

THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY.

The anniversary of this queen of societies was held in London on May 1st. The Report brings glad tidings of the onward march of Bible circulation, despite of all the opposition of "modern criticism" and "science, falsely so called." The summary, says the *Record*, will interest all who believe that the Bible embodies God's Word written and shall not return to Him void. It appears that the issues of the Bibles, Testaments, and portions of the same from the depot at home, amounted to 1,490,988 copies; the free income of the Society amounted to 107,386*l.*, whilst the sum received from sales both at home and abroad, amounted to 212,303*l.* The increase of expenditure above receipts, amounting to 15,000*l.*, was entirely due to the expenditure connected with the war in the East, in which was included 452,000 copies of the Bible or portions of the Bible, by means of which many had learned patience in suffering, consolation in affliction, and peace in death.

The Report concluded by noticing one event of the year, mention of which elicited loud cheering—the presentation to the Society "by a kind friend of a portrait painted by Millais of their noble and much-loved President. They trusted that his valuable life might be spared for many years to come; but they rejoiced to feel that when it pleased God to call him hence they would possess a most faithful likeness of their friend and patron, serving to remind them of the ready help which he had always rendered to them in every time of need, and of the noble stand which he had ever made against errors."

The Rev. H. Evans spoke as a Welshman, with enthusiastic earnestness of the work of the Society in the principality of Wales. He stated as a fact and as a result of the circulation of the Bible in Wales, that the Home Secretary is now able to abolish half the county prisons in Wales because there are more prisons than prisoners. "I was the other day at Dolgelly," said he, "when a friend asked me if we do not want a new college for Bala. I said Yes. 'Why,' said he, 'do you not buy the prison at Dolgelly? It has been closed for months.' I have heard that the county prison at Beaumaris, Anglesea, was about being closed. It has had only one prisoner for six months, and she did not speak a word of Welsh." He said that it was owing to the Bible that Popery made no progress in Wales, and that there was not a single infidel publication in the Welsh language.

The speeches of the Rev. F. F. Goe and Canon Fleming were each of them all that could be desired in tone, in sentiment, and in eloquence, and indicated a spirit of unwavering confidence in the power of the living Word of God to resist all the daring assaults of modern criticism, and the still more perilous concessions of half-hearted advocates. In the few graceful sentences in which the Noble Chairman returned his acknowledgments for the vote of thanks, his Lordship stated that he did not believe that "there had ever been a period in the history of our land—and certainly this observation applies to a period like the present, when we are in the midst of moral and spiritual dangers, such mischievous writings and opinions, such contradictions, such difficulties and temptations, such hazards, such fallings away on the right hand and on the left, as there are in the present day—I say I do not believe there ever was a period when it was a higher honour, or a centre of greater influence, to be the President of the British and Foreign Bible Society."

