

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

Ten years of colportage in America.

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TEN YEARS

OF

COLPORTAGE IN AMERICA.

PUBLISHED BY THE
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU-STREET, NEW YORK.

1851.

SCRIPTURAL PLAN OF BENEVOLENCE.

EVERY steward of God is interested to know his duty in respect to charitable giving, and should settle some principle of action concerning the use of property committed to his care. Important light is thrown on this duty by the three premium essays published by the American Tract Society, entitled, "*The Divine Law of Benevolence*," "*Zaccheus*," and "*The Mission of the Church*," as well as by the tracts "*Religion and Benevolence*," (No. 535, 28 pp.,) and the "*Scripture Plan of Benevolence*," (4 pp.)

The principles ably discussed in these essays, based on 1 Cor. 16:2, are briefly these: That "*every one*" should give; that his gifts should be *systematic*, "on the first day of the week," or at other *stated periods*; and that they should be *proportioned to the income of the giver*, "as God prospers him." These principles are simple, scriptural, and of universal application. Many eminent ministers and laymen have acted upon them for years, with benefit and satisfaction. They are commended to the adoption of all, as the plan of infinite wisdom for counteracting avarice, and providing for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world.

STATISTICS OF COLPORTAGE FOR THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 1, 1851.

Number of colporteurs, including 135 theological students for their vacations, 569, for the whole or a part of the year; of whom 109 were for the German, French, Irish, Spanish, Welsh, and Norwegian population. They were apportioned as follows: Vermont, 3; Rhode-Island, 2; Connecticut, 7; New York, 81; New Jersey, 9; Pennsylvania, 74; Maryland, 19; Virginia, 57; North Carolina, 8; South Carolina, 12; Georgia, 23; Alabama, 13; Florida, 2; Louisiana, 12; Texas, 6; Mississippi, 4; Arkansas, 4; Tennessee, 20; Kentucky, 12; Ohio, 62; Michigan, 12; Indiana, 49; Illinois, 31; Missouri, 22; Iowa, 3; Wisconsin, 14; Minnesota, 1; California, 1; Canada, 4; Mexico, 2.

Number of families visited 505,422, with 238,864 of whom the colporteurs conversed on practical religion or prayed. Volumes sold, 451,951; volumes granted to the destitute, 127,888, amounting, with tracts, to \$23,009. Number of prayer-meetings held or public meetings addressed, 13,306.

Of the families visited, 90,779 habitually neglected evangelical preaching; 54,321 were Roman-catholics; 68,027 were destitute of all religious books except the Bible; and 34,684 were destitute of the Bible.

OFFICERS ELECTED MAY 7, 1851.

PRESIDENT.

Hon. Thomas S. Williams, LL. D., late Chief-Justice of Connecticut.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

PUBLISHING COMMITTEE.

Rev. John Knox, D. D.; Rev. Justin Edwards, D. D., Andover, Mass.; Rev. John S. Stone, D. D.; Rev. David Magie, D. D., Elizabethtown, N. J.; Rev. William R. Williams, D. D.; Rev. William Adams, D. D.

DISTRIBUTING COMMITTEE.

Dr. James C. Bliss, William Forrest, William Winterton, James W. Dominick.

FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Richard T. Haines, Moses Allen, Thomas C. Doremus, Richard S. Fellowes, George N. Titus, Esq., Oliver E. Wood.

SECRETARIES.

Rev. Wm. A. Hallock, D. D., Rev. O. Eastman, Rev. R. S. Cook, *Corresponding Secretaries*; Rev. Charles G. Sommers, *Recording Secretary*; O. R. Kingsbury, *Assistant Secretary and Treasurer*, No. 150 Nassau-street, New York.

Moses Allen, *Treasurer*; John A. Ackley, *Depositary*; Cyrenius Beers, Jacob Brouwer, *Auditors*.

TEN YEARS OF COLPORTAGE IN AMERICA.

A BRIEF sketch of the rise and progress of Colportage in this country seems appropriate to the completion of the first decade of its history. The great truth that "God is in history" will thus find a new and marked illustration; while new motives to fidelity in evangelical labors, and to implicit confidence in the providence and grace of God, may be derived from the review.

