

A Few Words on Fifteenth Century Latin Bibles.¹

THE subject of Biblical Literature is one which must always form a theme of attraction to a considerable class. Nothing in connection with the history and literature of the Bible can fail to be of interest. In the bibliography of the first half century of the Latin Bible we find several features of interest. Not only was the Bible the first complete book printed with moveable types, but it generally proved to be the first effort of the early printers, and in many cases was one of the earliest works produced in the various towns. It is also the first book in the number of its editions, copies, and translations. Regarded entirely apart from its contents, and from a bibliographical aspect only, it is a book which stands alone.

To state simply the number of editions I have discovered would not convey much information to a large class, so I propose, in connection with the statement, to show to what extent these editions have been known generally to bibliographers, also to show what proportion of them are possessed by the British Museum, the Bodleian, the University Library, Cambridge, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, and have been, or are, in the possession of well-known collectors.

I have enumerated 144 editions during the first half century, but nineteen of those enumerated have sprung into being through errors in copying, the misprint, in some cases, of a date in a catalogue, or some such mode. The cataloguer inserts, by mistake, a wrong date, or the printer puts in one, and the *careful* bibliographer in after years comes across the entry, and forthwith cites the book as a newly-discovered edition. Curious and careful bibliographers, two and three, and so on, copy from the first careful bibliographer, the entry having received the sanction of his great name. In this way at least half-a-dozen editions, which probably never had any real exist-

¹ Read before the Library Association, Reading, September, 1890.

ence, have sprung into being, and are supposed to be preserved in various out-of-the-way quarters. I may cite as examples the so-called edition of 1465 in two vols., fol., printed at Embrica. This is cited by Le Long, on the authority of Mastricht, and it is quoted also by Masch III., 98, and by Osmont in his *Dictionnaire Typographique* I., 101. De Bure candidly admits he knows of no copy in France, and he might safely have extended his negative assertion. Again, the so-called edition of 1469, fol., supposed to have been printed at Reutling by John de Amerbach. The origin of this was a catalogue by Soubert, of the Library of Nuremberg. Masch gives this as his authority. De Bure simply mentions that there is a copy in the Library of Nuremberg, and various other bibliographers since have quoted the edition, as, for instance, Caille, Chevillier, Hallerwood, Maittaire, Osmont, and Weislinger. The so-called edition of 1478, fol., Argent. per Mart. Flacher, is cited by both Hain and Panzer. The former had never seen a copy, and the latter doubted its existence.

The editors of the *Bibliotheca Sacra* enumerate 109 editions in the first half century, including those that are doubtful, and 17 that are supposititious. Of these 109, 39 are omitted by Le Long, and of the 17 supposititious 11 are not referred to by him. Maittaire mentions 81 (including doubtful editions), and 6 which are spurious, making a total of 87. Panzer enumerates 104 editions (including doubtful editions), and 7 which are spurious, making a total of 111. Hain enumerates 105, including doubtful editions, and 3 which are spurious; 71 editions he had seen, and 37 he mentions on the authority of others. Eight of these last he doubts the existence of.

Of the public collections the Bodleian heads the list with 83 editions, the British Museum comes next with 73 editions, and the National collection in Paris, third, with 68 editions. There are 30 editions in the University Library, Cambridge, 21 editions in the Library of the University of Munich, and 25 in that of the University of Strasburg. There were 47 editions in the Caxton Celebration Exhibition.

As to private collections, Earl Spencer's Library is exceedingly rich in rare editions, he having 24 editions of the rarest before the year 1500.

Mr. Stevens says, in his introduction to the history of printing, illustrated by the printed Bible, prefixed to the collection of the Holy Scriptures in the Caxton Exhibition, "the famous collection of Bibles in the Royal Library of Stuttgart is said to exceed

7,000 editions, but by comparison of the catalogue of our present Caxton celebration collection, with the collection of Adler printed in 1787, the patient and curious reader will see that more than one half of our collection is not represented at Stuttgart."

