

Narvellous Results of Free-Trade in Bibles, shown in a Letter to the Rev. William Anderson, LL.D., Glasgow, By Dr. Adam Thompson.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,—My young friend and colleague, Mr. Mearns, has informed me that, at an interview with you in Glasgow last week, you expressed a wish "to know the saving from the actual number of copies of Bibles and Testaments sold since 1839, and saving on each."

It would afford me great pleasure if I could comply with your request to the very letter of it. And I am sure that the effect of such information could not fail to excite the utter astonishment of all intelligent men, the ardent gratitude of all pious men;—nay, and the admiration of even all mere political economists, who take no further interest in the matter than as giving a demonstrative proof—perhaps the most remarkable that can be referred to—of the value of the principle of Free-trade in all saleable commodities.

The greatest distributors of Bibles in the world is the British and Foreign Bible Society. To the published Reports of that Society, then, I make my appeal. Happily, they are minute enough, giving the exact number of copies issued every year from the commencement of that great and benevolent Institution.

To do all justice in the case, I shall omit any reference to their earlier Reports, embracing a quarter of a century; although they might seem more to my purpose, as from the strictness of the monopoly, and the exorbitance of the price at that time, the issues were comparatively small. No one can doubt the fairness of the estimate, as a test, if we take eleven years immediately before, and the same number that have now elapsed since the abolition of the monopoly in Scotland, giving the number issued in each year, and thus showing the increase in circulation, and the saving of expense by the Bible Society during the latter period. The following figures then show the actual facts of the case, as taken from the printed Reports:—

ELEVEN YEARS BEFORE THE ABOLITION OF THE MONOPOLY.

1829, issued	365,424
1830	434,422
1831	470,929
1832	583,888
1833	536,841
1834	393,900
1835	653,604
1836	558,842
1837	541,843
1838	594,398
1839	658,068

5,792,159

ELEVEN YEARS AFTER THE ABOLITION OF THE MONOPOLY.

1840, issued	776,360
1841	900,912
1842	815,551
1843	982,060
1844	944,031
1845	915,811
1846	1,441,651
1847	1,419,233
1848	1,285,067
1849	1,107,518
1850	1,136,595

11,563,789.

It thus appears that the increase of issues during the same period of years following, as compared with those preceding the abolition of the monopoly, is no less than 5,775,633. The saving to the funds of the Society cannot be so easily calculated, because we have not the same unquestionable data on which to proceed. But, while it must not be forgotten that the saving is greatest on individual copies to the largest and most expensive sort, I shall assume—and it will be admitted by all candid men that the assumption is far from being in my own favour—that all the copies issued by the Bible Society were of the smallest and least and expensive sort, such as the Bibles and Testaments referred to in my late letter to Lord Bexley, there being on the Bibles a reduction of 4s. 2d., and on the Testaments of 2s. 7d. each copy. As, however, the number of Testaments issued is greater than that of Bibles, I shall suppose the saving on the entire issues to be only at an average 3s. per copy; and that on 11,563,789 copies, the issues of eleven years after the abolition of the monopoly, there will have been a saving in that period to the British and Foreign Bible Society alone of £1,734,568 7s.

Now, it will not surely be an exaggeration to reckon, that three times the above number

have been issued by all other agencies, including the Naval and Military Bible Society, and all other Religious Societies in England—the Hibernia Society—the Bible Societies, and other religious institutions in Scotland—the great publishers in Edinburgh and Glasgow, not to mention Coldstream, where, during the period referred to so many thousands were printed, and sent to all parts of the British Empire as well as America—and the sales by the entire trade throughout the United Kingdom and the Colonies. This assumption would give a circulation of Bibles and Testaments, during the eleven years that they have been under the operation of Free-trade, of the overwhelming number of 34,621,307, and the saving in price, of 3s. at an average on each copy would be the enormous sum of £5,203,705 1s. These figures are startling to myself, and will, no doubt, be astounding to many others. But the principles on which the calculations have been made will bear scrutiny, and let them be strictly scrutinized. As it respects the immensely increased circulation by the British and Foreign Bible Society, there can be no doubt about the matter. Its own annual Reports are my authority. In regard to the saving on its issues, any man may satisfy himself who can procure the monopolist's old catalogue of prices and compare it with any of recent date. And, as to the extent of the general circulation throughout the United Kingdom and the Colonies, I am certain that my allegations will be borne out by the Reports of "Her Majesty's sole and only Master Printers in Scotland," and by the returns of all printers of Bibles lately made to the British Parliament.

The Shortness of Active Life.

