

from an early writer, who delivers himself thus: "that by this means the gospel was made vulgar and laid more open to the common people and even to women, who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy and those of the best understanding: and so the gospel jewel or evangelical pearl was thrown about and *trodden under foot of swine.*"

The Catholics being good at the business, would have been glad to have burned Wickliff for his pains. In spite of them, however, he died in quietness, A. D. 1384. Yet to show that the flame of their own malice was not out, they burned what they could find of him, forty years after his burial. The council of Constance, for want unhappily of his living person, ordered his bones to be dragged out of their sepulchre and committed to the flames, which precious specimen of Catholic magnanimity was presented to the world, A. D. 1425. Six years after Wickliff's death, an attempt was made to crush his translation under the mammoth feet of the government. But through the influence of the Duke of Lancaster, a powerful English nobleman, the bills which had been brought into the House of Lords for this purpose, failed. At a convocation of Roman priests, however, in 1408, it was enacted that "no one should translate any text of Scripture into English, and that no publication of this sort composed in Wickliff's days, or since, should be read in part or whole, in public or private, under pain of excommunication, &c." Sheep-stealing and Bible-reading were enormities of the same class, and to put the perpetrators thereof into the same prison and into the same fire, was justice that they only should gainsay who dare deny the infallibility of the Roman Church. This edict gratified the lovers of such matters with many a public execution.

At this time the English Bible was

in manuscript only, the art of printing not having been yet discovered; and he must loosen well his purse strings who would become the possessor of a copy. Two hundred of the common copies of our day could be purchased for the money demanded for a single one of Wickliff's translation. The first press set up in England, was in 1474, about fourteen years after the discovery of the art of printing. This event was ominous of evil to Popery, and abundance of light was shed from Catholic pulpits on the enormities of this work of darkness. We have a curious instance of their ignorance in the following statement made for the admonition of the faithful: "that a certain book called the New Testament, had come forth, which was now in every body's hands, and was *full of briars and thorns.*" And we find an honest expression of their fears of the press in the declaration of a distinguished prelate, "we must root out printing, or printing will root out us."

For the first *printed* English translation of any portion of the Scriptures, we are indebted to William Tyndale. He published the New Testament in Flanders in 1526. The Dutch merchants found the sale profitable, and many thousand copies were soon in circulation. No sooner had they crossed the channel, however, and were found in England, than the bishop of London set about enlightening his diocese with them, by committing as many of them to the flames as he could find. It was wrath, however, that yielded praise, for it gave the book notoriety and vastly increased the circulation. As for Tyndale himself, it was an unpardonable enormity in him to cause the Sun of righteousness to shine upon the deep moral gloom of England through his mother tongue, and accordingly through the influence of the English bishops he was arrested, and imprisoned eighteen months; he