

Agent who alone can render the circulation of the Scriptures mighty to the pulling down of strongholds.

Towards the end of the last century, a great awakening in religious matters took place in the principality of Wales, mainly, we believe, through the instrumentality of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodists.—This created an appetite for the Bread of Life, and a consequent loud demand for copies of the Sacred Scriptures, but the supply was utterly inadequate for the emergency. "The word of the Lord was precious in those days". In this state of things, the Rev. Thomas Charles of Bala, of Sabbath School notoriety, and a highly honoured servant of the Lord, visited London, in the month of December, 1802, and, happening to be present at a meeting of the committee of the Religious Tract Society, took occasion to prefer the suit of his countrymen in reference to the great lack of Welsh Bibles, the failure of all attempts to obtain an adequate supply, and the necessity of resorting to some new and extraordinary means.—The proposition was favorably entertained. In the course of conversation, it was suggested by the Rev. Joseph Hughes, a Baptist minister, that as Wales was not the only part of the kingdom in which such a want as had been described might be supposed to prevail, it would be desirable to take such steps as might be likely to stir up the public mind to a general dispersion of the Scriptures.—This idea met with encouragement from all present. An address was drawn up on the subject and widely circulated, and on the 7th of March, 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was duly organized. Such were the circumstances in which this great Institution originated—an Institution whose sole object was to encourage a wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, and which, besides all its endeavours at home, pledged itself, according to its ability to extend its influence to other countries—whether Christian, Mahomedan, or Pagan. And if the object was great and noble, the means by which it was to be accomplished were simple and comprehensive, fitted alike to secure its own harmonious operations, and to impart to it a marvellous self-propagating power. And who that reflects for a moment on its vast, its gigantic results, will hesitate to admit that with all its imperfections, it has proved eminently successful, and for the last 50 years has constituted the very sun and centre of almost all evangelistic undertakings. It hath been honoured in putting into circulation not less than 43,000,000 copies of the Sacred Scriptures, besides imparting an immense stimulus to other societies. It has called into existence and formed, throughout Great Britain, Ireland, and the Colonies, not less than 1105 Auxiliaries and Branch-

es, and 2642 Associations, making a grand total of Auxiliaries, Branches, and Associations, of 3747. It has been mainly instrumental in founding about 4000 kindred institutions in the Eastern and Western Continents, holding the proud and commanding position of the general Parent of them all. It has printed 175 versions of the Sacred Scriptures, and of these, 121 are translations never before printed. It has expended, in the pursuit of its great and simple design, the sum of £3,856,486—beginning with £600, and now averaging £100,000 per annum.

But what art all these results of an external and secular description merely, in comparison with those that are spiritual and eternal? Who can reckon up the immense number of immortal beings that may have been brought, through its instrumentality, to a saving knowledge of the truth,—the spiritual bondsmen it hath liberated—the naked it hath clothed with a robe clean and white—the poor it hath replenished with treasures more perennial than the gold of Ophir—the blind on whose eye balls it hath poured celestial light—the deaf whose ears it hath unstopped—and the dumb whose lips it hath made to sing for joy?

Who can estimate the amount of consolation which this Institute has been the means of pouring into the hearts of the distressed and forlorn—light in the midst of the thickest darkness,—deliverance in straits,—beauty for ashes,—the oil of joy for mourning,—the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;—the disclosures of the divine glory in the use of the Sacred Volume given to those who were excluded from visible ordinances,—the heavenly serenity, tranquility, and joy, experienced even by those who were crushed under the weight of the tyrant's rod—the blessed visions and foretastes of eternal joy—the triumphs of grace and the hallelujahs of praise?

Most wondrous book! bright candle of the Lord! Star of eternity! the only star By which the bark of man could navigate The sea of life, and gain the coast of bliss Securely!

Who can tell how much of Britain's glory, during the last half century,—of her triumphs in arms,—of her acquisitions in territory,—of her extensions in commerce,—of her trophies in intellect,—of her attainments in science,—of her feats in skill and arts,—and of the whole of her economic well-being, is owing to the Bible Society? Yes, O Britannia, thou owest much to the Bible, to Bible Societies, to Bible circulation. These are thy wooden walls, thy waving banners, thine impregnable bulwarks, thy brightest ornaments. High is thy commission, ennobling thy destiny,—didst thou but know the day of thy visitation, even to spread a harmonious concert throughout all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people.

Who can duly appreciate the good done to our common christianity through the medium of the Bible Society, levelling to the dust those adamant walls of jealousy, and of cold selfishness, which the zeal of ecclesiastical partizanship had erected,—diffusing throughout the ranks of professing christians, the spirit of holy brotherhood, and of kindly co-operation,—holding up, in living, and emblazoned, and noon-tide embodiment, the essential unity that pervades the various sections of Protestantism,—a unity, in some respects, more beautiful than the unity of incorporation, inasmuch as it combines a conscientious adherence to truth, and the spirit of genuine forbearance,—a unity transcendently more glorious than the external regimentals of a Romish uniformity—the one being mental and moral, the other merely physical and natural?

Who can tell the beneficial influence it hath exerted, the auxiliary aid it hath afforded, to other evangelistic undertakings, in supplying missionaries to Jews and Gentiles with copies of the Scriptures for distribution, in defraying the expenses connected with the translation of the Bible, such as is now being done with our own Mic Mac Mission, and in preparing the soil for the active toil, the living voice, of the Preacher, in those countries where the Bible has yet marked upon its forehead "Contraband Goods"?

Who can, in one word, comprehend the glory redounding to the Godhead, from the whole existence, constitutions, and operations of this institution; for has it not inscribed on its very escutcheon, at once the divinity of the Bible, and the design of its author;—does it not acknowledge that as every page bears on it the impress of Jehovah's own seal, so is it but a transcript of the character and will of Him who maketh His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and whose very glory consists in the diffusion of its rays over all the ranks of His creatures;—does it not proclaim, as with the voice of an Arch-Angel, to East and West, North and South, that as all have a warrant to read, and a capacity to understand, heaven's message to man, so all in possession of that message, are bound to consider themselves but its sacred depositaries, and as laid under the most solemn obligations to send it wherever there is a being on God's wide earth, wearing the nature of man? Need we wonder, then, that an Institute so God-like, so bright a reflection of Him who is light, and in whom is no darkness at all, should be so hated and maligned by "the Man of Sin", by that system which lives, and breathes, and moves, in midnight darkness—or that Pope Pius IX. should be more afraid of the Bible Society than he is of the Republican bayonet—because he knows that this is able to destroy his throne in the Vatican.