

dent of the society, the venerable Earl of Shaftesbury. No more energetic or otherwise perfect representative of the far-reaching organization of which he is the head, could have been selected than the veteran combatant in the cause of humanity, who fought, while yet Lord Ashley, for the Ten Hours' Eill, who has since given a large interpretation to the duties of a landowner to his poorer people, and who has, during a long and industrious life, probably done as much actual good to mankind as any living man. Lord Shaftesbury has admirable associates in the work of carrying out the object of the Bible society. The committee is selected from church and dissent, and with its sub-committees seems to carry on its work with energy as well as discrimination. It would in this place be too long to allude to the numerous lay and clerical celebrities who are either vice-presidents or members of committee. It will suffice to state of the working staff that Mr. Joseph Hoare is the treasurer, who distributes some £240,000 per annum; that the Rev. John Sharp, M.A., and the Rev. W. Major Paull are the secretaries; that the Rev. William Wright, D.D., is the superintendent of the translating and editorial department; and Mr. Charles Finch the assistant foreign and financial secretary.

The latter gentleman was good enough to show me several more of the treasures of the Bible House, as No. 146 Queen Victoria Street is called. In addition to the fine Millais just mentioned are several portraits of the distinguished men who have from time to time shared in the work of the society such as Wilberforce, Henry Thornton, Granville Sharp, and the first president, Lord Teignmouth.

Everybody knows that the Bible society was founded eighty-one years ago; since when it has circulated more than a hundred millions of Bibles, Testaments, and portions of Scripture at a cost of about nine and three-quarter millions sterling. I naturally inquire whether any part of the great income of the society is carried to reserves, building funds, and other devices for absorbing "live" capital.

"Not at all," is the answer. "We keep about six months ahead of our outgoings, that is all. And we have, as a matter of course, always a large stock. You are aware, that except in special cases, we do not actually give our books away. We sell many of them at a loss, made good by subscriptions. For instance, we sell a sixpenny Bible, which costs us eightpence; and we have penny Testaments. It is desirable that possessors should attach some value to their property. It does not matter how small that value may be; but people are apt to disregard what is given away. What we claim to have effected is an enormous reduction in the price at which Bibles can be purchased, and the organization of a system of colportage by which they may be brought to every household."

"This library should contain many rare and curious volumes of Scriptures?"

"A few gifts we have, and most of these were exhibited at the Caxton celebration a few years ago. Here is a Miles Coverdale Bible, and numerous memorials of Tyndale; but we have not the Mazarine or other Bibles of great value. They would not be given to us, and we should certainly not buy them. Our mission is not bibliographical, but to extend the area and fruit of the teaching of the Scriptures by multiplying copies of them in every attainable language at the lowest possible price. Here are specimens of the octavo Bible in the type called "small pica." In the beginning of the century it was priced at 12s. per copy. Here is the old book, and here the new one, which costs 2s. 9d. Here are school Bibles in nonpareil and pearl type. The old ones cost 4s. 6d. and 5s. 2d.; the new respectively 1s. and 9d. each. The free contributions, amounting last year to 144,970l. 4s. 3d., enable us to sell these books below the cost of production to schools and the poor, and to make absolutely free grants where they are shown to be necessary. But our main idea is that of cheapening the scriptures, and distributing them from house to house by the system known as colportage. We dis-