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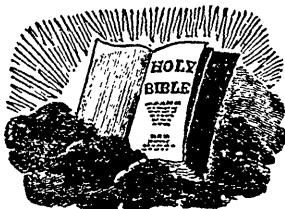
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THE
BIBLE ADVOCATE.

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MONTREAL, NOVEMBER, 1837.

No. 7.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

[It is always, interesting to the inquisitive mind, and often beneficial, to trace back our blessings to their source, to observe when and how the God of Mercy has provided and set in motion the causes which produce them, and to mark the progress by which, through his good providence, they have descended to us. The following sketch of the History of the English Version of the Scriptures appeared in a recent number of the *Boston Recorder*. It is so ably drawn up, and the principal facts are so judiciously selected and exhibited, that we have transferred it to our pages, instead of the purposed History of the British and Foreign Bible Society, which will be resumed and continued, occasionally, in some future numbers.—ED.]

THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

It is now having a glorious career, but it had a struggle, even for existence, at the outset. Bright as this luminary now is, and is yet to be, clouds and thick darkness gathered over it as it first entered our horizon. We are indebted to John Wickliff

for the first translation of the entire Scriptures into our language. The Romish Church, then in the plenitude of her power and insolence, scowled malignantly upon him as he fished up this precious pearl from the sea of the dead languages. They would have plunged it back again into the depths, but John Wickliff was a stout fisherman, and they were foiled. A Romish historian makes the following statement. "Wickliff made a new translation of the Bible, multiplied its copies by the aid of transcribers, and by his poor priests recommended it to the perusal of his hearers. In these hands it became an engine of wonderful power. Men were flattered by an appeal to their private judgment; the new doctrines acquired partizans and protectors in the higher classes who alone were acquainted with the use of letters; a spirit of inquiry was generated, and the seeds were sown of that religious revolution, which, in little more than a century, astonished and convulsed Europe." We can further see that the birth of the English Bible was a sorrowful affair to the Catholics,

from an early writer, who delivers himself thus: "that by this means the gospel was made vulgar and laid more open to the common people and even to women, who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy and those of the best understanding: and so the gospel jewel or evangelical pearl was thrown about and *trodden under foot of swine.*"

The Catholics being good at the business, would have been glad to have burned Wickliff for his pains. In spite of them, however, he died in quietness, A. D. 1384. Yet to show that the flame of their own malice was not out, they burned what they could find of him, forty years after his burial. The council of Constance, for want unhappily of his living person, ordered his bones to be dragged out of their sepulchre and committed to the flames, which precious specimen of Catholic magnanimity was presented to the world, A.D. 1425. Six years after Wickliff's death, an attempt was made to crush his translation under the mammoth feet of the government. But through the influence of the Duke of Lancaster, a powerful English nobleman, the bills which had been brought into the House of Lords for this purpose, failed. At a convocation of Roman priests, however, in 1408, it was enacted that "no one should translate any text of Scripture into English, and that no publication of this sort composed in Wickliff's days, or since, should be read in part or whole, in public or private, under pain of excommunication, &c." Sheep-stealing and Bible-reading were enormities of the same class, and to put the perpetrators thereof into the same prison and into the same fire, was justice that they only should gainsay who dare deny the infallibility of the Roman Church. This edict gratified the lovers of such matters with many a public execution.

At this time the English Bible was

in manuscript only, the art of printing not having been yet discovered; and he must loosen well his purse strings who would become the possessor of a copy. Two hundred of the common copies of our day could be purchased for the money demanded for a single one of Wickliff's translation. The first press set up in England, was in 1474, about fourteen years after the discovery of the art of printing. This event was ominous of evil to Popery, and abundance of light was shed from Catholic pulpits on the enormities of this work of darkness. We have a curious instance of their ignorance in the following statement made for the admonition of the faithful: "that a certain book called the New Testament, had come forth, which was now in every body's hands, and was *full of briars and thorns.*" And we find an honest expression of their fears of the press in the declaration of a distinguished prelate, "we must root out printing, or printing will root out us."