The *providential preparations* for the application of the system of colportage to this country are worthy of note. The power of a similar agency, as employed in the great Reformation, and its more recent achievements on the continent of Europe, had arrested the attention of thoughtful men in America. The efficiency of personal Christian effort, or fireside preaching, had received ample demonstration in the success of the plan of Tract visitation. The Volume enterprise, by which chiefly 1,598,150 books had been circulated previous to 1841, had awakened widespread interest in *printed truth*, as a blessed means of edification and salvation, and had furnished a corps of experienced and faithful men to give direction to the labors of others in the new system to which it paved the way. The Tract Society had gained the confidence of the Christian public by sixteen years of harmonious, efficient, and heaven-blessed toils for the conversion of the world. Add to this the fact that the tide of European emigration had then become so strong as to excite the apprehension of every Christian patriot, and to demand some more efficacious means of evangelization; that our western states were becoming peopled with unprecedented rapidity; that the cheap and vicious press then began to pour forth its streams of vanity and pollution as never before; and that the instrumentalities previously relied on for counteracting vice, dispelling ignorance, and propagating the gospel, were seen to be painfully inadequate to the wants of our expanding republic—and it will be seen how marked was the divine hand in bringing into being and leading to the application of an enterprise so suited to the exigencies of our country.

The combination of the elements of tract visitation and volume circulation, or the association of individual Christian influence with the diffusion of religious reading, with special reference to the destitute, constitute Colportage. In God's own time and way the system came into vigorous operation—its past achievements, though in its infancy, and, much more,

its probable influence on the kingdom of Christ, marking an era in the history of modern evangelization.

The normal idea of this enterprise was suggested in a discussion of plans of usefulness between the executive officers of the Society, in connection with the preparation of the Annual Report for 1841. In that document an appeal is made for aid in the distribution of good books, which may "instruct the ignorant, rebuke the vicious, establish the pious, and guide the inquiring soul to Christ." "To supply the destitute millions of this country will require an immense expenditure of effort and money," say the Committee, (16th Annual Report, p. 33.) "A large number of devoted men must be employed, who shall, with Christian coöperation, visit the poor and neglected families, converse with the impenitent, sell the volumes to those who are able and willing to purchase, and be authorized to circulate them to some extent as a gratuity. Will not those families who live under the meridian light of the gospel, and who have been called, alarmed, guided, and converted, or instructed and quickened by the Spirit's blessing on volumes which they possess and prize, cheerfully contribute the means for conferring the same precious boon on their fellow-countrymen who sit in darkness?"

The annual meeting had scarcely passed when the Society's efficient and experienced volume agent at the West, visited the East. He had supplied with books many of the older and more flourishing churches; and the policy of the Society with reference to the unevangelized population being unfolded in a conference with the executive officers, he at once threw his energies into the enterprise. He spread before the Committee important facts respecting the spiritual condition of the West; the limited extent in which previous efforts had reached the masses on his field, notwithstanding the circulation of volumes to the amount of \$41,310 in connection with his agency; and urged the appropriation of \$2,500 for the employment of agents, and a like sum in grants of books for the destitute, for the current year—pledging \$100 of the amount, in case the movement was authorized. He accompanied one of the secretaries to Boston, and aided in the selection of the first candidates for the colporteur service, who responded to an appeal made in May, 1841, on the platform of the Society in that city. In that address the secretary presented the purpose of the Committee "to carry the volumes to the vast multitudes, especially of the poor and vicious, who have not been extensively reached. Their intention is to avail themselves, as far as possible, of the services of plain, simple-hearted Christians, who shall go into destitute neighborhoods and tell their experience of the loving-kindness of the Lord; and scattering as they go, by gift, if necessary, such of the volumes as

may be most useful. The agent for the West has told us he can profitably use \$2,500 worth of books as a grant to the destitute; and we shall need at least \$5,000 for other portions of the country."

Messrs. Prescott and Follansbee, the first two American colporteurs, were commissioned in June, and began their labors in August, 1841--the field of the former being Indiana, and of the latter Kentucky.

Under date of June 23, 1841, the Committee issued a "Home Appeal," unfolding the more matured views then entertained of the necessity of colportage, and of its claims on the charities of the churches. The following extracts will show the tenor of that document. After reciting the occasions for more strenuous exertions for the spiritual improvement of the country, they say,

"The Committee, having anxiously and prayerfully considered this subject, have determined to employ, chiefly in connection with volume agents of tried fidelity, a considerable number of humble, single-hearted Christians, who will labor at a small compensation, and with the coöperation of the people of God, so far as it can be obtained, visit especially the destitute families at their homes; conversing and praying with individuals; selling the volumes where it is possible, but *giving them* where it seems necessary in the exercise of a sound discretion; in short, who shall do all for the salvation, particularly of the destitute, that faithful personal labor connected with the diffusion of the most spiritual books can do, with the blessing of the Holy Spirit. It is a work kindred to that prosecuted with such evident tokens of divine favor by the colporteurs of France and Switzerland, and for which very superior facilities are enjoyed here. To sustain these labors, however economical its arrangement, and to provide the requisite amount of books for gratuitous distribution, will require a large sum of money.

