

formed. In the year 1780 a number of troops were encamped in Hyde Park, at the time of the Lord George Gordon riots on the question of Popery. It came into the hearts of some pious persons in London to provide means for supplying each of the soldiers thus assembled with a copy of the Holy Scriptures. The Marquis of Cholmondeley, at the annual meeting of the Naval and Military Bible Society in 1860, thus briefly referred to the beginning of the Society: "It owed its origin to God, whose prerogative alone it is to bring forth good out of evil; and the occasion was those riots, well known as the Gordon riots, which brought to town a great number of troops, who were encamped in these parts. The immorality that prevailed among the troops at that period was such as to excite most painful feelings in the minds of many pious and philanthropic persons of the day, and they consorted together to consider in what way they might render themselves most useful to them. They determined upon the distribution of the Holy Scriptures; that distribution was afterwards extended to the other service; and thus originated the Naval and Military Bible Society."

It was called at first "The Bible Society" and continued for many years under that title; so that it may claim to be the true parent of the greater institution which now is such a blessing to the world.

But now comes in the strange story of the little meeting, which caps that told by Lord Shaftesbury, in Exeter Hall. We give the narrative as told by a former secretary of the Society, in a public lecture delivered in many places, and afterwards published under the title of "The Word and the Sword."

The circumstances connected with the formation of the Naval and Military Bible Society are both interesting and instructive; and if not corroborated by undeniable testimony would be almost incredible. Indeed, they present to the mind an illustration of that adage which asserts that truth is sometimes stranger than fiction.

It is now eighty years since one of those persons represented by the noble President, Lord Cholmondeley, as "pious and philanthropic," determined upon a course of action, and set about transferring from his brain to paper the *modus operandi* of his scheme, which presented to his enanoired view so promising an aspect, that he at once decided upon a second transfer. This latter took the form of a public advertisement, in which a detail of the plan was set forth, and a public meeting called in the largest assembly room to be had then in London, giving place, date, and time. This individual was of a most sanguine temperament of mind, and therefore concluded that the place of meeting could not contain half the people who would seek admittance on the appointed day. Independent of the excellence and clearness of his plans, as they appeared to him, he considered that interest in the army alone would be a sufficient inducement to call a large concourse of people together, in an age, too, when a public meeting was a very rare event. So at the appointed time he was found wending his way in high spirits, and without anticipating anything but complete success, to the place of meeting where in due course of time he arrived. He did not, however, as he expected, see a large crowd outside the door, and on ascending the staircase which led to the assembly room, he was not a little amazed to find an utterly deserted and empty place. He examined his watch and found the hour quite correct, and in a disappointed and downcast state of mind he approached the platform and sat down to ruminate.

While thus engaged he heard the echo of a solitary footfall on the lonely staircase, which, with sober and solemn pace, became gradually more distinct to, at that moment, his not very clear apprehension. Presently, however, all doubt was removed upon the appearance at the door of a stately and intelligent individual, who in a quiet manner and with clear voice thus addressed the occupier of the platform:

"I came here, sir, in answer to an advertisement convening a meeting for the purpose of considering certain plans and proposals of which I highly ap-