For the first *printed* English translation of any portion of the Scriptures, we are indebted to William Tyndale. He published the New Testament in Flanders in 1526. The Dutch merchants found the sale profitable, and many thousand copies were soon in circulation. No sooner had they crossed the channel, however, and were found in England, than the bishop of London set about enlightening his diocese with them, by committing as many of them to the flames as he could find. It was wrath, however, that yielded praise, for it gave the book notoriety and vastly increased the circulation. As for Tyndale himself, it was an unpardonable enormity in him to cause the Sun of righteousness to shine upon the deep moral gloom of England through his mother tongue, and accordingly through the influence of the English bishops he was arrested, and imprisoned eighteen months; he

was then strangled at the stake, and his body burned.

Cranmer was made archbishop of Canterbury in 1533. Unlike his Catholic brethren he befriended the Scriptures, and brought to pass a new translation of the whole Bible. Assignments of different portions were made to different individuals for translation. The reply of the bishop of London, to whom Acts was assigned, is worthy of notice, as showing how completely politeness and liberality of mind may be divorced from ecclesiastical greatness. "I marvel much at what my Lord of Canterbury meaneth, that he thus abuseth the people in giving them liberty to read the Scriptures, which doth nothing else than infect them with heresy. I have never bestowed an hour on any portion and never will, and therefore my Lord of Canterbury shall have his book again, for I never will be guilty of bringing the simple people into error."

The translation just noticed as instigated by Cranmer, was carried through the press by Miles Coverdale, distinguished for his piety and learning, and in October of 1535, the whole Bible for the first time, was printed in the English language. Coverdale was obliged to fly from the fury of the Catholics, who, eschewing all other modes, sought to illumine the world by burning Bibles, or men, as they found either most ready at hand. Henry VIII. was for a while favorable to the circulation of the Scriptures, and commanded that his own edict concerning their circulation should be read in the churches. "But herein," says a historian of that day, "the waywardness of the priests was observable; they read confusedly the word of God, and the injunctions of the king, set forth and commanded to be read by them; humming them over so that scarce any could understand them. They bade their parishioners live as their fathers, and that

the old fashion was the best. Notwithstanding it was wonderful to see with what joy the book of God was received, not only among the learned, but generally all England over, among all the vulgar and common people; and with what greediness God's word was read, and what resort there was to places where reading of it was enjoyed. Every body that could, bought the book and busily read it, or got others to read it for them if they were not able to read it themselves; and divers of the old people learned to read for the purpose." Henry VIII., however, through Catholic influence, swerved from his former position and interdicted the Scriptures by the following edict. "No women except noblewomen and gentlemen, (who might read to themselves alone) nor artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving men, husbandmen, nor laborers, were to read the Bible or New Testament, in English to himself or to any other, privately or openly, *upon pain of one month's imprisonment.*" Under Edward VI. the friends of the Bible again came into favor, and the restrictions respecting its circulation were taken off. In the course of seven years, eleven impressions of the whole Bible and six of the New Testament were taken. Great encouragement was given to its circulation on the accession of Elizabeth. From 1560 to 1570 there were 17 editions of the whole Bible, and six of the New Testament, and by the Queen's command, every church was required to have a copy in some conspicuous place for the perusal of the poor.

It is worthy of notice that the Catholics finding that the translation and circulation of the Bible, with all their good will to the contrary, could not be prevented, determined to have one of their own; and it was one so grossly imperfect in various points as to show they would render turbid,

if possible, a current they could not prevent. They first published the New Testament in 1584, and the Old with a version of the New in 1609, at Douay, which is the one now used by Catholics, when suffered to use any.

The present translation, finished in 1613, has taken precedence, most justly, of all other translations in the English language. And in no language upon the earth can there be found so many copies of the sacred volume, or so widely diffused through the world, and read by so many people. What was the misty, glimmering morning of the English Bible in 1535, is now the risen day. Its influence on the character and the destinies of the human family must be greater, for various reasons, than the same volume in any other language, and the contemplation of the full extent of which will be a delightful theme for those who shall be heirs of salvation.