"If a colony of 5,000,000 souls, speaking and reading the English language, were found in the most distant part of Asia, destitute of *religious* reading, while books and papers that poisoned the mind and ruined the soul were continually finding their way into their abodes, how promptly would the American churches send among them the preacher and the *colporteur*, laden with the precious practical writings of the holiest authors; nor cease their labors till every family had been supplied. But is the obligation or encouragement less, when these 5,000,000 are our own countrymen, and accessible to our efforts with far less expense of money and of life?"

After the experience of the year, the Committee in their Report for 1842 urge with great earnestness the claims of "the unevangelized population of this country, probably equal in numbers to that reached directly

by the personal influence of all the foreign missionaries in the world," and say,

"The paramount question is, *whether the existing generation in America shall be evangelized, and by what means.* It is urged on the patriot Christian by every consideration of our relations to God, our country, and the world. The conviction that *it must be done*, would mark a new era in the history of the church. Does not the Lord Jesus Christ require it at our hands? Where is the sincerity of the sacrifice we make for other lands, while blind to the dangers and destitutions of our own? If 'he that provideth not for his own kindred,' in temporal things, is 'worse than an infidel,' how is he better who leaves millions of his own countrymen to famish for 'the bread of life,' on which he feasts?

"It is an obvious fact that the present means of evangelization are scarcely adequate to keep pace even with the rapid *increase* of our population. While, then, Sabbath-schools are rapidly multiplied, the Bible distributed, an educated ministry furnished in greater numbers, and all other means of doing good are employed in their fullest vigor, another, though a kindred agency, adapted to the existing condition of a widely scattered population; is indispensable, if the whole population is to be evangelized. *Colporteurs* must be furnished in sufficient numbers from the ranks of intelligent pious laymen, who shall penetrate the forests, and scour the prairies, and scale the mountains of our wide territory, seeking out destitute families; 'publicly and from house to house' telling the story of 'Christ and him crucified,' and placing in the hands of all, by sale if possible, and as a gift if necessary, the spiritual volumes of the Society, that may speak more eloquently and persuasively the words of eternal life when the humble visitor is gone, or when the hours of weariness or affliction make such counsels welcome. Thus the *preaching of the press*—the universal diffusion of good books, which contain the 'precious lifeblood of master-spirits of other ages, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to live beyond life,' with the attendant personal influence of godly men in their distribution, may supply an important 'lack of service,' and be the means of conveying the news of salvation to every inhabitant of the land."

For the sake of bringing more prominently before the Christian community the expanding field and increasing responsibilities of the institution, a Public Deliberative Meeting of the Board and friends of the Society was held in the Broadway Tabernacle in the autumn of 1842, the influence of which is still felt. One of the most prominent topics suggested for discussion, in the circular calling this meeting, was as follows: "Shall the Executive Committee prosecute the work of supplying the millions of

the unevangelized population of our own country, and especially the destitute at the West, including probably 1,000,000 German emigrants, with at least one book for each family, by sale or gift, through the agency of pious colporteurs and the coöperation of Christians, on such a scale that the *existing generation* may be reached? And will the churches adequately sustain this 'Home Enterprise?'" The report of a Committee, unanimously approved by the meeting, responded to the questions thus presented, urging the Society "to carry forward, as fast as the providence of God shall seem to direct, the colporteur system, with the view of reaching as soon as practicable the existing generation of the unevangelized in our own country;" and expressing the belief, "that in the prosecution of a scheme so benevolent and so divine, the Society may rely upon the blessing of the great Head of the church, and the sympathies and coöperation of every friend of the Redeemer."

The emphatic and unanimous approval of the enterprise by the members and friends of the Society thus convened, encouraged the Committee to press onward in their efforts with redoubled zeal; while the documents and discussions of the above occasion, furnishing a comprehensive view of the principles and relations of the Society, served to awaken the public interest—indispensable to the support of its constantly expanding operations.

In connection with this important meeting, the *American Messenger* came into being, as a more convenient and useful organ of the Society, and a more efficient means of doing good than the Tract Magazine, which it superseded. The first number contained the proceedings of the Deliberative meeting. The growth of colportage has been identified with the prosperous and unprecedented circulation of the Messenger—now exceeding 186,000 copies monthly.

In September, 1843, a pamphlet of 28 pages, discussing the principles and relations of colportage, entitled "The American Colporteur System," was issued by the Committee, and had a wide circulation.

At a later period a work, entitled "Home Evangelization," was issued under the direction of the Committee, presenting a more complete view of the wants of the country and the adaptation and bearings of colportage than had previously been given. Of this volume 45,000 copies have been issued, including 20,000 copies distributed gratuitously among colleges, theological seminaries, and missionaries, and by agents of the Society, chiefly by the liberality of an anonymous friend in Baltimore. There have been many instances of the usefulness of this distribution.

