

ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA.—P. 2. Line 26 from top, for *east* read *west*.

P. 12. Thomas Robinson, rector of Wycliffe, died in 1769.

P. 17. Dean Wanley married the daughter of Sir Henry, and the sister of Sir John, Goodricke.

P. 23. For *moritur* read *aspicit*.

P. 25. Line 10 from top, for *miniature* read *miniature*.

P. 33. Addition to the Cleseby pedigree, for which I am indebted to my friend Mr. Walbran. Robert Abbat of Fountains grants "domino Harsculpho de Cleseby et Johanni filio Willelmi filii predicti domini H." all the land belonging to the abbey between the common pastures of Whitker and Thorneker in Dishforth near Ripon. Dated in 1296.

EARLY GERMAN VERSIONS OF THE BIBLE.

GREAT interest has always been felt in this country in regard to the earliest-printed versions of the Sacred Scriptures in our language. Many works of great research have been devoted to this subject alone; and even Anderson's elaborate "Annals of the English Bible" cannot be said to have exhausted the history of our early English printed translations. But these, however interesting they may be to English readers, were all of a date much subsequent to the versions printed in Germany, Italy, Flanders, and France, and even in Spain. The earliest English translation of the Scriptures was not printed till about 1526, or sixty years after the earliest German Bible issued from the press in 1466; while in Italy, Malermi's Bible was printed at Venice in 1471; in Flanders, we have the version of Cologne (in the Low German), first printed about 1485; in France, that of Guyard des Moulins, made about the year 1294, and first printed at Paris in 1488. Very little interest, however, has been excited in England regarding these early translations, many of which are very scarce, and probably no perfect series of them is contained in any library. Perhaps in all England there are not twenty copies, at the present day, of the German Bibles printed before the year 1500; and even their very existence seems to have escaped the research of many English writers on the bibliography of the Sacred Volume. We find the learned and diligent Thomas Hartwell Horne apparently ignorant of the German editions prior to those of 1530; for he only tells us, at p. 88, that "so early as the year 1466 a German translation from the Latin Vulgate was printed, the author of which is unknown." We are the more surprised at this, as Mr. Horne repeatedly quotes Le Long's

Bibliotheca Sacra, in which almost all of the twelve German editions prior to 1500 are noted. The translation of the Bible by Martin Luther, finished about the year 1534, is by most people in this country, and by many, too, in Germany, thought to be the earliest existing German version; and in that case the English version of Tyndal can justly claim priority. The very earliest editions of the German Bible are as rare, and as much sought after at the present day, as are the first English editions of Tyndal and of Coverdale; but we have recently acquired two copies of a somewhat later date, though still very early; and these we have the pleasure of submitting to the inspection of the Society, with a few remarks on their peculiarities, and on the earliest German versions of the Sacred Writings.

The first translation of the Bible into the vulgar tongue, north of the Alps, was made at a very early period; quite as soon, indeed, as the famous version prepared from the original Hebrew and Greek, by St. Jerome, for the use of the southern nations on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Ulphilas, Bishop of the Westrogoths, translated the Holy Scriptures between the years 350 and 388; and, fortunately, a portion of this version, in the Mæso-Gothic language, has come down to our times, and has been often printed.

Other versions in more modern German—approaching, indeed, closely to the language of the printed Bibles—yet remain in manuscript in Germany. In the library of Stuttgart, there is a translation of the New Testament by John Viler von Koburg, bearing date 1351.

In the Royal Library at Vienna there are two MS. versions of the whole Bible; one in two volumes, bearing date respectively 1446 and 1464; and the other the well-known magnificent Bible of the Emperor Wenceslaus, 1378 to 1400, which is ornamented with splendid miniature paintings.

In the Ducal Library at Gotha, there is another German MS. version, in beautiful condition, and very finely illuminated. It originally came from Munich, and was probably executed for the noble Bavarian family of Hofer von Lorenstein, as the arms of that house appear twice in the illuminations. There is also, in the same library, a splendid MS. version of the New Testament, likewise brought from Munich about two hundred years ago.

None of these manuscript versions agree, we believe, with the printed copies; so that it is evident that many separate versions of the Sacred Scriptures must have been executed in Germany prior to the invention of printing, and especially, perhaps, about the period when that great art was struggling into existence.