ADVANTAGE OF FEMALE EFFORT IN THE BIBLE CAUSE.

It is the decided opinion of your Committee—and such opinion is fully supported by experience in every quarter—that a Ladies' Association gives more efficiency to one of the grand objects of the Bible Society than any other portion of its constitution. By means of the united exertions of Females, the inferior orders of society are brought more closely and more universally into contact with the Bible Society, and introduced to a participation in its magnificent and merciful plans. Not only are their own individual wants supplied, by being made possessors of a Bible, of which they were before destitute—and that, too, in a way calculated to give a stronger interest to their minds in their possession of that inestimable treasure, by its being their possession by purchase, and not a gift; but, what must be

regarded as a subject of great moment, they are brought, in very many instances, to take a deep and lively interest in the spread of the knowledge of divine truth amongst others; they are made acquainted with the awful destitution of the word of God throughout Christian countries; and they have brought before their eyes the equally awful fact, that many millions of their fellow beings are wholly unacquainted with the word of eternal life, and are consequently living without God in the world, and dying in vast numbers, daily, without hope.

Now, such subjects as these—the very slightest breath of the sound of which, a few years since, never reached their ears—are adapted to call forth the noblest feelings of the heart, and to excite to the most generous action: they are calculated to generate a spirit of sympathy beyond all others. And it is well known, that, in very numerous instances, this has been the delightful consequence. A new world has been opened to the eye of the mechanic, the labourer, and humble cottager. He has been called out of his own narrow sphere, where, for want of opportunity of charitable exercise, in too many instances, his heart had contracted a degree of narrowness also; so that his world was little more than the shop or factory in which he worked—the land on which he toiled—the cottage on which he reposed. The Bible Society has carried to his home and hearth, the whole of his native land—the broad expanse of the earth; and he is taught by it, to be interested in the spiritual and eternal happiness of the four quarters of the globe.

Above all, he is led to regard himself in a light, which but dimly, if at all, shone upon him before—as a subject among the unnumbered millions of the Redeemer's Kingdom. He might have been a man before,

working out his own individual salvation; but he was scarcely a man who looked to the glory of Christ's Kingdom, and regarded that glory as consisting in immeasurable multitudes being brought out of every nation, people, and tongue, to throng around the throne of the exalted Saviour, that He might see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

Thus the Bible Society has caused him to do good; and has thereby given an expansiveness to the character of his religion which it did not previously possess. And, let it be repeated, *the main instrument by which the Bible Society has done this*, has been LADIES' BIBLE ASSOCIATIONS, for the purpose of visiting the lowly dwellings of the poor—making them acquainted with the objects of the Society—ascertaining their want of Bibles—furnishing them with them, when and where required—and bringing many to be free contributors in support of the foreign objects of the Society. It is to be seen, in the Croydon Ladies' Association, how valuable an acquisition the aid of Ladies is, in forwarding the great purposes of the Society.—*Report, &c.*

THE DYING SOLDIER.

CONSOLATION FROM THE BIBLE.

—In the memorable conflict at Waterloo, a soldier mortally wounded, was conveyed to the rear by a comrade, and at a distance from the action was laid down under a tree. The dying man requested to have his knapsack opened, that he might have his pocket Bible got out. He then requested his comrade to read to him, if but a small portion of it, before he should breathe his last. He was asked what passage he would have read to him, and he fixed upon John xiv. 27. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you,

let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Now, said the dying soldier, I die happy, I desire to have peace with God, and I possess the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

A little while after, one of the officers passed near, and seeing him in such an exhausted state, asked him how he did; he replied, I die happy, for I enjoy the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and then expired.

INTERESTING NOTICE.

The Committee of the British and Foreign Bible Society beg to inform the Subscribers to the Institution, that they have now in the Depository copies of the Gospel by St. John, in embossed characters, for the use of the Blind, prepared by Mr. T. M. Lucas, of Bristol; the Gospel by St. Matthew, in embossed roman letters, prepared by Mr. Alston, of Glasgow; and the Book of Psalms, in similar type, prepared under the superintendence of Dr. Howe of Boston, U. S.; which will be sold to Subscribers, or granted for the use of the Poor, according to the Rules of the Society.