Soon after the commencement of colportage, it became apparent that however desirable its agency might be among the dispersed and neglected masses of our native population, it was obviously indispensable to the

evangelization of the present generation of *foreign immigrants*. In 1842 the first German colporteur was commissioned in Ohio, whose labors are still continued, with signal tokens of the divine favor, especially among his Roman-catholic countrymen. One of the officers of the Society, whose attention was called to the German interest in a western tour, also visited some of the German institutions and ecclesiastical bodies in Pennsylvania, and found a wide field, with promise of efficient laborers for its cultivation. From year to year valuable candidates for the German colporteur service have been raised up, until they constitute an important and most interesting portion of the little army now in the field. As a class they are not surpassed in constancy, devotedness, and efficiency. And as the range of books in the German tongue is widened, their circulation increases, and their access to families is easier. The evangelical churches of the German family welcome and rejoice in this movement, and are coming by degrees to give it a cordial support. They justly feel that with the tendencies to Rationalism and Atheism on the one hand, and to Romanism on the other, there is imperative need of additional agencies for spreading a pure faith, a common salvation. The Committee share in this feeling, and regard no part of the labors of the past ten years with more interest and satisfaction than those that relate to the Germans.

The efforts in behalf of the *Welsh* immigrants have been gratefully welcomed by ministers and Christians speaking that tongue, and have been crowned with success. Many thousand copies of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, stereotyped by the liberality of a friend, and other volumes, have been placed in their hands, which will pave the way for future evangelical issues for their benefit.

The Committee have made various attempts to promote the spiritual well-being of the Irish population, and still persevere in their endeavors. Though these labors have not been in vain, it is an occasion of grief that so few visible evidences of good have rewarded the toils and sacrifices in their behalf. It is yet purely a work of faith and labor of love. Perhaps it is unreasonable to look for speedy results among a people so long trodden under the iron heel of oppression, and so abject in their servitude to a corrupt priesthood, and in their adherence to superstitious forms. We cannot, however, but indulge the hope that a brighter day is drawing nigh, and that patient continuance in labor will be graciously rewarded.

The French population, concentrated chiefly in our large cities, and in Louisiana, Missouri, Ohio, and Michigan, have been cared for in some degree, and with a measure of success.

Within the last three or four years, various providences have turned attention to the spiritual condition of *Canada*, and every effort in that

direction has been blessed and prospered. Several English, German, and French colporteurs have been employed in Canada West, and ten or twelve students from Andover have just commenced an expedition in Canada East. Christians in those provinces are looking with hope to the continued prosecution and enlargement of the enterprise there—we trust not in vain. At the same time the eastern provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have had partial attention, and demand a still further application of an instrumentality happily adapted to their spiritual condition and wants.

The employment of colporteurs in *Mexico* was undertaken while the American army occupied that territory. Professor Morse, so honorably known as the inventor of the Telegraph, incited to the undertaking by the donation of \$500, and others made generous sacrifices for the same object. At one time colporteurs were at Jalapa, Tampico, and Monterey. At another, while one penetrated the interior from the Rio Grande, amidst numberless perils and difficulties, another was in the city of Mexico scattering publications in Spanish, to the delight of the people, and the consternation of the ecclesiastics, who resorted in vain to excommunications of sundry tracts from the altar, to arrest the progress of the truth. From reliable sources the belief is encouraged that the 8,000,000 people of Mexico, one fourth or more of whom are readers, are in a great measure accessible by colportage; and the time may not be far distant when that priest-ridden and neglected republic will hail the approach of the army of Protestant evangelization. Perhaps, too, Central and South America, caused to feel as never before the influence of our commerce and civilization, will be speedily thrown open to the influence of that religion which they are beginning rightfully to regard as the mainspring of our prosperity. It may be that from California a race of Spanish evangelists will be raised up to carry to their former countrymen the light of life; so that human cupidity, as in other instances, may be overruled for the furtherance of the kingdom of Christ.

Soon after the acquisition of *California*, a colporteur sailed for that distant and important field, arriving January 25, 1850. On the 24th of February the "Pacific Tract Society" was formed, in circumstances highly auspicious, under whose care, it is hoped, colportage and kindred agencies may be made to reach the scattered population of that new state. A building was immediately erected for a depository, and a considerable amount of publications has been purchased. Additional funds have also been raised for the prosecution of the objects of this important auxiliary.

To this brief sketch of the rise and progress of the American colporteur system, it may be desirable to append extracts from the reports of

some of the superintendents of particular fields, or brief notices of the more important districts successively cultivated.

