

India has a special interest for us to-day. I witnessed the departure of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught from that empire last year. Their Royal Highnesses came aboard the vessel at Bombay, by which we were proceeding to China. Bombay blazed, and fluttered, and overflowed with the emblems of hearty loyalty. The cannon thundered a parting "God-speed," but a general officer who stood near me drew my attention to a little matter that seemed to me of more significance than the universal bunting or the official thunder of the guns. "How extraordinary!" said my companion; "these officials are in tears," and as a matter of fact there was scarcely a dry eye among the friends who were parting from their Royal Highnesses. During the voyage from Bombay to Hong Kong the Duke of Connaught was not only the hardest worker but the most genial companion on board, and the Duchess was the most considerate and kind. It was thus they won not only the confidence but the devoted love of the people of India.

It is satisfactory to remember that the Bible Society first touched India when British hands were resolutely seizing the sceptre of that great empire. Danes and Dutch, Portuguese and French, were occupiers and settlers, but from the advent of the Bible Society British statesmen alone ruled India. On parallel lines with British rule the Bible Society sought to extend its operations. The Society was not warmly welcomed by British officials, but the instinct for ruling which has enabled British statesmen to lay the foundations of just government on the ruins of hoary despotism in India has, under the guiding Spirit of God, led the same people to extend the dominion of the Bible over the hearts and homes of the natives. The various peoples of India now read the Scriptures in about fifty languages, and the humanizing and civilizing and Christianizing influence of the Bible is beginning to be felt in mountain and valley far beyond the limits of British rule.

The progress of British translation is one of the wonders of these times. Up to the founding of the Bible Society there were about forty versions of the Scriptures in the world. There are now nearly three hundred versions on the Society's list. During the prosperous reign of our beloved Queen about one hundred and fifty-seven versions have been added. In fact, more versions of the Scriptures have been produced during the reign of Queen Victoria than in all preceding ages. The work goes forward in an ever increasing ratio, and during the last fifteen years twice as many versions have been brought out under my own care as were produced during the first eighteen centuries. The Society has now some seventy versions on the anvil, being made or revised, and about one thousand scholars and philologists are engaged in welding these versions into acceptable forms.

The story of the heroic devotion and self-sacrifice displayed by translators is of thrilling interest. When a translator had fallen by the hands of savage cannibals or by the deadly miasma there were always men of like spirit to continue the work. They caught the words alive from lips that thirsted for their blood, and fixed them on the page instinct and throbbing with God's thoughts of love. The barbarians saw their winged words transformed into God's message, in which they heard a sound and summons from their true home, and laying aside their ferocity they themselves became transformed from savage cannibals into peaceful Christians. In several islands of Oceania the first explorers and missionaries were slain. By the time the Bible was translated there was not a heathen on the island. The idols were destroyed, and gods, manufactured in Birmingham, are provided for collectors of such curios, and with modern travellers who write about the islanders assure their readers that the ferocity of the people has been greatly exaggerated!

This vast enterprise has created vast but unrecognized obligations. Commerce is now possible in many regions because the Bible Society has been there. Its one Book has disenchanted prejudice, it has removed distrust,