N.B. The Gospel by St. Luke, prepared by Mr. Gail of Edinburgh, also in raised type, is shortly expected; and other portions of the Scriptures will speedily follow.—*Monthly Extracts*, Sept. 30, 1837.

STATE OF THE BIBLE CAUSE IN CANADA.

MONTREAL.—The operations of the Bible Society in this city have been unceasingly directed to the furtherance of the resolution of supplying the Province with Bibles, as stated in a former number. The regular Agent of the Society, Mr. Elliott, after having supplied the townships of Rawdon, Killenny and other places in the vicinity with the word of God, has gone to visit the destitute places around Three Rivers, with the same object in view.

A public meeting was appointed here for the 25th ult., to lay before the public more

fully the great undertaking in which the Society had engaged; but the unfavourable state of the weather caused its postponement to the 6th instant. A subscription has been begun specifically for accomplishing this purpose, which amounts already to a considerable sum, although far insufficient. The American Bible Society, in the true spirit of the Gospel, which is not confined to country or race, has added a donation of 1000 Bibles to its former large grant of 200 Bibles and 2000 Testaments for the counties of Sherbrooke and Stanstead.

Large grants to various Branch Societies and to Sunday Schools have been made during the summer, while every encouragement has been afforded to suitable persons to act as Agents, when the present formation of a Branch Society was impracticable.

The Agent, Mr. Norris, employed by the Sherbrooke County Society, has been engaged to supply the county of Mississquoi, when his present connection is dissolved.

For the supply of Emigrants, the Parent Society has repeated its former grant of 100 Bibles and 200 Testaments, which have safely arrived per *Toronto*.

QUEBEC.—One hundred copies of the *Bible Advocate* have been ordered by the Society, the letter of the Secretary expressing a feeling of Christian desire for the success of this little work, whose funds are considerably deficient. No direct communication has been received regarding the operations of this Society; but it is to be hoped that it is not behind in carrying out the resolution mutually formed by both Societies of supplying the destitution of the Province.

SOREL.—This town is in course of being supplied, through the Rev. William Anderson, and some Christian friends.

ST. JOHN'S.—No Society exists here; but a dépôt of Bibles has been placed under the care of the Rev. Mr. Reid, while the Rev. Mr. Roussy continues his efforts to circulate the Scriptures in French.

CALDWELL'S MANOR is in course of being supplied by the Rev. Mr. Townsend.

MISSISSQUOI COUNTY.—Several clergymen and other gentlemen have been corresponded with, for the purpose of forming a County Society, which important end has not yet been accomplished. The Rev. James Reid will supply the portion of the County in his vicinity. The following abstract of an examination into the Township of Stanbridge shows that this part of the Province is much in need of the Scriptures. The Report was made by the Rev. A. Ridler.

"Visited the greater part of Stanbridge to ascertain how the inhabitants were supplied with Bibles; found it difficult to get into the back settlements. Estimates the number of families wholly destitute of Bibles, sixty-nine; ten of whom may have Tes-

taments, though they report themselves to have no Bible. Found about twenty or thirty families, Roman Catholics, who he concludes are without the word of God. 'Many of the poor' he says, 'expressed much desire to get a Bible, and if they could, would pay for one. Among those who reported themselves, are some rich farmers, who could pay for a Bible, but I should think the greatest difficulty would be to get Bibles into the houses of the rich; pride is a barrier so formidable to break through.'

"If you want the names of such families as are destitute of Bibles, you can let me know."

SHERBROOKE AND STANSTEAD COUNTIES.—Although the general efficiency of the Agent and Committees of the Societies formed in these Counties, leaves no doubt of their present activity, yet it is to be regretted no communications have been for some time received from them, showing their actual operations.

SHEFFORD COUNTY.—From the agency of Captain Maitland, a Branch Society has been formed here, but as yet no account of the proceedings has reached us. It is reported, however, that the meeting was very interesting.

