

It is my privilege on this, as it has been on many similar occasions, to open the proceedings of the evening by addressing a few words to you from the chair, before calling upon the Secretary to read the Annual Report.

I shall be very brief in what I have to say, as I have before me a list of speakers to the various resolutions who will, I am sure, occupy your time both profitably and agreeably, and I shall not therefore trespass long upon your patience.

The Report which our Secretary will presently read to you gives a satisfactory account both of our home work and of the progress of the Bible cause generally throughout the world. Never indeed, at any period since its first establishment, has the great Parent Society—the British and Foreign Bible Society—put forth nobler or more vigorous efforts to carry the Word of God to every part of the world. Through its instrumentality, the Bible message of peace and pardon, and love and good-will to all men, is girdling the globe—from the frozen shores of Labrador and Greenland, to the tropics of South America—from our own Western Continent to the furthest ends of Asia—in the heart of Africa, and the far off isles of the South Pacific; there is not a clime, and scarcely a tongue, in which the story of the Cross has not been published.

In the various countries of Europe more especially, the agents and co-laborers of the Bible Society have been zealously availing themselves of the opportunities afforded by the political changes and events of late years, for the introduction of the Holy Scriptures among those to whom the Scriptures have hitherto been in a great measure a sealed book. And when, my friends, we look abroad upon what is passing in Europe now, and the troubles and commotions of various kinds—the bitter animosities still existing between some nations—the civil strife and internal discord in others,—the overthrow of old forms of government and of religious belief, succeeded in many instances by an alarming amount of insubordination against all authority, and of utter infidelity and scepticism in religious matters, we might well despair of the future, were it not for the Bible, and the new and better life which its blessed teaching when applied by God's Spirit can awaken, and is even now awakening in these very countries. Yes, I am not ashamed to express my belief that the marvellous story of redeeming love, with all its constraining, vitalizing force of motives, is doing, and will do, more than all the wisdom of statesmen and politicians, to regenerate the social fabric, and bring about something like lasting peace and quietness into these hitherto distracted communities.

There is another fact, too, in connection with this subject to which I cannot help alluding, and that is how wonderfully these wars and revolutions have been made instrumental in the good providence of God for the dissemination of his Word, to an extent which, under ordinary circumstances, could never have been anticipated, and have gained for it admission also into countries where but for the downfall of the old institutions, and the changes