The *American Tract Society at Boston* early entered warmly into coöperation with the Society at New York, both in the support of the operations of the latter in the more destitute portions of the country, and in the employment of colporteurs in New England. During the seven years ending May 1, 1850, the Society at Boston had employed colporteurs equal to one man for fifty-seven years; visiting 119,904 families, conversing or praying with 48,846, selling 195,218 volumes, and granting 50,397 volumes. The rapid increase of foreign immigrants locating in New England has recently arrested the notice of the Committee, and they are now giving increased attention to the cultivation of the moral wastes thus found at their very doors.

The several annual reports will show that as the population of the *state of New York* exceeds that of any other state, so a larger number of laborers has been employed. In the city of New York, colporteurs speaking the various languages of the emigrant classes have been employed from year to year, in increasing numbers. Were a hundred men steadily devoted to this single state, they could scarcely accomplish the work demanded among the heterogeneous and neglected multitudes comprising a large portion of its population.

In *Eastern Pennsylvania*, the system was vigorously applied to the German and English counties, under the supervision of Mr. Ermentrout, as early as 1843, and more recently under that of Mr. E. M. Long.

In the autumn of 1843, the Rev. S. T. Wells, who had performed a brief agency in Missouri, was transferred to *Western Pennsylvania*, where he has since continued his labors as general agent, with some oversight of colportage in that field. The following year four colporteurs were associated with him; among them Mr. James D. Clark, who afterwards became the superintendent of colportage, until ill health compelled his resignation. In the summer of 1849, Mr. H. N. Thissell, an experienced colporteur in Ohio, assumed the supervision of colportage. The statistical results for the successive years serve as the best illustration of the prosperity of the work on this field. At the present time about fifty colporteurs are in commission in connection with this agency, and much interest attends the work. See the annual report of the superintendent on another page.

In *Maryland*, the Rev. S. Guiteau was instrumental in awakening some interest in this department as early as 1842, and has continued his labors, in connection with the Baltimore branch, till the present time. Colportage has become a leading object of benevolence in that state, and

during the past year alone, nineteen colporteurs were employed for a portion of the year, visiting 17,264 families, and the operations of the branch were on a scale of expenditures exceeding \$10,000 per annum.

The history of colportage in *Virginia* would furnish a record of remarkable providences and blessings. From the outset, the hand of the Most High has been visibly displayed, leading on the increasing company of self-denying laborers, and bringing around them friends and supporters. In 1845, Mr. Jonathan Cross, who began his labors as a colporteur in Western Pennsylvania, passed single-handed into the mountain districts of Western Virginia. He soon began to gather fellow-laborers of kindred spirit around him. From year to year new interest has been kindled along their pathway, until a considerable portion of the state is pervaded with the influence of the men and the books of the Tract Society. Instead of tracing the progress of this work in detail, as in the report of six years' labors embracing twenty-five pages now before us, we insert his report for the past year.

"In year since we began," writes Mr. Cross, "has the Holy Spirit more signally blessed our efforts than during the one just closed. A steady advance has been made in the direction of the destitute and neglected classes of our population. The labors of the year afford a demonstration of the facility with which those who have hitherto been neglected may be evangelized. No matter how ignorant, prejudiced, or erroneous, no matter what diversity of faith, locality, or color, the experience of the past has shown that the Spirit of God blesses the kind, faithful, prayerful presentation of truth in an oral or printed form, if borne to the firesides of the people.

"We have constantly kept before the minds of our fellow-laborers, that our work is designed especially to reach the destitute and neglected who are far from God and holiness. My own labors throughout the year, with the exception of two weeks, have been confined to collecting donations, obtaining information in relation to the most destitute portions of the state, looking up suitable men to labor, ordering books, and settling the accounts of the colporteurs. During the year I have visited the following towns and counties: Alexandria, Winchester, Shenandoah, Monroe, Greenbriar, Alleghany, Bedford, Campbell, Halifax, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Cumberland, Elizabeth City, Dinwiddie, Norfolk, and Richmond, besides many others through which I have passed, but only tarried a day or two.

"More liberal donations have been collected this year than in any previous one, and there are indications of a deeper interest throughout the state. With few exceptions, the ministers have been cordial, and I

have seldom met with any Christian whose character for piety stood fair among his fellow-men, who has refused his aid, while philanthropists are large contributors and warm friends.

"It has been my privilege during the year to converse with hundreds of intelligent men from every section of the state where our books have been scattered. I have heard but one opinion expressed in regard to the system of colportage. Wherever faithful labor has been performed, there is a corresponding improvement in the morals of the people. Intemperance has been checked, and Sabbath-breaking restrained; schools are increasing and churches building, and many who had neglected the preached word are becoming regular and attentive hearers, and, better still, 'doers of the word;' and, as an effect which always follows moral culture, dilapidated buildings and fences are repaired, enterprise encouraged, and the value of property is increased. All this is true on a general scale. Some special facts as an illustration will, I hope, be interesting to you.