HULL.—A grant has been made to Mr. P. Montague, as Agent at this place.

LOCHIEL AND KENYON, U. C.—Mr. D. Cattanach has engaged to supply these Townships,

CORNWALL AND LANCASTER, U. C.—Several individuals are desirous of forming Societies at these places; as yet, however, nothing definite has been reported. There are also no branches in Williamstown or Martintown; the ministers of the Church of Scotland, however, are generally in connection with the Scottish Bible Society, and possess a small stock of Bibles, &c. It is to be hoped that more united and extensive measures will be adopted in these places, to supply the destitution of the Scriptures, which in some places is represented as considerable.

TORONTO, &c.—From this Society, as well as from others in the Upper Province, no communications have been received.

APPEAL.

The Committee of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society desire to call the earnest attention of all who are concerned in the moral improvement of the inhabitants of this Province, and thereby in the promotion of their tranquillity and welfare, to the importance of laying among them a good foundation of Christian principle and right moral feeling, by the extensive distribution of the Volume of Inspired Truth, one of whose clearest precepts is to "fear God and honour the King."

Considering the scattered and frequently isolated state of a large portion of the inhabitants of the more newly settled parts,

and the equally isolated situation of the Protestant population in most of the Seigniories—considering also that so many are cut off from all the usual means of either awakening or keeping alive religious feelings in their breasts, and of giving a religious education to their families, whereby they are obviously in danger of becoming little other than practical heathens—it must appear evident to every candid and well-intentioned mind, that there is not only propriety, but also a sort of moral necessity in the attempt to give them that “bread of life” which may be always ready to nourish them in the deficiency of more ample means of grace.

In the hope that the following statement will meet with the approbation of all classes of the community, and draw forth the sympathy and liberal support especially of the religious portion of them, it is laid before them preparatory to an effort to obtain means for carrying out the plan with vigour and effect.

In the spring of the present year a resolution was taken by this Society to supply with a copy of the Holy Scriptures every destitute family in the Province willing to receive it, either by gift or purchase; and a Sub-Committee was appointed to devise and execute the best means of ascertaining and supplying the want. The Committee have kept the object for which they were appointed steadily in view, and have made some progress in discharging the duties assigned to them.

It was, in the first instance, assumed that the Province contains 175,000 Protestants, 35,000 families, besides many Roman Catholics who will receive the Scriptures; and that of these families one-fifth are destitute of the Word of God. To supply those, therefore, 7000 Bibles would be needed, besides great expense of agency in making enquiries and distributing the books.

Application has been made in several quarters for aid in this extensive and benevolent enterprise. The Wesleyan Methodists have engaged to make every exertion in their power. The following is an extract from the minutes of their last District Meeting, May 17, 1837:—

“We sincerely rejoice to learn that our Christian brethren of the Committee of the Montreal Auxiliary Bible Society, have resolved on attempting the accomplishment of so noble a design, and fully concurring in the suggestion of the Committee, ‘that the enterprise will require much money and the cordial and extensive co-operation of Christians in all parts of the Province,’ and being aware of the limited means of the inhabitants at the present time, we shall have great

pleasure in rendering any aid in our power, by gratuitously collecting and furnishing information, raising funds, and distributing the Scriptures in the several sections of the country in which we respectively labour. Any further communications from the Committee we shall be happy to receive, through the Chairman of our District.”

(Signed) WILLIAM SQUIRE, Sec.

The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge have promised their aid, so far as members of the Church of England are concerned. The British and Foreign Bible Society has generously granted two thousand copies, and the American Bible Society one thousand copies of the Scriptures.

