

tion to the abominable excesses of shameless, brutal lust—we have swarming shoals of larger and smaller publications. That I might not be speaking at random on the subject, or from hearsay only, I have purposely used means to secure copies of upwards of two hundred of those scandalous infidel and impure publications. The very names of some of them are replete with blasphemy; while those of others are fitted and designed to excite wanton imaginations, and defile the heart, and stimulate to vicious indulgence. I cannot, I dare not outrage the feelings of this House, or do violence to my own, by orally enunciating any of these names. Of the subject matter, or contents of the infidel portion, it may suffice to say that therein and thereby, the claims of the Bible as an inspired book or revelation of God are held up to ridicule, contempt, and scorn; that there is not a character in it, not even the holiest and best, without excepting the Spotless One and the Just, who was “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” that is not caricatured, villified, or abused; that there is not a doctrine in it, however heavenly and true and worthy of its Divine Author, which is not shockingly distorted, misrepresented, and exhibited in forms the most repugnant to natural reason, and colours the most odious to the moral sense; that there is not a precept in the decalogue which is not torn, lacerated, tortured, tossed into the mire, and remorselessly trampled under foot; and, finally, that in some the very existence of God, or the soul, or a future state, is peremptorily negatived with insolent derision!

Of the *impure* and directly demoralizing portion it might be enough to say that it abounds with everything that is inexpressibly low, coarse, vulgar, atrocious, and abominable. Lord Shaftesbury, than whom there is not a more competent witness and judge, has pronounced many of the publications as positively *infernal*. Mr. Boyd, the admirable secretary of the Religious

Tract and Book Society of Scotland, who has paid special attention to the subject, thus reports as the result of his many and searching enquiries:—

“The cheap and pernicious literature of the day appears in various forms. Intended especially for Sunday reading, several weekly newspapers are published at a penny, with an immense amount of reading, and giving much prominence and fulness of details to all trials before the police and divorce courts, and to all cases of *licentiousness and crime*. There are also dozens of penny and halfpenny magazines and serials issued weekly, and penny novels. Of these publications, the contents, with few exceptions, are highly sensational, and often made up of tales of intrigue, burglary, seduction, murder, and every species of crime, which the writer invests with a variety of attractions. The criminal appears as a hero to be admired, he outwits the police, and escapes with impunity, and lives merrily and in plenty without the drudgery of daily toil. Then the engraver employs his art to picture vividly what the pen has described, and thus greatly augments the mischief wrought by a corrupt press, whose issues are almost always profusely and strikingly illustrated.”

The more vile and villanous of the publications now referred to seldom reach, and seldomer still penetrate, the environs of really reputable society. But they do reach numbers not only among the masses, but among the middle classes alike in town and country, for the most part openly, but often through secret and special agencies that elude the guardians of our piety and morals, and there they act with a festering, corrupting, and even fatally mortiferous influence on the souls and bodies of myriads. In this way our once secure and supposed impregnable fortress is now in many directions vigorously assailed and beleaguered by this formidable foe, whose fiery and poisoned darts already overshoot the walls, destroying the faith of many, and sorely transpiercing their hearts and