

Bible Society before he goes, in order to furnish himself with a supply of the Holy Scriptures, with which to further the work of his ministry, and to second the efforts of his living voice. I confess that to my mind this is the most interesting—I had almost said the most important—part of the work of the Society. The work of the mission field could absolutely not be carried on without the Bible Society. Whatever societies are at work, and to whatever religious community they may belong, they all turn to the Bible Society, as to an armory from which they draw the great weapon of their warfare, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," in order that their ministry amongst the heathen nations of the world may, by God's mercy, become effectual.

In the work we are carrying on in connection with this Society there is a great deal, as you know, to encourage us. You have only to read any one of the reports of this Society to see how wonderfully God is blessing the work in which we are engaged. But on the other hand, no doubt, there is a great deal that may discourage us. I am inclined to think, as regards our home work, that the children are not now so well instructed in the Holy Scriptures as they were some time ago. I may be wrong; I hope so; but my impression is that the Bible occupies a less prominent position in the teaching of the young than it did even twenty or thirty years ago. And, if this be so, it is a very serious and incalculable loss, for it is in the years of youth that we find the seed-time for the spiritual life, and the word of God sown in the tender hearts of the young is more likely, at least that is all we dare to say, in God's good time to spring up and bear fruit, than when it falls upon the harder soil of the soul that has come into much contact with the world and its cares, its pleasures, and its sins. If, therefore, I am right, I feel that this is a very serious discouragement to us, and one which we ought to do our utmost to remedy. We cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that in many of our schools now the time allotted for the teaching of the Bible is very much less than it ought to be. The manner in which the Bible is taught is very much less satisfactory than it used to be. Even where the word of God is read, in many cases there is no attempt to bring home its teachings to these infant minds, and, so long as this continues, I feel that the Bible Society is working with a very considerable difficulty in its way, and that even the circulation of Bibles in the homes of the poorest of our fellow-countrymen is seriously counterbalanced by inadequate instruction of the children. I trust that better days are coming to us, or that we shall find some other means, not only in our Sunday schools, but in other ways, of bringing home to the hearts of the children those truths concerning their salvation which they used once to learn in their day schools, and which we must try to supply to them now in other places and in many other ways.

There is another difficulty and another discouragement of, I confess, a very serious kind which we have to face nowadays. There is encouragement certainly in this, the greatest of all perhaps, that never in my own lifetime—so far as I have had opportunity of forming an opinion—has there been so widespread and so deep-seated a desire to understand the word of God as in the present day. I learned that in my experience as a parish clergyman; I hear a great deal to confirm it even now from my brother clergy. I believe that that is God's special work in the present day, and that he has stirred the hearts of his people, by a very direct influence of his Holy Spirit, to hunger and thirst for a knowledge of the word of God. That is a great encouragement to us, and it is a matter for the deepest thankfulness. I must say I hold it to be a primary duty of every minister of Christ and his chiefest happiness to help his people to know and understand the word of God; and that in whatever other form his teaching may be given to them, this is the best and highest form of all—the exposition of the plain meaning and practical teaching of the pages of God's word. But, unfortunately, as we know, in these days there has arisen a school of thoughtful and well-meaning men who