

part of the Minute Book reads thus : "The Society having now formed themselves into a regular Committee, will in future enter a minute of the business done by them at the Weekly meeting every Tuesday evening."

The first meeting was on July 31, 1781. Spencer Wood in the chair. Present : John Griffiths, George Cussons, Thomas Dobson, Samuel Audinet. These names occur very regularly in the subsequent weekly minutes, with a gradually increasing number of members. At the second meeting (Aug. 7) Mr. John Davis was present.

The following handbill was distributed with the Bibles first sent out : "Sincerely and constantly endeavour, by reading, by meditation, and prayer, that your understanding may be enlightened, and that your temper and practice may be regulated by the sacred instructions of this book ; and it will prove, under the Divine blessing, the powerful means of your real happiness in this world, and your complete salvation in the next. But if, instead of this, you lay this heavenly treasure aside, and will not improve the blessing that is thus freely put into your hands, by those who wish well to your precious and immortal soul, if you neglect to read this Book of God, or to make a proper use of the most important advantages it affords, it will be a swift witness against you in that awful day, when you will be tried by its contents, and shall fall under that dreadful condemnation of the slothful and unprofitable servant, which you will find recorded, Matt. xxv. 26—30."

Among the clergy who were foremost to advocate the cause of this infant institution stands the venerable name of the Rev. Wm. Romaine, rector of St. Anne's, Blackfriars, who also became an early contributor to its support, and who for several years made a point of preaching in its behalf, collecting not less than £100 per annum from the churches in London. Several bishops, and many of the clergy, with persons of various denominations, soon joined, and cordially aided in promoting its objects.

The first sermon preached for the Society was from 1st Samuel iv. 7 ; "And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Woe unto us ! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore."

So popular did this first effort to advance religion in the navy and army become, that in a very short time the Society assumed a prominent position, and obtained a large accession to its patronage. His Royal Highness the late Duke of York had become Patron ; his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, President ; the First Lord of the Admiralty, several Cabinet Ministers, besides many noblemen, admirals, and generals, had accepted the office of Vice-Presidents ; thus affording official sanction to the substantial benefit the Society was diffusing far and wide.

There is a strange interest in looking over the early records of the Society, and observing the names of notable men in the history of England and of the Christian Church. Mr. Willberforce became a subscriber in 1794. Granville Sharp and William Clarkson also appear in the lists. John Newton, Sir Richard Hill, Rowland Hill, Colonel Burn, Horne, Bishop of Norwich, the Hon. W. Dundas, Lord Kenyon, the Earl of Dartmoor (Cowper's "one who wears a coronet and prays"), Lady Mary Fitzgerald, are amongst the notable names seen in turning over the lists. At a later period the Duke of Wellington was president of the Society."

It is gratifying to note, also, that collections and donations were received not only from churches and chapels, but from cities, boroughs and public corporations. Ely city and Cambridge Corporation, for instance, send handsome sums, and Cambridge University, in 1794.

In 1804 its designation was changed from "The Bible Society" to that of "The Naval and Military Bible Society, in consequence of the formation, in that year, of "The British and Foreign Bible Society."

Of the subsequent history and present condition and work of the Society, the reader may wish to know something ; but we have space for only a few words. For many years the Naval and Military Bible Society carried on its operations on a large scale, the chief supply of Bibles for the services being