One of the most instructive and interesting addresses was that by the Rev. George Palmer Davies, of Berlin, who said,—My Lord and Christian friends, I have this day been entrusted with a difficult task. My usual occupation is work. I have annually to provide for the printing of some 400,000 copies of the Scriptures, for binding them, and for distributing them; I have to correspond, or to superintend correspondence, with hundreds of volunteer fellow-labourers and with the Society at home, and to organize and control the work of some eighty men in your employ in different capacities. To-day I have not to work, but to speak; to speak on a great theme before this important assembly, and I shall need all your indulgence. My theme is the Bible and Bible-work in the German Empire and the cantons of the Swiss Republic. It is a great theme; first, because the Bible is a great book; secondly, because Germany is a great country; and thirdly, because in this great country the British and Foreign Bible Society has done, and is at the present moment doing, a great and a noble work. That the Bible is a great book needs no demonstration before this or before any other audience. It is the book of Moses and of David, of Isaiah and of Daniel, of Peter and of Paul, and of John, and that is more than enough to make any book great. Law, and psalm, and prophecy, and Divine history, and revealed redemption combine to make it among the world's great books the very greatest. In the highest sense it is the world's one great book. "Bring the book," said a well-known author. "What book?" "What book! There is but one book—the Bible." And Germany is a great country. It is geographically great. Its area is four times, its population nearly twice, as large as those of all England and Wales. Excepting the great Russian colossus it is the most populous country in our quarter of the globe. It contains one-seventh of its entire population. Germany is the territorial heart of Europe, in direct contiguity, being separated only by an imaginary line, with Austria, Russia, Denmark, Holland, France, Belgium, and Switzerland, separated from Great Britain only by a narrow strip of sea, and from Italy by a still narrower strip of Austrian mountains. In this respect, as the geographical centre around which other great nations cluster, there is not a country in Europe or in the world that can compare with it. Germany has a great past. When the Roman Empire fell it was Germany that grasped the falling sceptre and held it tight for a thousand years. While welding her own tribes into the form in which, as a body politic, they were to play their part on the stage of the world's history, she became the great mother of great races. We at this moment are in Middlesex, that is, Middle Saxony. Essex is East and Sussex South Saxony. Normans are men of the north, and England itself is the land of the Angles. It has a great present, and in all probability will

have a great future. Germany is and always has been the land of great intellectual and spiritual conflicts. In the Middle Ages, in the great struggle of civil freedom against ecclesiastical usurpation, it defied the Gregories, the Innocents, the Bonifaces, and the Leos of Papal Rome; and in this 19th century, in the same great struggle, under its Protestant Emperor and his mighty Chancellor, it has defied and successfully defied, anathemas of Pius IX. resembling those which were hurled 300 years ago. It is the land of Luther and of Luther's Bible, and gave England herself her first edition of her printed Scriptures. It is the land whose literature and philosophy are in our own day, for good or for evil, influencing, almost moulding, the philosophical and theological thought of the modern world. Among the nations of Europe, including our own, it is the land where the plague has spread, the land in which the ulcer of social democratic Atheism has first come to a head, and at this moment is the axis around which the orb of international continental politics revolves. British Christians, help German Christians to rescue their country from the atheistic clutches of its socialists, from the less coarse but equally pernicious infidelity of its materialistic philosophers, and from the dark bondage of its Romish priests, and you will have helped to reconquer for Christ, not one-seventh the proportion of the population, but fully one-third of the intellectual and spiritual power of continental Europe. For this great country has great spiritual wants. It is a vast harvest waiting to be gathered in for Christ, but the labourers are few. Look at it for a moment. 38,000,000 of Germans and 5,000,000 of Wends, Czechs, Poles, Lithuanians, Danes, Walloons, French, and Jews; that is what it is—43,000,000 of immortal souls for whom Christ has died!

Go take thy flight from star to star,
From world to tremulous world afar,
Take all the worlds of all the spheres,
These human souls are worth them all.

