

ADDRESSES.

Principal Dawson said : Mr. Chairman and Christian friends : the resolution entrusted to me is short, but not unimportant. It refers to a subject on which I could wish to say more than the time allotted to me this evening will permit. It is—

" That the aspects of our time, and more especially the present state of religious discussion and controversy, render it more than ever the duty of Christians to extend the circulation of the word of God and to promote its study."

The subject of the resolution may be viewed in two aspects. We may regard it in relation to the controversies of earth or to the promises of Heaven. With respect to the first of these,—the opposition made to the Bible in our day,—we must bear in mind that the Bible provokes opposition. It is an aggressive book ; and we may, in this imperfect state of the world, almost measure the extent of its influence in the world by the strife which it excites. The Bible denounces tyranny, superstition, formalism, hypocrisy, and injustice. It assails vice, infidelity, worldliness, and selfishness. It is still in all these respects far in advance of our age ; and all these influences, however mutually hostile, must combine in enmity to the doctrines of the Bible, wherever these are propagated or practised. These old enemies are active in our day as heretofore, and the principal difference is that they have taken up the new and keener weapon of scientific criticism wherewith to prosecute their assaults.

This accords with the spirit of our time. The present is a critical age. We scrutinize and analyze everything in nature, science, philosophy and theology, and receive only what stands this test. The Bible itself encourages this tendency. It tells us to " prove all things, and hold fast that which is good." If the Bible were an obsolete book, of no influence or authority, it might escape this treatment ; but it is a power in the world, gaining in strength every day with the growth of education and intelligence ; and the fact that it excites inquiry and opposition is far more cheering than if it were hidden and neglected.

The assaults on the inspiration and authority of the Bible, which have recently been made in our own language, have excited some apprehension, and may do some harm, but the result is not to be dreaded ; and already much good has been done in producing increased study of the Scriptures, and in bringing more prominently forward the evidence for the inspiration of the book. Still we must not be surprised if more formidable attacks should appear. The English criticism has yet only reached an elementary stage. It is but a clumsy