

The
Printed English Bible

1525-1885

BY

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WITH PORTRAITS AND FACSIMILES

LONDON
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
Manchester, Madrid, Lisbon, Budapest

First Edition, April, 1894.
Second Impression, 1909.

PREFACE

THE object of this primer is to set forth briefly the chief facts in the history of the Printed English Bible, so far as they are known at present, and to describe the principal editions. There is still much that is obscure, much, probably, that we shall never know, eagerly as the information would be welcomed. A great deal also of what passes for history in current works is partly or wholly fabulous. It is only during the last five-and-twenty years that a beginning has been made in the thorough and scientific study of the great subject, by reflecting the light furnished by the different early editions back upon the external history. Such books as Lewis' *History of the Bible*, Anderson's *The Annals of the English Bible*, Cotton's *Editions of the Bible and Parts thereof*, are—the first throughout, and the last two in many most important respects—quite unreliable, while many of their worst blunders are repeated in various handbooks which have copied their statements without any attempt at verification. A brief bibliography of the most reliable books is given at the end of this volume

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for the guidance of those who wish to pursue the study.

The same criticism applies even more severely to many of the statements about, and even many of the so-called quotations from, the different editions of the Scriptures. These have often been incorrectly quoted in some recognised book, and then copied and recopied without verification, and often with a further departure from accuracy. Every quotation made in this little book has been carefully verified by reference to the edition quoted, either in the author's own collection of Bibles, or in those of the British Museum and the Bible Society. One result of this method, it is hoped, will be that the reader will have nothing whatever to unlearn in the way of inaccurate description of and incorrect quotation from early editions. In a subject involving so many minute details it is, perhaps, too much to hope that errors have been avoided. Any inaccuracy brought under the writer's notice by any reader who has first consulted some standard copy of the edition referred to in the text, will be gratefully corrected in future editions.

Many of the words in the extracts from the early editions have been modernised in spelling in order to render them more intelligible to the reader unfamiliar with the forms and peculiarities commonly met with in fifteenth and sixteenth century English books.

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