One soul outvalues a whole world. These 43,000,000 are of more value than a whole universe. Further, these souls are, or destined to be, 43,000,000 of readers. Taking Germany and Switzerland together, there is no agglomerate of 46,000,000 of human beings on the face of the earth among whom the art of reading is so widely known, that is, among whom the ground is so prepared for work like ours. When you travel in Germany on the banks of the beautiful Rhine, or on the dark slopes of the Black Forest, or high up the Bavarian Tyrol, or far north on the giant mountains; when in Switzerland, at least in its Protestant countries, you climb or tarry under the shadows of its snow-peaks, you may offer God's Word to every sane man, woman, or grown-up child you meet, with the almost absolute certainty of offering it to a person by whom it can be used. And it is with gratitude to Almighty God that I can say here this day that whenever you are on German or Swiss soil, whichever of the multifarious languages spoken within the borders of these lands may be that of the population by which you are surrounded, the British and Foreign Bible Society puts it into your power in their own tongues to place in the hands of the people the records of the wonderful works of God, whether these tongues be spoken as in some of the high valleys of the Alps or in some of the plains and forests of North Germany by only thousands or tens of thousands, or, as in Germany itself, by tens of millions of the people. Such is the harvest. Who are the reapers? 25,000,000 of Protestants constitute the first great section of the German harvest-field. What shall we say of this? God be praised, there are thousands of harvesters engaged in reaping the harvest, and in gathering it in—pastors, true shepherds, men of energy, and men of God, in every way worthy of the traditions of their Protestant past. Moreover, there are free organizations, Bible Societies, and Tract Societies, and Sunday-schools, Town Missions, Rural Missions, Refuges, Workmen's Homes, Orphan Asylums, Magdalen Asylums, and dozens of other forms of Home Mission work, at times on a national scale, at times of a mere local character. German and German-Swiss Christians raise every year more than 100,000*l.* sterling for foreign missions. They here co-operate with British Christians, not only for the conversion of the heathen world in general, but for the conversion of the heathen populations under British rule. But while all this is true, it is, on the other hand, also true that in town and country, and especially in towns, the increase of the Protestant population has terribly, appallingly, outstripped the increase of Christian effort. The world has grown larger; the official Church has remained all but stationary. Where Protestant Germany now has one ordained minister in proportion to her Protestant population, a hundred years ago she had two, and her sister Protestant lands, England and the United States, at the present day have three. Add, moreover, in these latter countries to the regular pastorate the cloud of Evangelists which covers the land—a form of auxiliary work almost absolutely unknown to some of the greatest Churches of Germany; take further into consideration that very many of these organizations are, so to speak, in their infancy, promising babes rather than full-grown youths or vigorous men, and you will see at a glance the necessity of auxiliary work like ours even for the Protestant populations. German Christians—and they are awakening to a consciousness of the past—have a gigantic task before them in recovering lost ground, and in taking possession of new ground, and for long years to come our work will be a necessity, not as work for Germany, but as work for that kingdom whose King is Christ, and whose territory is neither England nor Germany, but the wide, wide world. 512,000 Jews with their Rabbis constitute the second great section of the harvest field. The Jewish populations are cared for by four German and four British Missionary Societies, while we circulate the Scriptures among them annually in thousands of copies in their holy Hebrew, or in the vulgar tongues. But of the 15,000,000 of Romanists, who thinks of them? It is a melancholy fact, scarcely anybody. Apart from the distribution of the Scriptures, and that almost entirely directly or indirectly by ourselves, they are, as far as I know, and so far as direct aggressive Protestant effort on a great scale is concerned, all but absolutely virgin soil. We are almost the only workers