The world and the customs of the world never cease to levy taxes on our time—that is true, and, so far, the blame is not ours—but the particular degree in which we suffer from this robbery depends much upon the weakness with which we ourselves become parties to the wrong, or the energy with which we resist it. Resisting or not, however, we are doomed to suffer a severe pang as often as the irrevocable flight of time is brought home with keenness to our hearts. The spectacle of a lady floating over the sea in a boat, and waking suddenly to find her magnificent robes of pearl necklace, by some accident detached at one end from its fastenings, the loose string hanging down in the water, and pearl after pearl slipping forever into the abyss brings before us the sadness of the case. That particular pearl which at the very moment is rolling off unto the unsearchable deeps, carries its own separate reproach to the lady's heart. But it is more deeply reproachful as the representative of so many others, uncounted pearls that have already been swallowed up irrecoverably while she was yet sleeping, and of many besides that must follow, before any remedy can be applied to what we call this jewelry hemorrhage of the same kind in wasting our jewelry hours. A day has perished from our brief calendar of days—and that we could endure—but this day is no more than the reiteration of many other days, days counted by thousands, to the same extent, and by the same unhappy means, viz: the evil usages of the world made effectual and ratified by our own *laches*. Bitter is the upbraiding which we seem to hear from a secret monitor, "My friend, you make very free with your days; pray how many do you expect to have? What is your rental, as respects the total harvest of days, which this life is likely to yield?" Let us consider. Three score years and ten produce a sum total of 25,550 days; to say nothing of some seventeen or eighteen more that will be payable to you as a *bonus* on account of leap years. Now, out of this total, one third must be deducted at a single blow for one item, viz: sleep. Next, on account of illness, or recreation, and the serious occupations spread over the surface of life, it will be little enough to deduct another third. Recollect, also, that twenty years will have gone from the earlier end of your life—viz: above 7000 days—before you can have attained any skill or system, or any definite purpose in the distribution of your time. Lastly, for that single item which among the Roman armies, was indicated by the technical phrase "*corpus curare*," tendance on the animal necessities, viz: eating, drinking, washing, bathing, and exercise—deduct the smallest allowance consistent with propriety; and upon summing up all these appropriations, you will not find so much as four thousand days left disposable for direct intellectual culture. Four thousand,

or forty hundreds will be a hundred forties—that is, according to the lax Hebrew method of indicating six weeks for the phrase of "forty days," you will have a hundred bills or drafts on Father Time, value six weeks each, as the whole period available for intellectual labour. A solid block of about eleven and a half continuous years, is all that a long life will furnish for the development of what is most august in man's nature. After that, the night comes when no man can work—brain and arm will be alike unserviceable—or, if the life should be unusually extended, the vital powers will be drooping as regards all motions in advance.—*Hogg's Instructor*.

Truth Tested by Time.

The following passage of a letter from Dr. Layard is worthy of a place by itself, that it may attract the attention which its importance demands:

"In a religious point of view, there is no doubt that much important information may be expected from a careful investigation of the monuments of Assyria. During my labours, without being able to devote much thought or attention to the subject, I have been continually struck with the curious illustrations of little understood passages in the Bible, which these records afford. In a historical and archæological point of view, I know nothing more interesting and more promising than the examination of the ruins of Assyria. One of the vastest empires that ever existed—the power of whose king extended, at one period, over the greater part of Assyria—whose advance in civilization and knowledge is the theme of ancient historians—disappeared so suddenly from the face of the earth, that it has left scarcely a trace, save its name, behind. Even the names of its kings are not satisfactorily known, and out of the various dynastic lists preserved, we are unable to select one worthy of credit. As to their deeds, we have been in the most profound darkness; and were it not for the record of their strength and greatness which we find in the Scriptures, we should scarcely credit the few traditions which the Greeks have preserved to us. After the lapse of two thousand five hundred years, a mere chance has thrown their history in our way, and we have now their deeds chronicled in writing and in sculpture."

Here, then, is a remarkable instance in which the truth of Scripture has been subjected to the developments of time. For twenty-five centuries has the voice of Scripture declared to the world, in the calm confidence and simplicity of truth, those events in the Assyrian history which happened to possess a connection with the sacred narrative. Assyria, to use again the language of Layard, than which nothing more appropriate can be devised, has "disappeared so suddenly from the face of the earth, that it has left scarcely a trace, save its name, behind." And now that modern discovery has brought to light the monuments of Assyrian art, and the hidden secrets of Assyrian antiquity, nothing is found to clash with Scripture, but on the contrary its minutest details, its apparently casual allusions, which could only have been introduced because they were existing realities when the sacred history was written, these are now corroborated by the distinct evidence of actual observation among the long-hidden ruins of the great city of Nineveh.—*Churchman*.