"**THE RECLAIMED DRUNKARD.**—About a year ago I met a drunkard, and one of the most degraded of his class. I talked to him some time, and gave him tracts on intemperance and 'Baxter's Call;' saw him several times within a few weeks, still adding a few words and a tract. After this, I lost sight of him for nearly eight months. I then met him again, but did not recognize my old acquaintance in this well-dressed man. I offered him a tract, however: he thanked me, and then made himself known. 'Ah,' said he, 'I was nearly gone when I first met you. I tried to follow your advice, but could not live without some whiskey. I have tapered off finally, and I pray to God both night and morning, and hope to get to heaven at last.' And truly he was an altered man, if not a new creature in Christ.

"**THE CRIPPLE.**—Another old man, a poor cripple, unable to go to church, destitute of any kind of books, whom I visited and furnished with cheap volumes and tracts, on my last visit told me he had now found peace, while tears of joy ran down his furrowed cheeks.

"A wealthy lady who gave me \$20, and who has promised to contribute the same annually, told me that a tract of eight pages was the means of her conversion.

"**AN OLD SINNER SAVED.**—During my stay on the mountains last summer, I went to a very destitute neighborhood, and held a series of meetings for prayer and exhortation. The Spirit of God seemed to be there, and some professed to have found the Saviour. Among them was a woman 75 years old, who told me that since she was 18 years old, she had not been one week free from concern about her soul. I gave her the 'Anxious Inquirer.' Three days after she began to read it, she said to me, 'How hard it is for an old sinner to be saved; but that book has explained it all to me. Oh what a precious Saviour I have found.'

"**THE STRANGER.**—The first day of the meeting, a man who was seldom seen in the house of God, passing by and hearing a stranger's voice in the house, came in, and took a seat near the door. In a few minutes he began to weep. At the close, I gave him a tract. He attended each day; on the fourth he professed conversion. His aged mother was present; he sprung to her, clasped her in his arms, and prayed for her salvation, although they had not been on speaking terms for years.

"**THE SWEARER.**—While assisting at a great revival nearly two years ago, some young men were in the habit of coming late at night for the purpose of escorting ladies home. I gave one of them, who was profane, the 'Swearer's Prayer.' He took it to his room, became deeply concerned on reading it, came next day as an inquirer, and is now apparently a sincere Christian. His testimony is that the tract was the means of saving him from destruction.

"**CANAL-BOAT SCENE.**—Last spring, while travelling on board a canal-boat, some of the most profane men I ever saw were in company. Not satisfied with swearing, they at last took to scoffing in a most awful manner, shouted and prayed in mockery, and tried to excel one another in ridiculing sacred things. After consulting a gentleman as to the expediency of interfering with such desperate characters, and receiving the advice not to meddle with them, I concluded to follow my own counsel, and threw some of the card-tracts on the gaming-table. They were severally entitled 'Death,' 'Hell,' 'Eternity.' Some of the men blushed; one, however, a little more hardened, asked a blessing in mockery over them. But it was plain that they were not easy: soon a few refused to play, and left the table. Late in the evening, one of the most aged and hardened among them was taken suddenly and alarmingly ill. His companions all left him alone. He was threatened with apoplexy. The other passengers either did not care to approach him, or were afraid to do so. I used the only remedies within reach. On reviving from the stupor somewhat, the poor old sinner became awfully alarmed, as well he might be, and began to cry out, 'O Lord, have mercy on me.' I talked to and attended him till we got nearly home. He seemed to be in deep concern about his soul. He told me, two weeks after, that the moment his eye fell on the title of those tracts he became terror-stricken. He had been very intemperate, but left off drinking. I have recently lost sight of him; but to all appearances he was a reformed man. Though poor, he gave me two dollars to aid the cause which he said 'had saved him.' I have scattered tracts in stages, steamers, rail-cars, and hotels, and by the wayside, and as the result I have in very many cases seen profanity and gambling cease, and the drunkard forsake the bar.

"**NELSON IN TEXAS.**—I was recently told by a pious widow that she had a son in Texas, who at one time was sceptical. A Christian man put into his hands 'Nelson's Cause and Cure;' he read it, and wrote to his mother that 'his views were changed; that it was a wonderful book, and that it had been the means of his salvation.' This lady bought ten dollars' worth of books to send to her son, and for him to lend to others.