in this great field, and even for us it has been freely open only in recent years. It required caution in entering on it, and it requires caution and holy prudence now in working it; but in no branch of our operation on German soil have we been in recent times so blessed as here. From 50,000 to 60,000 copies of Bibles and Testaments sold annually among Catholic populations, represent work done, by the blessing of God, in the teeth of the opposition of the priests and of the fanaticism of the people. Let me sum up. Protestant Germany needs your work as an auxiliary to its own. Jewish Germany needs your work as an auxiliary to the work of the native and British Societies labouring for the conversion of Israel. Romish Germany would, it is hardly too much to say, in the case of millions of its adherents have, but for your direct and indirect efforts, to confess, like those disciples whom Paul met in Ephesus, concerning the Holy Ghost, "We never so much as heard whether there be any written Word of God." I am Briton-born, and even now a British subject, and shall remain so till my dying day; but two years' University life, and twenty-one years' Christian labour in the great German Fatherland, give me a certain right to speak in the name of its Protestant populations, and in the exercise of that right I thank you, British Christians, constituents of the British and Foreign Bible Society, for the 12,000,000 of copies of the Holy Scriptures which you have provided, in the last fifty years of your activity, for peoples in and out of Germany speaking the tongues of the German Empire and the Cantons of the Swiss Republic. I feel it a privilege to be here this day publicly to pay this debt of gratitude. While I am speaking here, sixty-nine of my Bible-bearers are at work among these 46,000,000 of Protestants, Jews, and Romanists. They rose this morning early. They have gone forth, each in his own sphere, bearing precious seed. Some are at this moment in strife and conflict with the atheistic Socialists of the large cities; some are scrambling up mountain slopes to the solitary houses of the cowherds and to the high villages of the mountaineers; some are driving their Bible-vans—their carriers by day, their bed-rooms by night—across the flat and sandy levels of the great plain of Northern Europe; some are in the houses of pastors or other godly men where, for their works' sake, they are received as friends and brethren; some are contending with fanatical priests or fanatized people; some are praying at the bedsides of the sick or of the dying, or listening to the penitential tale of the sinful and of the fallen; some are braving the scoffs of the keen-witted and satirical Jew—all of them are, in their way, as your messengers, standing up for Christ, offering the Word of God to the saved and to the sinful, to the penitent and to the impenitent, to the believer and to the unbeliever, without respect of persons, like death knocking with impartial hand at the palaces of the rich and the cottages of the poor. They understand you to have given them substantially the same charge which the Lord gave to the Universal Church—"Go into all the land and bring the Word of the Gospel to every creature; and, if they will receive you, leave in every house the Bread of Life." They know that I am here this day. They are praying for us. Pray for them! Germany and Switzerland are the heart of Europe. By working here you are purifying Europe's heart-blood. Every year, directly or indirectly, you leave between 300,000 and 400,000 copies of God's Word in German and Swiss homes—350,000 precious grains, but they need watering. Bedew them with your prayers, and in God's good time we shall see Germany grow again religiously as she has again grown politically great.

BIBLE STAND AT THE FRENCH EXHIBITION OF 1878.—During six months of the Paris Exhibition of 1867, portions of Scripture were given from the Bible Stand to men, women, and children in their own languages to all who chose to accept them, sometimes as many as 40,000 copies a-day. The number distributed during the whole time of the Exhibition was two million and a quarter. Scarcely one portion in a thousand was refused, while oftentimes thousands were in every instance gratefully received. Gratuitous circulation demonstrated disinterestedness, and British Christians evinced their faith in the Bible by freely seeking to make it known. The surprise and admiration of the press of Europe and America showed how thoroughly the nations had learned that England is a Bible-reading land, and the wide-spread knowledge of salvation through Christ than perhaps any other single event since the time of the apostles. The Paris Exhibition of the present year promises to draw a still greater gathering of intelligent men from every quarter of the globe, and as each nation strives to display its choicest and richest products of art, learning, science, and manufacture, the people of God must faithfully witness for Christ by scattering broadcast the good seed. An admirable site at the Trocadero, immediately opposite the chief entrance of the Exhibition, has been allotted to the committee of the Bible Stand by the municipal authorities of Paris. On this piece of ground a Bible kiosk has been built. As far as the funds of the committee will permit, portions of the Word of God, such as the Gospel of St. John, or the Epistle to the Romans, etc., will be given to every visitor. Complete copies of the Bible and New Testament will also be sold at a cheap price at the kiosk, and 50,000 French New Testaments have been especially prepared, with an inscription: "Souvenir de l'Exposition, 1878," by the National Bible Society of Scotland. Evangelistic work will also be carried on in connection with the Bible kiosk. Mr. Alexander who has been engaged on Bible work in connection with the Bible Stand for nearly sixteen years, will superintend the kiosk. It is well known that through his instrumentality great good was done among the soldiers during the Franco-German war. Being recommended by Queen Augusta of Prussia, now German Empress, special facilities were afforded to him by the military authorities. He has also fulfilled twice important missions to Russia in connection with Bible and mission work. The committee take our Lord's commission to His disciples as their guide, "Freely ye have received, freely give." What can be more exalted than the privilege to act up to our Master's Word?