I have the catalogue referred to, and if the "patient and curious reader" should refer to the title of the volume only, he would at once see that it is but a catalogue of that portion of the Bibles acquired from Lorch, a clergyman of Copenhagen, who in 1784 disposed of his collection of Bibles, containing 5,156 editions, to the King of Wurtemberg. But the Stuttgart Library was rich in Bibles before this acquisition, and shortly afterwards was rendered richer still by the purchase of Panzer's collection amounting to 1,645. Home tells us that in 1814 the Stuttgart collection amounted to 9,000. The portion acquired from Lorch was by no means extensive as regards 15th century Latin Bibles—there were but 34 editions.

The Rev. Dr. Ginsburg's collection is more particularly rich in Hebrew and German Bibles; but I understand he has a fine collection of Latin Bibles. The Rev. William Makellar, of Edinburgh, has 22 editions. The British and Foreign Bible Society have five editions. I have myself 60 editions in the 15th century.

I do not wish to hurt the feelings of the booksellers, but it is remarkable how some consider the rarity of a volume depends on the fact of there being no copy of it in a particular collection. For instance, one reads in their catalogues, as an inducement to purchase, "Not in the great Sunderland Library." Now, of the 125 genuine editions of the Latin Bible before 1500, 13 only were in this library, and even the truly great collection of the Duke of Sussex could boast of but 61 editions. Fifty-one only were enumerated by Mr. Pettigrew in his *Bibliotheca Sussexiana*, but the Duke, subsequently to 1827, acquired ten more editions.

As to the places where the editions of the 15th century appeared, Venice heads the list. In this city 31 editions appeared between 1450 and 1500, the first edition appearing in 1475. Basle comes next with 21 editions, the first appearing about 1470; Nuremburg next with 16 editions, the first in 1475; Strasburg next with nine; Cologne and Lyons next with eight each; Paris with six, Mayence with three, and Spira and Ulm with two. No other place is known to have produced two editions during the above period.

Before the year 1475 all the editions were in folio. The first

quarto Latin Bible appeared this year, printed by John Peter de Ferratis at Placentia, and was also the first book printed in that town. The first Coburger edition appeared in 1475. There are five editions of the Latin Bibles in 1476, having printers' signatures. Mr. Stevens says four, but he omits in the reckoning the Vicentia edition. The first Bible with a distinct title-page was printed at Venice by Geo. de Ravabenis in 1487 in small quarto, and the first Bible with a plate on the title-page was printed at Venice in 1492 by Hieronimus de Paganinis. The first Bible in octavo, or the "Poor Man's Bible," is one of the earliest, if not ~~the~~ earliest from the press of Johann Froben, of Basle, in 1491.

The value of these early editions must be necessarily on the increase, if we consider the many circumstances operating to produce a rise.

First.—The formation in recent years of public libraries in all parts of the world, especially in this country and America, where there is always present the desire of possessing some early printed volume, if only as a specimen of the various presses; but in the case of the Bible an exceptional demand exists.

Second.—The formation of private collections.

Third.—The fact that though the demand thus increases, every year lessens the number of existing volumes—fire, neglect, and other destructive influences being at work.

I will give a few illustrations of the remarkable rise in the price of these early editions of the Latin Bible, as such may prove of interest. No doubt often the difference in the price realised at sales by the same edition of some of the earlier Bibles is owing to their respective conditions, and occasionally to the illuminator's talent, or the binder's reputation and skill, but this is not always the reason.

The Gutenberg Bible on vellum.—A copy sold at Gaignat's sale in 1769 for 2,100 francs, and passed to Count MacCarthy, at whose sale it sold for 6,260 francs. This copy is now in the British Museum, and worth at least £3,500, probably £4,000. Another copy, with two leaves in facsimile, sold in 1825 to Perkins for £504, and at his sale in 1873 sold to Lord Ashburnham for £3,400. A paper copy of this edition was bought by the Duke of Sussex for 160 guineas, and at his sale in 1844 sold for £190, whence it passed to Daly, Bishop of Cashel, at whose sale in 1854 it sold to Mr. Quaritch for £595. It then passed to Lord Crawford, and was bought again by Quaritch for £2,650.

So with Sir M. M. Sykes's copy. It sold in 1824 at his sale for £199, and passed to Perkins, at whose sale in 1873 it sold to Quaritch for £2,690.

Sir John Thorold's copy sold in 1884 to Quaritch for £3,900. Dibdin, in 1825, valued a copy at 150 guineas only.