"**STATISTICS OF THE YEAR.**—During this year we have sold 29,517 volumes, amounting to \$7,379 21; have given to the poor 12,067 volumes, amounting to \$2,011 14; visited 18,707 families, with most of whom we had religious conversation and prayer; have found 2,115 families destitute of all religious books except the Bible, and 801 without the Bible; have held 1,292 meetings, mostly in destitute places—half of the laborers are preachers; found 1,247 families who neglect evangelical preaching; and have organized or aided 73 Sunday-schools. Forty-six laborers have been employed, some during the whole year, and others for a part only.

"**COST.**—The aggregate of labor performed amounts to 19 years. Total expenses for services, freight, tolls, ferriage, meals, and lodging,

is \$5,235 17. Grants, \$2,011 14. Amount of funds collected in the state to meet this demand is \$4,751 68, leaving a balance drawn from the parent Society of \$2,494 63.

“We commence this year with a larger corps of laborers at work than we ever had before, and to all appearances the expenditure will be greater. Sixty-one counties are embraced in the labors of the year just closed. In that field, THIRTY-ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FOUR new members have been added to the different churches. How far your publications and the labors of colporteurs have been instrumental in bringing about these results, we do not undertake to say. We know, however, of no place where books and tracts have been freely distributed, where there has not been a more than usual ingathering into the church.

“About 55 individual conversions are reported, which were brought about through the direct agency of a book or tract. Still, our great encouragement is, that the reading of the Society's books has led many to the house of God, and thus brought under the influence of the living ministry those who, without this instrumentality, would in all probability have never been reached.

“STATISTICAL RESULTS FOR SIX YEARS.—I have drawn a statistical report of the amount of labor performed in Virginia during the six years and four months, as follows: labor performed equal to 75 years and one month; volumes sold 135,982, amounting to \$33,995 38; grants to the poor 51,410 volumes, amounting to \$8,586 83; meetings held, 5,391; families visited, 74,000; families destitute of all religious books except the Bible, 11,485; and 6,309 families destitute of the Bible, 5,047 of which we have supplied, either through grants from auxiliary Bible societies, or from private individuals. We have found 6,820 families who neglect preaching; and 2,067 who have embraced error in some of its forms. We have organized or aided, by donations of books in poor, destitute neighborhoods, 320 Sunday-schools, where old and young have become pupils. There might be seen the child of ten years, the young man and woman of twenty, and fathers and mothers, with the aid of glasses, taking their first lesson in the first book they had ever owned, and that book placed in their hands by a colporteur. In these Sunday-schools a thirst for knowledge has been created; through the influence thus set in motion, day-schools have sprung up, where the children of the poor are taught, and often the only book within their reach of an elementary kind is the Tract Primer, and that too furnished by the colporteur.

“In many instances families were found, numbering from five to twelve persons, who did not know a letter of the alphabet; they wanted

no books, of course. The colporteur would open some book, read a passage, and exhibit some of the pictures. The eyes of the children would sparkle; 'Mother, get me that book—I want to learn to read it.' What mother can resist such an appeal? The book is bought, or received as a gift. In a little time the child is in school. Such an occurrence as the above has been very common in the experience of our colporteurs.

"The first religious visit to hundreds of log-cabins has been made by a colporteur of the Tract Society. Many have heard their first sermon from his lips; and to judge by their terrified appearance, sitting still or standing, and not unfrequently the children running about while the man of God is on his knees, we might conclude that it was the first *prayer* they had ever heard.

"Pages might be filled with facts showing the instrumentality of books and tracts in the conversion of sinners.

"Numerous testimonials from gentlemen of high standing, both ministers and laymen, could be brought to prove the good done. A lawyer of Western Virginia, of eminent piety and high attainments, said to me, 'Five years ago, there were hundreds of bookless habitations in the region of country where I reside; but now, every cabin has its Tract Society books; and I am often surprised at the acquaintance the people manifest with their contents, as well as at the great change which is perceptible in the morals of these same people.'

"A gentleman from a different part of the state and a land agent for several counties, made the following remark: 'In every house I enter, in my constant travels, I see some of your books. The people are delighted with them; they will show them to strangers, as we are apt to do with any highly prized article.'

"In different places where Sabbath-schools were organized, they proved the nucleus of a church, where there is now regular preaching; and in some cases old, dilapidated, forsaken church buildings have been repaired, and regular worshipping assemblies now meet there to hear the preaching of the word.

"The operations in Virginia have cost the Society \$19,488 93, being much more than has been collected in the state for the aid of the Society.

In the *Carolinas and Georgia*, colportage was introduced in 1842-3. In 1843 the Savannah Colporteur Association was formed, and prosecuted its labors with much efficiency. One of the colporteurs in its service, Mr. Wight, has since become a missionary in China. In December, 1843, Rev. Henry Safford was commissioned as a colporteur, and after sufficient experience became the superintendent of colportage.

