THE

BIBLES OF ENGLAND:

A PLAIN ACCOUNT FOR PLAIN PEOPLE

OF

THE PRINCIPAL VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE

IN ENGLISH.

BY

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PREFACE.

This work is not a scholastic work, nor is it intended for scholastic readers. It is meant for plain people who have no knowledge of either Hebrew or Greek. Many questions, therefore, are ignored, which scholastic persons may think should, in a review of English versions of the Bible, be brought to the front; and some trivialities are introduced which scholastic persons may think should have been excluded.

The special subject to which most space in this volume is devoted, is that to which in many published works on English versions of the Bible least space is given; namely, the differentiations of successive versions, and the literary peculiarities that in each translation may be supposed most readily to attract the notice of common English readers. It is attempted in this way to show how dissatisfaction with one version led to the publication of another; and there is set forth as much of the history of each version as will indicate the persistent labour that for five hundred years has been spent on the perfection of the English Bible.

One thing that calls for explanation, if not apology, is that while the book is professedly non-scholastic it contains a considerable number of Latin words and even Latin sentences. It will be found, however, that in many cases the Latin words are self-explanatory, and serve to show the source from which particular expressions in the several English versions were derived. In all cases, too, the Latin quotations are of simple construction, and will be understood and appreciated by many readers who do not reckon themselves classical scholars. And if in any instance the Latin interpolation should prove a stumbling-block, it may be passed over without causing a breach in the continuity of the narrative.

It will be observed that at the head of each chapter there is a note of the special editions from which examples of the
translation under discussion have been obtained. Such a note
was necessary. Through misprints and corrections, there are
scarcely two editions of any one English version of the Bible,
except modern issues of the authorised and revised, that are
absolutely identical. If the editions, therefore, from which
quotations are taken has not been specified, some of these
quotations might, on reference to a different edition, have
been pronounced inaccurate. It is not to be supposed, how-
ever, that the editions specified at the heads of chapters in this
volume are those that are most highly prized by book-hunters.
They are simply those that I either happen to possess, or to
which I have had most convenient access. But they are all
sufficiently authentic for indicating the salient features of each
version.

It can scarcely be expected that in a work like this, which
abounds in details, there will not be some slips and oversights,
and judgments and mistakes. One mistake that may be
thought inexcusable will be found on pages 215-216, in a note
on a Hebrew word which an old Catholic controversialist
alleges to be the original of the Church term Mass. That
note was inserted without much consideration as the proofs
were passing through the press. To undo the evil or mis-
statement in that note, a correction, to which the reader's
attention is requested, is made in the Appendix, under letter
D. Another passage that from awkwardness of expression is
open to misapprehension, will be found on page 187. To pre-
vent misapprehension on the subject to which that passage
refers—the Theocracy established at Geneva in the days of
Calvin—a brief account of Christian theories of Theocracy
held by the Reformers is given under letter C in the
Appendix.

Both for advice on special points of dubity, and for access
to valuable copies of old versions of the Bible, to Latin as well
as to English, I have gratefully to acknowledge my obligations
to the courtesy and kindness of friends and others that, al-
though personally unknown to me, I take the liberty of count-
ing friends.

The Matter Marquise,
13th May, 1859.

A. E.
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ERRATA—Pages 144, 347.—For “Stephen,” read “Stephenus.”