

TWENTY-SIXTH  
ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY;

PRESENTED AT NEW YORK,

MAY 7, 1851.

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## TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL MEETING

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THE Society met on Wednesday, May 7, 1851, at 9 o'clock, A. M., at the Society's house, the Rev. Gardiner Spring, D. D., Vice-president, in the chair. The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Justin Edwards, D. D. After receiving letters from the President and from several Vice-presidents and Directors apologizing for absence, and attending to the nomination of officers for the ensuing year, the Society adjourned to the Broadway Tabernacle.

The public exercises of the anniversary were held in the Broadway Tabernacle at 10 o'clock. On motion of the Rev. John Knox, D. D., Chairman of the Executive Committee, WILLIAM B. CROSBY, Esq., Vice-president, was called to the chair, and the meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Leonard Woods, D. D., of Andover, Mass. The Rev. Mr. Eastman, Secretary, read letters from the President Chief-Justice Williams, and from Rt. Rev. C. P. M'Ilvaine, Judge M'Lean, and Chief-Justice Green, Vice-presidents, expressing their cordial interest in the Society. The Treasurer, Moses Allen, Esq., presented the Treasurer's Report, and Rev. Messrs. Hallock and Cook, Secretaries, an abstract of the Annual Report, when the following resolutions were presented and unanimously adopted: namely,

On motion of the Rev. Gardiner Spring, D. D., of the Presbyterian church, New York, seconded by the Rev. Charles Evans of the Baptist church, general agent, it was

*Resolved*, That the Annual Report, an abstract of which has now been presented, be adopted and published under the direction of the Executive Committee; and that the signal proofs it affords of the prosperity and usefulness of the Society, call for gratitude and praise to the great Head of the church.

On motion of the Rev. Richard Newton of the Protestant Episcopal church, Philadelphia, seconded by Mr. J. Cross, colporteur and agent in

third of our population were unreached by the gospel. How vast then must be the population in the more neglected districts who remain unblest with saving truth. There were whole villages even in midland states without a preacher, and in complete spiritual destitution. Where could any means be found to meet their wants, unless such an instrumentality as this is employed? We must have living men to go into these destitute places with their books in their hands, to come in direct contact with the hearts and minds, with the word of life. The choice was not between this and some other instrumentality, but between this and none; and shall this instrumentality be employed?

But this resolution contemplates the carrying on of this work in view of the influx of *emigrants* from infidel and papal Europe. Within the last three weeks he had seen it stated, that during thirty-six consecutive hours, there were poured into this country no less than 2,600 of these emigrants. And how large a proportion of these bring with them ignorance and superstition and infidelity. If there were nothing for our colporteurs to do but to look after this emigrant population, they would have quite enough to do. But beyond all this, these persons come to mingle with our population, to take their part with us with no preparation. Are we to allow this mass to be poured into our community, and do nothing to avert the evil? Where is the influence to save us from the injury they must inflict, and to qualify them to breathe the air of freedom? There is none better than the agency which this Society employs. Wherever we see this mighty mass, we see motives strong enough to urge us onward in this work.

But there is one other point, *the encouragement from past success*. There never was a work on which the divine blessing was more manifested. When it was commenced, there was neither money in the treasury nor men engaged. The number has increased in ten years from 11 to about 500. Wonderful openings have been made before them, and the means and the men provided. Never had a suitable man offered but he had been engaged, and the means had come from some unknown source; and every way, evidence of God's favor had been afforded. How cheering the circumstance mentioned by his venerable friend Dr. Spring; and this is but one of a thousand. Is it likely that any single volume has gone out without some useful results? How many thousand hearts were now beating with the love of Christ, through the blessing of God upon these books? Let every individual here then take home this resolution and the work which it proposes. Every view which can be taken of the field demands it, and the blessing of God encourages it; and we have reason to believe that the means will be provided as they are wanted, and that in due time 1,000 colporteurs will be spread all over the land.

#### MR. JONATHAN CROSS' ADDRESS.

Mr. JONATHAN CROSS, superintendent of colportage in Virginia, said it was not necessary to go to the mountains of Virginia to find cases of destitution, and arguments for the increase of colporteurs. A boy came into the Tract House on Monday, nine years old, who had never heard of God; and he had met adults in Pennsylvania who were totally ignorant of the Saviour. He knew no place where destitution did not exist. In his labors for seven years

for the Society, he had travelled nearly 35,000 miles, but he had never found a single county where a colporteur might not be usefully employed year after year. Each successive visit added to the moral power of the enterprise. He could illustrate the value of their agency by a narration of facts till another morning, if need be; but it was unnecessary. All knew that a blessing was in it.

He compared the erection of this spiritual temple to the building of the temple of Solomon. A great many workmen were needed, and there was a great variety of work to be done. Each had his corner to build. Some were sent into the woods and the quarries, to get out the materials of the edifice. Each had his appropriate work. Ministers of the gospel were the master-workmen, and many materials for the temple had been hewed out by the colporteurs in the mountains, or split from the rocks by these quarrymen of the Lord. In his own district, a man came to him in a hunting-shirt, carrying a knife and gun, inquiring for "the book-man," and informing that they had been trying to form a Sunday-school in his neighborhood, but they could find only one copy of the Testament, and he had come for books. Mr. Cross supplied him with 100 volumes and 50 Testaments. They began to read, and soon to pray. A blessing followed, and within eighteen months a church was built in that place. In another place, where the bushes had grown up around an old church, the visit of the colporteur led to the reestablishment of worship, and the renovation of the church.

Mr. Cross related several affecting anecdotes of the usefulness of colporteur labors and of the publications of the Society in Virginia, and spoke of the extensive revivals in that state, more or less immediately connected with the instrumentalities employed by this institution, and made a concluding appeal in behalf of more extended labors in Virginia, and throughout the country.

#### REV. MR. KIRK'S ADDRESS.

The Rev. E. N. KIRK said, Christ has told us, "Ye are the salt of the earth," and the figure was designed to teach that while the power is of God alone, the instrumentality is with man. When our Lord was about to feed the multitude by miraculous means, he first asked whether there was any among them who had bread. He ever would have some human agency. The power of regeneration was in God; and while we were sending messengers over the land, it was in earnest dependence on him, who in his sovereignty is like the wind, "that bloweth where it listeth," and yet hears the cry of the humblest believer. They were "salt," and when salt is kept in a conservatory its effect is lost. It was our privilege to scatter it, and preserve the otherwise putrefying mass. Christianity has two aspects: one is, when we build our churches and invite the people to come. Another is, when we carry the gospel to those that will not come for it: the commission of Christ requires this. The resolution has two expressions that contain the obligation to engage in this work, *dispersion* and *destitution*.

He proceeded to speak of the colporteur convention which he had attended in Cleveland. He went with some solicitude, and with considerable expectation; and he could say that his expectations had been more than realized. He