Agents have been engaged for several months at once in examining various places in the Province, to obtain data from which to infer the general destitution, and in supplying in some measure the destitute. In eleven Townships or sections of country, 851 families were visited, of which 337 were found to be without a copy of the Scriptures. In one Township containing 200 Protestant families, 76 were found destitute. In another containing only 20 families, 10 were destitute. A district visited by one of the agents furnished facts as follows:—of 14 families, only 3 had Bibles—some had small parts descended to them from their parents, which they have kept most carefully. One family had not possessed one for three years—another had kept house for nineteen years and had never possessed a copy of the Scriptures. One man told the agent, that he never had a Bible; he said his father had one, but it went astray and he did not obtain one. This man is 68 years of age, and has brought up a large family. All the parties referred to as residing in this district are Protestants, and nearly all connected nominally with the Church of England. Other details might be given, but the Committee deem it unnecessary.

The result of the inquiries yet instituted, shews a greater want of Bibles than was at first supposed. Should the remainder of the Province be in a similar condition to the parts visited, more than *one-third* instead of *one-fifth* will be the ratio of destitute families, requiring for their supply more than 12,000 copies—a number of which, however, would be purchased.

The aids already furnished and expected have been referred to; and for the rest, the Committee appeal to the liberality of individuals, churches, and societies, trusting that a design so noble, and a supply so necessary, will not be suffered to fail for want of funds to carry on and complete the work. It is obvious that a very considerable sum will be

needed to accomplish so extensive a design; but will not pious individuals by their own contributions, Ministers of the Gospel, by an appeal to their churches, and members of Auxiliary and Branch Societies and Associations, by putting forth their utmost energy, endeavour to meet the demands of an occasion so auspicious to the interest of truth and righteousness? The Committee feel assured that one answer only can be fittingly given to this enquiry. Let, then, all the friends of the Bible exert themselves without delay, and the purpose will be achieved.

Communications to be made to the Rev. HENRY WILKES, Corresponding Secretary, Montreal.

Montreal, October 21, 1837.

SPAIN.—The thick darkness which has here brooded for so long a time, begins a little to disperse. At Barcelona, Lieutenant Graydon, R. N., has devoted himself to the circulation of the Scriptures with the greatest openness, for nearly two years. He has circulated about 2000 copies, and is disposing of 3000 Testaments, which he has lately printed.

The British and Foreign Bible Society has an Agent at *Madrid*, who is publicly printing the *New Testament*.

Yet Spain does not teem with Bibles, although with infidel publications of the lowest kind. Let the prayers of Christians in this land, hasten the day-spring which is about to visit that land.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE.—Bible knowledge, fetched in by prayer, and watered well with meditation, makes the mind humble and serious.—*Ber-ridge*.

IMPORTANT HINTS.—He who cannot find time to consult his Bible, will find one day that he has time to be sick; he who has no time to pray, must find time to die; he who can find no time to reflect, is most likely to find time to sin; he who cannot find time for repentance, will find an eternity, in which repentance will be of no avail.—*H. More*.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE BIBLE.—The following passage from Simpson, contains an interesting outline of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures:—

“There are four grand arguments for the truth of the Bible. The first is the miracles on record—2d, the prophecies—3d, the goodness of the doctrine—4th, the moral character of the penman. The miracles flow from divine power; the prophecies from divine understanding; the excellence of the doctrine from divine goodness; and the moral character of the penman from divine purity. Thus Christianity is built upon these four immovable pillars, the power, the understanding, the goodness and the purity of God. The Bible must be the invention of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or God. It could not be the invention of good men or angels, for they neither would nor could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ when it was their own invention. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils, for they could not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity. I therefore draw this conclusion—the Bible must be given by divine inspiration.”

LIVING TO GOD.—Let us live for God, and then we need not fear the gathering ills of the future. Let us live for God, and the joys and the sorrows of the coming year will alike be the forerunners to us of endless years in a cloudless clime.

TO OUR READERS.

Variety is essential to the success of a Periodical; and this cannot be long kept up by an Editor without the aid of others. A sameness of manner, at least, will pervade the work, however diversified its contents. The friends of the *Bible Advocate* are, therefore, requested to send contributions to its pages, in any form which may correspond with the avowed design of the publication, leaving the Editor or the Committee to decide upon the insertion or rejection of any article sent. The Editor is thankful for the few which have been already inserted.

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