A copy of the Mentelin Bible of 1460 sold at the Crevenna sale in 1790 for 115 francs, while Perkins had to pay £231 for his copy, which, however, sold at his sale for £75 only.

The edition of 1462, the first edition with a date, has gone up wonderfully in price. A copy on vellum, which originally belonged to Gaignat, sold in 1769 for 3,200 francs to the Duc de la Vallière. At his sale in 1783 it realised 4,086 francs, and passed into the hands of Count MacCarthy, at whose sale in 1817 it fetched 4,750 francs. It afterwards became the property of Mr. Watson Taylor, at whose sale it was sold to Mr. Dent for £215 15s., and at Dent's sale in 1827 it sold for £173 5s., and was acquired by Mr. Perkins, at whose sale in 1873 it was purchased by Quaritch for £780. It then passed into the hands of Lord Crawford, at whose sale in 1887 it was sold again to Quaritch for £1,025. The paper copies have also increased in value. The Pinelli copy in 1779 sold for £30, and Fournier, in 1809, valued a copy at £40, but Sir John Thorold's copy sold in 1884 for £1,000, and the Sunderland copy in 1881 for £1,600.

The second Eggestein edition sold in the Duke of Sussex's sale for £16 10s. only, and yet a copy was priced by Longman's, eighteen years before, at £73 10s., and the Perkins's copy realised only £49. The Mentelin edition of 1469, known as the "R" Bible, sold in Heber's sale in 1834 for £2 2s. only, and was priced by Nutt in 1837 at £6 16s. 6d. Mr. Quaritch purchased a copy recently at £60, and copies have sold as high as £100.

The second Cologne edition of Conrad de Homborch, usually ascribed to Ulric Zell (1470) sold in the Duke of Sussex's sale in 1844 for £5 15s. 6d., but a copy was priced recently by Ellis and White at £85. A copy of the Rodt and Richel edition of 1470-1 sold at the Sussex sale in 1844 for £4 4s., but a copy was priced by Mr. Quaritch in 1877 at £32.

The very same copy of the Schœffer edition of 1472, which had sold at the Duke of Roxburghe's sale in 1812 for £8 8s., sold in the Earl of Aylesford's sale in 1888 to Quaritch for £71, and was priced by him at £100.

The first Jenson edition of 1476, on vellum, sold at Paris's sale in 1791 for 1,440 francs, and was bought by the Duke of Devon-

shire for £168 at the Merly sale. The Sykes copy, which, in 1824 was sold for £71 8s., fetched in the Perkins sale in 1873 £290, and a copy in the Hamilton sale, 1882, sold for £330.

The first Naples edition of 1476 sold at Meerman's sale in 1824 for 50 florins, and the Sussex copy in 1844 for £5 10s., whereas the Sunderland copy sold in 1881 to Quaritch for £46, and was priced by him in 1884 at £65.

A copy of the second Jenson edition of 1479 sold at Dr. Askew's sale in 1775 for 1s. 6d. It is now worth £10. The Hibbert vellum copy sold for £115 10s.

It is surprising how little is known respecting some of the earlier editions. I have had a volume of the rare Naples edition of 1476 sent to me by a bookseller in a large way of business as an early edition of about 1480 unidentified. It was the first volume, and I immediately recognised it by the signature *m* being by mistake doubled. It is supposed by some to be the first Latin Bible with printed signatures. So the first *Fontibus ex Grecis* Edition (of 1478) I acquired as an edition of about 1480.

Many are misled by the collations of some of our bibliographers who have examined imperfect copies, and even the usually accurate Hain in his collation of the edition of 1476 he attributes to Richel, has led many astray. I was fortunate enough to obtain my copy of this edition at a remarkably low figure, in consequence of its not containing the interpretations of the Hebrew names, which the copy Hain describes had. There can be no doubt the work is complete without this table, and later investigation has shown that the copy Hain described had bound up with it a table from another edition.

I have prepared a list in a tabular form of all the editions of the Latin Bible of the first half century, which I trust may prove useful to librarians. I have by letters indicated the principal bibliographers by whom the various editions are mentioned, and by numerals indicated when copies are in the British Museum, the Bodleian, the Cambridge University Library, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, Earl Spencer's Collection, and my own.

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