

duty of preparing another Bible, differing in some important respects from the two already in circulation—his own of 1535 and that bearing the name of Thomas Matthew. The excellence of Parisian paper and typography was the cause of the selection of this city for the new work. There was nothing stealthy or secret in the procedure adopted. Cromwell was the patron of this especial undertaking; and through his influence a license was obtained from the King of France, Francis I., by which Coverdale and Grafton were authorized, in consideration of the liberty which they had received from their own sovereign, to print and transmit to England the Latin or the English Bible, on condition that there were no private or unlawful opinions in the new work, and that all dues, obligations, &c., were properly discharged. Under this protection Coverdale and Grafton applied themselves with the utmost diligence to the fulfilment of their commission. Letters to Cromwell are still extant, which contain very interesting notes of progress, and also show how deeply Cromwell interested himself in the work. For seven or eight months the two Englishmen and their associate, Regnault, the French printer, seem to have been left unmolested. In December, however, there came a mandate from the inquisition, which stayed all progress. Happily, a portion of the Bible was safe in England. Many sheets were seized; but even these were in large measure afterwards recovered, "four great, dry vats-full" being repurchased from a haberdasher, to whom they had been sold. The interruption caused a slight delay, but was most beneficial in its results. Cromwell was not the man to be foiled in his purpose; being unable to secure the accomplishment of the work in France, he brought over types, presses and men to England. In April, 1539, this "Bible of the largest volume," as it was then spoken of, or the first edition of the Great Bible, was issued from the press.

The title-page is very curious. The design is said to be from the hand of the celebrated Hans Holbein. The highest figure in the engraving represents the Lord Christ in the clouds of heaven. Two labels contain His Words. On that which extends towards the left of the engraving we find Isa. lv. 11 (*Vocatum nomen*, &c.). The other is directed towards the king, who, having laid aside his crown, and kneeling with outstretched hands, receives the declaration, "I have found a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will" (*Inveni*, &c., Acts xiii. 22); and himself exclaims, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet" (Ps. cxix. 105). The king appears again as the most prominent of all the figures. Now he is seated on his throne: the royal arms and motto will be recognised at once. The king hands the Word of God (*Verbum Dei*) to bishops and clergy on his right hand, to Cromwell and others of the laity on his left. To the former he says, *Hic præcipe et doce* ("These things command and teach," 1 Tim. iv. 11): to the latter, *Quod justum est judicate, ita pœcena audietis ut magnam* ("Judge righteously . . . ye shall hear the small as well as the great," Deut. i. 16, 17); and also words taken with slight alteration from Dan. vi. 26, "I make a decree; . . . fear before the living God." Below, on the right, Cromwell appears a second time, pointed out by the device and motto at his feet: he is delivering the Word of God to the laity, admonishing them in the words of Ps. xxxiv. 14. On the other side is Cranmer, clearly indicated by his costume and his arms, placing the sacred volume in the hands of one of his clergy, and solemnly repeating the charge of 1 Peter, v. 2. Below stands a preacher, enforcing the duty of prayer and thanksgiving on behalf of kings (1 Tim. ii. 1). The chorus of joy and thankfulness expressed in the attitude of the king's lieges, no less distinctly than in the shouts of "*Treat Ree*," and "God save the king," needs no comment. Prisoners look wistfully from their cells; but whether they are introduced as wondering at the commotion, or as sharers of the joy, or as affording in their own persons a warning that such punishment awaited all undutiful subjects, it is not easy to decide. It represents, with great faithfulness, a page of the history of the times. That the precious boon now conferred was the result of no human