

cast in a less firm mould would have shrunk, he had the satisfaction of carrying with him the convictions and the suffrages of a large majority of the people of Scotland. Yet if for a moment he dreamed that the path on which he had entered was level and smooth, he was speedily destined to learn his mistake. Reproaches and misrepresentations assailed him from quarters whence he had the least reason to expect them. Some of the persons who had stood by his side at the commencement of the conflict, and who had rendered themselves conspicuous by the forwardness of their zeal, if not by the soundness of their discretion, thought fit to desert him, and others, on whose countenance and aid he might reasonably have calculated, looked coldly on, and chafed his spirit, if they could not sour his temper, or damp his exertions, by the tone of their advice.

It is not to be doubted, that the effect produced upon Dr. Thomson's mind, by the manner in which some of the leading advocates of the directors of the British and Foreign Bible Society conducted their share, of what has been called "The Apocryphal Controversy," made an impression on his health. Naturally of a more than usually robust constitution, he was capable of undergoing great fatigues; nor was his temper of that sensitive and morbid character which dwells upon imagined injuries, or exaggerates petty slights into serious wrongs. Still the personal tone which the controversy assumed in the hands of persons who, in the absence of argument, had recourse to recrimination and insult, combined with the sleepless nights and busy days which the part he had undertaken imposed upon him, silently wore down the strength of his constitution, and prepared it for yielding to that blow, unexpected perhaps by all but himself, which put a perpetual period to his labors and anxieties. In a state of health, which, to most men, would have furnished an irresistible plea for seclusion from the excitement of public business, he paid a visit to London; where, if he did little to place the ground of controversy between the two societies of London and Edinburgh in its proper light, before the religious public of the metropolis, the failure is to be ascribed to some other cause than a deficiency of zeal, of exertion, or of eloquence on his part.

The manner in which Dr. Thomson managed his share in this controversy must not be passed in silence. It was with all his heart and soul that he entered into the controversy: he brought all his powers to aid him in doing justice to it; and for a time at least, his whole mind and time were absorbed in it. In the object contended for, he beheld a principle at stake, which, as a Christian, a protestant, and a minister, he was bound to vindicate and maintain. It was not merely whether certain funds had been wisely or imprudently applied; whether certain individuals, to whom the public had been taught to look up with confidence, had been faithful to their trust: whether a less degree of good had been done, than the world,

who heard of the operations of the society, had been led to imagine. Important as these considerations were, they were not the questions which especially struck his mind, in the discoveries which accident had made, of the proceedings of the directors and agents of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In the conduct of the society, as represented by these individuals, he beheld the grand leading principles of morality and religion placed in jeopardy. He saw the marked line of separation, which the Divine Being has drawn between his word and the imaginations of his fallible creatures, trodden down, and, so far as the operations of the society on the continent were concerned, in danger of being obliterated. He saw the broad seal of heaven wrested from the page on which it had been impressed by the finger of God, and placed unscrupulously, and without discrimination, on lying legends and on "the true sayings of God." In all this, he beheld an object fitted to awaken all the energy of a mind trained to tremble at the Divine Word, to rouse into indignance and irrepressible feeling all the sensibilities of a soul that was "very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts."

If we would form a correct estimate of the conduct of Dr. Thomson, in relation to the British and Foreign Bible Society, we must at once possess something of his character, and find ourselves placed nearly in his circumstances. The very features of his character as a controversialist, which may seem most to require softening, were connected with qualities for which his memory deserves most to be honored. If he assumed a decided attitude, and made use of strong language, it was not because he cared little for the feelings, or was reckless of the character of his antagonists, but because his zeal for the truth made him less alive than were the lukewarm and the timid, to the effect his occasional warmth might have, on those with whom a sense of duty brought him into collision. In a struggle, unusually protracted, and in which, on the side of the opposite party, in some memorable instances, not the courtesies of debate merely, but the restraints of Christian feeling and ordinary decorum were violated, it is not to be wondered at that he should at times have caught the tone of his assailants—that he should occasionally have descended from the high ground of principle to occupy a position, in which, though he was not less formidable, he appeared personally to less advantage—that, in short, like Luther and Calvin, and others, his predecessors in the task of correcting great abuses, he should occasionally have been tempted to forget that "long forbearing" is sometimes the surest parent of "persuasion," and that it is "a soft answer" which the wise man tells us "breaketh the bone." If more need be said on the subject, he himself has said it, in terms that leave us only to

\* See Dr. Thomson's speech at the extraordinary meeting of the Edinburgh Bible Society, on the 1st March, 1830.