1. The earliest-printed German Bible is presumed to be of the date of 1466, though some would assign it to the year 1462. It was printed by Henry Eggesteyn at Augsburg; and though of great rarity, there are at least twelve copies in existence.

2. The second Bible was printed by Mentelin, probably at the same place and in the same year; but some bibliographers maintain that this is really the earliest-printed version. It differs materially from that of Eggesteyn.

3. The third German Bible is likewise from the Augsburg press, and was printed there by Jodocus Pflanz, about the year 1475. This is the first Bible that is adorned with woodcuts; but we have never had the good fortune to see the volume. The Munich and Stuttgardt libraries both contain copies of this version.

4. The fourth version was printed at Nuremberg, about 1475; and the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th, at Augsburg, in 1475, 1477 (twice), and 1480. In these later versions (for such they really seem to be, and not mere copies of other earlier-printed Bibles), the year and printer's name first appear. We saw recently, in a bookseller's shop in London, the Augsburg version of 1477 (No. VI.); but the extravagant price asked for it placed it beyond our means. It was in fine condition, but was not adorned with woodcuts.

9. Of the ninth German Bible, published at Nuremberg in 1483 by Anthon Koburger, we are happy to exhibit a copy this evening. It is in two volumes, and has yet the richly-tooled and stamped binding on the oaken boards of the backs. The clasps still remain, and one of the volumes retains its richly-ornamented brass corners and central boss. The book is printed in double columns, with Roman numerals on the pages; and the paper is as firm and the ink as black as in any work printed in these luxurious days of ours. It is well known that the old printers not merely strove to reproduce in their types the calligraphy of the ancient manuscripts, but they sought, too, by rude wood-cuts, to emulate the miniatures with which their manuscripts were generally adorned. The art of the illuminator had not then died out; and they no doubt availed themselves readily of the services of those artists whom they were about entirely to displace. It will be seen that the initial letters in this Bible are left blank in the printing, and afterwards filled in by the hand; while on the initial letters of some of the more important headings much care has been bestowed. At the commencement of the book of Genesis there is an elaborate illumination upon a wood-cut representing the creation of woman. This seems to have been a favourite subject with the old illuminators; for we find it repeated in

the Bible of 1494, and also in the Life of Christ of 1515; both of which works are on the table here. Dispersed through the two volumes of this Bible are a large number of woodcuts—rude, indeed, in execution, but of great value as examples of the costumes prevailing in Germany in the 15th century, and throwing not a little light on the domestic furniture and usages of that period. All these woodcuts, more than 100 in number, are coloured—probably by the same hand that put in the initial letters. The colouring is vivid—somewhat like children's work of the present day; but it gives life to these quaint pictures. The book of Genesis contains by far the most woodcuts, the stirring events recorded in that part of the Sacred Volume having always afforded a wide field for the painter. The fall of our first parents exhibits the evil spirit twined around the tree of knowledge, but with the head and bust of a man clothed in a scarlet garment. In the passage of the Red Sea, the waters that overwhelm Pharaoh and his host are duly painted red. But perhaps the most extraordinary figure in the whole book is that of the elephant of Maccabees. The animal itself was evidently unknown to the painter, save by some distorted figure in illuminations; and the disproportion between the elephant, and the castle, and men he carries on his back, is even greater than the painter's license can claim. In the Apocalypse the artist has been most impartial; for amid the guilty ones of the earth he has placed a Pope with his tiara, a Cardinal, a Bishop, an Emperor, and a King. In spite of many defects of drawing, and a lamentable want of perspective, there is yet a degree of dignity of expression in the features of many of the individuals represented, and the stiff folds of the dresses of the females would delight an ardent mediævalist. We cannot say that all the figures are equally dignified. The position of Moses, in the woodcut of the burning bush, is sadly constrained and awkward. As to the language of this version, on comparing it with that of the preceding Bibles, of all of which versions we have portions in Kehrein's work, we decidedly regard it as superior to all that went before it. It is, throughout, rich, strong, nervous, idiomatic German; and we do not wonder that Luther, in his translation of 1532, when he evidently had this version before him, adopted from it whole phrases and sentences without alteration. With the ready appliances and inventions for facilitating printing at the present day, we can hardly understand the difficulties under which the early printers laboured in perfecting their books. No wonder that old Anthon Koburger, at the end of this Bible, thus expresses himself:—"This praiseworthy work of the entire Holy Writ, called the Bible, beyond all other previously-printed German Bibles, clearer,