Donald and the Catholic Nobleman.

A Scotch Nobleman, of the Roman Catholic persuasion, lived a very retired life, and left his affairs very much in the hands of others. One of his tenants named Donald, rented a farm upon which his forefathers had lived above two hundred years. The lease by which he held was, on the point of expiring, and the steward refused to allow Donald a renewal, wishing to give it to a friend of his own. Poor Donald tried every argument in his power with the steward; but in vain. At length he determined to make his case known to his lordship himself; but at the castle he was repulsed, the steward having given orders that he should not be admitted.

Donald, almost in despair, resolved on a bold measure. He climbed over the garden wall, and entered a private door, made his way unobserved towards the apartment of the nobleman. As he drew near and heard his lordship's voice engaged in prayer: and waiting till he should conclude, distinctly heard him pleading earnestly with the Virgin Mary and St. Francis to intercede with the Father and Son in his behalf.

After the voice ceased Donald gently knocked at the door, was admitted, and made his case known to the nobleman, who greatly moved by his tale, assured him that his lease should be renewed, and himself and family protected from the resentment of the steward. Donald poured forth his earnest and artless thanks, and was about to take leave, when a feeling of anxiety for the generous nobleman took possession of him thus:

"My Lord, I have been a bold man, but you have forgiven me, and saved me and my family from ruin; I would again be a bold man, and say something farther, if I have your permission."

"Well, Donald, speak out," said the nobleman.

"My Lord," replied Donald, "as I stood waiting at your door I heard you praying with great earnestness to the Virgin Mary and St. Francis; you seemed to be very unhappy. Now, my Lord, forgive me, but I cannot help thinking that the Virgin Mary and St. Francis will do you but little good. I had been a ruined man if I had trusted to your servants; but I came direct to your lordship, and you heard me. Now if you would but leave the Virgin Mary and St. Francis, who I am convinced will do no more for you than your steward would for me, and just go direct to the Lord Jesus himself and pray to him for what you need, he will hear you and grant the desires of your heart; for he has said in his word, 'Him that cometh to me I will in wise cast out.'"

Always Welcome.

See how welcome a sinner is to Christ.—The prodigal runs his course, he spends all in riot and luxury, and is reduced to utter extremity; and then he bethinks himself of coming home: "How many hired servants of my father's have bread and enough to spare, and I perish with hunger!" There be many mansions in my father's house. "I will arise and go to my father," &c. (Luke xv. 17, 18.) Being, upon this knowledge of his father's fullness, drawn, and upon sense of his own lostness, driven, he comes; and what salutation do you think his father might give him? "What! are you come indeed? In good time! You, that have all this time taken your swing in all wickedness, as long as you could live, my house was not good enough for you; and now, that you have laid me under the reproach of your back! do you now come to me? There is no duty or affection to me that sways you hither; but you are compelled by the extremity you have brought yourself to! Get ye home with a sorrow, and never look me in the face more." Thus we would have thought; but it is quite otherwise: his father, when he did but say he would come, meets him afar off, falls on his neck, kisses him, brings him home, provides the best room, the best robe, the best kid, all the best, and there is great joy. His father doth not question what draws, or what drives—whether he comes out of compelling necessity, or out of ingenuity and dutiful affection; but he is come—that is enough. "This my son was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found;" and there is all done that possibly may make him welcome.—*Pledger*.

False Peace.

To consider religion always on the comfortable side; to congratulate one's self for having obtained the end before we have made use of the means: to stretch the hands to receive the crown of righteousness before they have been employed to fight the battle: to be content with a false peace, and to use no efforts to obtain the graces to which true consolation is annexed—this is a dreadful calm, like that which some voyagers describe, and which is a very singular forerunner of a very terrible event. All on a sudden, in the wide ocean, the sea becomes calm, the surface of the water clear as crystal—smooth as glass—the air serene; the unskilled passenger becomes tranquil and happy, but the old mariner trembles. In an instant the waves froth, the winds murmur, the heavens kindle, a thousand gulfs open, a frightful light enflames the air, and every wave threatens sudden death. This is an image of many men's assurance of salvation.—*Saurin*.

A Churchman and no Dissenter.

The following conversation lately took place between an elderly gentleman and an old Greenwich pensioner, in an omnibus, while proceeding from Islington to the City. The gentleman asked him, how many years over