

A P O L O G Y .

THE Holy Scriptures, as translated in the reign of king James the First, are the noblest heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race. Contemporary with the rise of colonial emigration from the great hive of parent life and enterprise, the English Bible, of that epoch, would seem designed, by Providence, to be the parting blessing of the Mother of Nations, to her adventurous progeny. Itself the product of long years of fidelity to the great Charter of man's salvation, it represented to the emigrant, not alone the love and care of the Church of that particular age; but it came to him, hallowed with the memory of a long line of witnesses, to whom he owed it under God. It was the work, in some degree, of all, who, in the successive stages of England's growth and development, had contributed to that great principle of the Anglican Reformation, that the Bible, with all its precious promises, is, by covenant with God, the rightful treasure of every Christian man, and of every Christian child. It was the Bible of Adhelm and Bede and Ælfric and of Alfred; of Stephen Langton and Rolle of Ham-pole; of Wiclif and Tindal and Coverdale and Cranmer

and Parker, and of all the noble army of Marian Martyrs. Finally, it was the Bible which had been winnowed from whatever was unsubstantial in the fruits of all their labours, and which combined the merits of all ; it was the finest of the wheat. When it appeared, Shakespeare and Spenser had written in poetry, and Hooker in prose, and Milton was just born. The English language was in its prime and purity ; its wells were undefiled. As yet, there were no developed schisms in the great family ; recusants were few, and non-conformists were not yet dissenters. The great work was, itself, an Irenicum, and for a time, it seemed as if the spreading plague of religious dissension might be stayed. If not, it remained to be seen, as it yet does, whether this golden casket might not contain the elixir of renovation, and prove, in the end, the "healer of the breach," of the common family to which the English language is the mother-tongue. It went abroad, in every adventurer's chest, the talisman of his ancestral faith, and the keepsake of home affection. It went to Jamestown, and it went to Plymouth Rock. It was read by the camp-fire of Smith, on the Virginia river, and by the winter fireside of the Fathers of New England. There was at least one thing held in common by both these colonies ; and, whatever may have been the discontent of the Puritan, he could not open his Bible without a kindly thought towards the Church of England, as a Mother, whose breasts were flowing with the milk of God's Word, even though her hands were employed in chastisement and discipline. "For myself," said Rob-

inson, the leader of the Puritan emigration to Holland, "I believe with my heart, and profess with my tongue, that I have one and the same faith, hope, spirit, baptism, and LORD, which I had in the Church of England, and none other." So, on the deck of the *Arabella*, Winthrop and his associates wrote their famous letter, "calling the Church of England their dear Mother," and declaring that they could not part from "their native country, where she specially resideth, without much sadness of heart, and tears in their eyes; ever acknowledging that such hope and part as they had obtained in the common salvation, they had received in her bosom, and sucked it from her breasts."

And now, after two hundred years of the sending forth of colonies, the Anglo-Saxon people dwell in every latitude and longitude; they mingle their blood with other races, and yet remain one with the parent stock. Time, indeed, is working changes; and far-severed branches of the same original family must have their own household feelings, and immediate ties of home. It is not altogether true, alas! that this mighty people have all "one LORD, one faith, one baptism." If it were so, the world would be their easy conquest for the Cross. They do not pray the same prayers, nor with one heart and one mouth, confess the same "form of sound words." But as yet, over and above the common spirit of their laws, they hold fast the great Charter, from which their free laws have proceeded; they possess the same Bible.

Can it be necessary to argue that no one can inflict a graver wound on the unity of the race, and on all the sacred interests which depend on that unity, under God, than by tampering with the English Bible? By the acclamation of the universe, it is the most faultless version of the Scriptures that ever existed in any tongue. To complain of its trifling blemishes, is to complain of the sun for its spots. Whatever may be its faults, they are less evil, in every way, than would be the evils sure to arise from any attempt to eradicate them; and where there is so much of wheat, the few tares may be allowed to stand till the end of the world. Two centuries, complete, have identified even its slightest peculiarities with the whole literature, poetry, prose, and science, as well as with the entire thought and theology of those ages, and the time, to all appearance, is forever past, when any alteration can be made in it, without a shock to a thousand holy things, and to the pious sensibilities of millions.

The care with which the Hebrews guarded every jot and tittle of their Scriptures was never reprov'd by our SAVIOUR. It is our duty and interest to imitate them in the jealousy with which God's Holy Word is kept in our own language. Even the antiquated words of the English Bible will never become obsolete, while they are preserved in the amber of its purity; and there, they have a precious beauty and propriety which they would lack elsewhere. The language lives there in its strength, as in a citadel, and knows no damage, while it keeps that house like a strong man armed. He who would rub off those graceful marks of age which adorn