiry, and spreading light. Such questions as these were naturally asked,—What was his offence ? What views did he entertain ? How could such an amiable and accomplished nobleman deserve such treatment ? To these enquiries satisfactory answers could not be given ; and the result was the embracing of the reformed doctrines by many of rank and influence ; and that in the course of a generation the whole system of Popish superstition was overthrown ; for the impression produced by the martyrdom of this excellent youth, so much beloved by all who knew him, were most salutary. There were persons of all ranks, who believed that he died in the cause of truth, and who became more persuaded that the popish doctrines had no foundation in the Word of God. It might now be said that ‘many ran to and fro, and that knowledge was increased.’

Another cause which advanced the Reformation in Scotland was the circulation of the Scriptures in the English language. For by this time Tindal had translated the whole of the New Testament, and a considerable portion of the Old ; and these, with some of the numerous religious writings of this learned and distinguished individual, were sent from the Continent, where he lived, and were circulated, not only in England, his own country, but in Scotland,—being imported by Christian merchants who traded in the ports of Leith, Dundee, and Montrose. These were procured by many, and read in private with avidity ; and those who possessed them secretly collected their friends, and instructed them in the Word of God. By this means one copy of the Scriptures served to enlighten many families. Conviction thus increased and spread in all directions as to the impostures of Popery and the necessity of Reformation.

Another influence which tended to expose, and to lead to the overthrow of the Popish religion, was the satirical writings of poets. Not only on the Continent, but in a greater degree in Scotland, did the poetical effusions which were published expose the corruptions and absurdities of Romanism.