more truthfully and closely translated into vulgar German from the Latin text, and ornamented with beautiful figures, hath here an end. Printed by Anthony Koburger, in the excellent imperial town of Nuremberg, after the birth of Christ and the law of Grace the fourteen hundreth and eighty-third year, on the Monday after Invocavit; and, for the happy conclusion of the same, be praise, honour, and glory to the Holy Trinity, and One God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who liveth and reigneth, God for all eternity.—Amen.” As to the author of this translation, it is thought by some to have been Nicholas Syber, a canon of Eisenbach. The learned Keysler, in his travels in Germany, 1776, states that he saw a MS. of the Bible at Grätz in Styria, written by Erasmus Stratter in Saltzburg in 1469, which exactly agreed with this version. On the fly-leaf of the first volume of this copy, we read, in a very old German-text hand, “This Old Testament is given to Black Wentz, a dwarf in Eger.” Probably Black Wenceslaus was a dwarf high in favour at the Bohemian Court. In the second volume we read on the fly-leaf, “This New Testament is given to St. Hymbert’s Kirk, and to the public.”

10—12. The tenth German Bible before the year 1500 was published at Strasburg in 1485, the eleventh at Augsburg in 1487, and the twelfth in the same town in 1490.

Before this time, the Scripture had also been translated into the Low German or Nieder Deutsch tongue; and two versions were printed at Cologne before 1490. The third Low German version, of which we can exhibit a copy, was printed in Lubeck in 1494. It is an immensely thick volume and in excellent preservation, but has not the original binding. In the woodcuts and ornamentation of the initial letters we can trace a great change from the severe simplicity of Koburger’s Bible of 1483. The approach of the Renaissance or semi-classic style is plainly visible; but what the woodcuts have gained in elaboration they have decidedly lost in expression. We have rarely seen anywhere, not even among the hideous paintings of Teniers and Ostade, more repulsive figures than some of those in this Bible. Their expression is heavy, gross, and sensual in the extreme, though the proportions of the figures are more correct than in the Bible of Koburger. As examples of a change in costume (for fashions varied in those days as rapidly as they do at present), the book has considerable interest. The female headdress differs from that of Koburger’s Bible of 1483; but no female headgear can surpass the extravagance of that of King Pharoah at the commencement of the book of Exodus. Here the hair of the Egyptian monarch is frizzed out like an umbrella beneath the royal crown, so as to cover the face nearly to

the tip of the nose. We would call attention, also, to the singular figure of Moses in the opposite woodcut, where the Hebrew child, after being saved from the waters of the Nile, is making his breakfast out of a saucepan upon something exceedingly like sausages or black puddings. In another plate, in the Second Book of Kings, an arquebus or handgun is being fired from the shoulder.

As a sequel to those two fine editions of the early German Scriptures, we would call attention to another early-printed book upon the table, the Life of Christ, by Ludolph the Carthusian, in the Low German or Dutch language. It is a volume in fine condition, with the original binding and clasps; and though printed after the commencement of the 16th century, the initial letters and illuminations are put in by hand. The Albrecht Durer style of figure is here well-marked, but the architectural details are still purely Gothic. It will be observed that the Devil, in the Temptation of our Lord in the Wilderness, and elsewhere in the volume, is represented with a double face, in accordance with the well-known descriptions of his appearance at the witch-sabbaths of those days.

As a specimen of solid old binding, though of nearly a century later, we exhibit a Flemish Bible, that of Jacob Paets, about 1630, with an immense number of woodcuts by Christian Lichen. In spite of the improved manipulation we greatly prefer old Koburger's rude and vigorous engravings.

Of Latin early-printed Bibles we exhibit two, not much larger than the ordinary Bibles of the present day. One was printed at Basle by the famous Froben in 1495; and the other, which possesses much the clearer type of the two, by Jerome Paganini of Brixen, at Venice, in 1496.

Lastly, we exhibit a pretty MS. on vellum of the four Gospels, perhaps the work of a French scribe about the year 1420. It was on such copies of the four Evangelists that witnesses were formerly sworn in courts of justice. It contains only four miniatures; but they are neatly executed, and the whole MS. is in fine condition.

We trust we have not wearied the patience of our readers on a subject on which all are interested—the earlier editions of that Sacred Volume which all reverence as the Inspired Word of God.

EDW. CHARLTON, M.D.

Newcastle-upon-Tyne.