

THE BIBLE ADVOCATE.

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BIBLIA PAUPERUM;

THE BIBLE OF THE POOR.

This is the title of a very curious work that was much in circulation three or four centuries ago. Judging from its name alone, our readers would naturally suppose that it was a cheap edition of the Bible intended expressly for the purchase and accommodation of the lower orders of society; but this would be an incorrect conclusion. It is no edition of the Bible at all, though it relates to biblical subjects; but it is a manual or kind of catechism of the Bible intended for young persons and the use of the common people, as its name in part declares. The art of engraving on wood began to make progress in the fourteenth Century, and, having been much used in the manufactory of playing cards, which were invented a little before for the amusement of a hypocondriac Monarch of France (Charles VI.) was soon applied to a better purpose, that of forming blocks for printing books of amusement and instruction. The professors of the art composed pictures of historical subjects, chiefly

taken from the Scriptures, with a text or explanation engraved on the same blocks. One side of the paper only is printed upon, and the corresponding text is placed below, beside, or proceeding out of the mouth of, the figures introduced. These when placed together in a volume constitute the *Biblia Pauperum*, and from it the people in general were enabled to acquire, at a comparatively low price, an imperfect knowledge of some of the characters and events recorded in Scripture. It generally consists of forty plates, with extracts and sentences analogous to the figures and images represented in them. The whole are printed from wooden blocks on one side only of the leaves of paper, so that when folded they are placed opposite to each other, just in the same manner as Chinese books are now usually printed. As the white sides of the paper may be cemented together, the number of leaves is reduced to twenty. Copies, however, are sometimes found, the leaves of which not having been