An Objectionable Text Book

When the Education Sub-Committee of the Catholic Federation met on Monday evening attention was directed to a selection in one of the texts books prescribed by the University Select Committee filled for the examination this year, which is at present in use in the classes in our Catholic colleges and high schools preparing for that examination. The book in question is entitled "Selections from Carlyle," edited by Elizabeth Loo, and it forms one of the series known as "Bell's English Texts for Secondary Schools," used in the English literature course. The particular selection to which objection is taken is justly entitled "Martin Luther," and it is taken from Carlyle's well-known book "Heroes and Hero-Worship".

This extract on Martin Luther does not contain all the objectionable passages in Carlyle's delineation of the apostle and foul-mouthed monk as "a right Spiritual Hero and Prophet"—were ever epistles, or any other literary form, of unparalleled beauty and power, and the last analysis, contains much of an objectionable nature can be shown by a few quotations. One of the first things we come across in this passage, "It must have been a blessed replique to many an old Latin Bible, which he found in the Erfurt Library about this time. He had never seen the book before." Here we have again the discovery and translation of the Protestant Bible, which had been kept from the people by the Church! This story was first related by D'Aubigné, in his "History of the Reformation." His impenetrability was so great that it is surprising how it ever gained credence even from Protestants, and it has been a subject for the separation of every well-informed writer since Dean Maitland, the learned Anglian writer, in his "Dark Ages," exposed the audacious falsehood, and D'Aubigné, by an admirable subterfuge, tried to wriggle out of it.

How D'Aubigné could actually set down as history that Luther had had the advantage of a Catholic education, and had studied two years in the University of Erfurt, where "he had read the philosophy of the Middle Ages in the writings of Oecom, Scotus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas," which are paralleled with the Scriptures, and yet assert that he had not known there was such a thing as a Bible in existence, is one of those things which is difficult to understand, unless we believe him to have written it deliberately, and in bad faith, with ulterior objects. It is still more difficult to understand how writers with any pretense to scholarship or reverence for sacred history, can accept and repeat the statement and repeat it, as Carlyle does. We can only account for it on the score of the bitter prejudice and bigotry against everything Catholic, which we know to be sour old Prussian cynicism was reared.

As a matter of fact it can easily be proved that before Luther saw the light of day there had been printed 58 editions of the Latin Bible alone, and that before the year of his discovery there had been published 125, and of these 38 editions had been published in Germany. A census of the Latin Vulgate (the common tongue of the learned in Europe) was printed in 1470.