In reviewing his labors, he writes,

"During my connection with the Society, sixty-five individuals have been associated with me for longer or shorter periods, of whom thirty were students. Of the latter, twenty-one were members of Oglethorpe University, four of Mercer University, one of Emory College, and four of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, S. C. Of the 35 regular colporteurs, 17 were members of the Methodist Episcopal church, 14 of the Presbyterian, and 4 of the Baptist church. The aggregate amount of labor is thirty-one years and seven months, in 70 counties in Georgia and 5 districts of South Carolina. The amount of sales has been 80,894 volumes, value \$20,226; and of grants 18,522 volumes, value \$3,087; total value, \$23,213. More than 41,000 families have been visited, and most of them conversed or prayed with; 2,028 families have been found destitute of the Bible, and 3,077 of all other religious books."

Among the instances of usefulness recorded by Mr. Safford, he states that "a reader of 'Mammon' placed \$100 in the hands of a preacher, for the gratuitous distribution of 530 copies of that work through the conference of the Methodist Episcopal church. Another gentleman gave \$25 to place a copy of the Sabbath Manual in the hands of each stockholder of the Georgia Railroad Company; and another paid for 200 copies of the same work for his county. These donations prompted to an effort which resulted in the distribution of thousands of the Manual, which prepared the way for the passage of a law by the last legislature forbidding the running of freight-trains on the Sabbath, under a penalty of \$500 for the first, and \$1,000 for the second offence. The circulation of our publications lessens the demand for 'light reading.' A dealer in the article said to me, 'I cannot sell my books where the colporteur has been.' To extend the colporteur system over my field would require forty men constantly employed."

The colporteur system was extended to the south-west, from New Orleans as a centre, in 1842. Mr. Heman Packard gives the following sketch of its early history:

"I came to Louisiana in 1838. What I did for the Tract cause during the first four years was unconnected with any society. I gathered such second-hand tracts and books as people at the East were willing to give, during the summer, and in winter I brought them here and distributed them among boatmen and raftmen. In 1841 I brought *twenty-seven boxes*, some of them large. I was suspected of having incendiary books, and cast into prison. I was soon released; but owing to the enmity and hard speeches of some who got their wealth from these boatmen and raftmen, and who well knew that if they left their intemperance and gambling, the hope of their gains was gone, I labored with some fear and trembling, except when my confidence in God lifted me above the fear of man.

"The next summer I was in a strait. My available means were spent. Some of my friends at the East said my health was so far restored that I might live among them; others said, as they had persecuted me in this city, the Saviour's instructions were against my returning here again. My best friends were not disposed to aid me in returning to New Orleans. I felt, however, a settled conviction that my work was here, and that if I altogether held my peace, then should deliverance arise from another quarter. When I saw a notice of a Deliberative meeting of the American Tract Society, to be held in New York, I determined to attend it. I did so, and you know the result. I came to New Orleans as a colporteur of the American Tract Society. From the outset, I determined to begin at the bottom of society, where I left off the year before, and work upward if I could.

"At first I opened my books in an old soda-shed, open on one side and not fully enclosed on any side. From thence I took out my books to boatmen, raftmen, etc. There I displayed my books to ministers and others who called to examine them. I was informed that more than one congregation got a reproof for suffering the publications of our Society to be so poorly accommodated.

"A Baptist brother came from the country, and for the first time heard of the American Tract Society. He would see their publications, and followed me to the shed. He took home a goodly number, and exerted an influence that extended from one individual to another, and from one bayou to another, embracing in its course the conversion of sinners and the increase of Christ's visible church on earth. That brother rests from his labors, but the influence of that visit has not ceased. When the soda-shed was wanted, I procured a place for my books in a counting-room, and had a bookcase to exhibit a sample. I hailed the coming of an enterprising Bible agent for the French, and Mr. Westerman from the Tract Society to the Germans, as the beginning of better things for New Orleans. In 1844, a small depository was opened in connection with the Bible Society. The circulation of our publications was greatly increased by local agencies. A colporteur speaking French and German was sent to Western Louisiana, and Mr. Keith went to Texas. Other colporteurs for Louisiana and for Mexico were engaged as suitable men were found, until for the last two years the number has averaged sixteen. Three times that number could now find profitable employment on this field, without calculating any thing for the probable openings in Mexico. The rapidly increasing population in many parts makes the want of more laborers greater every month.

"From whence shall ten, twenty, or thirty devoted laborers come? When I remember the darkness in which I formerly prayed God to send some one speaking their language to care for the souls of the German and French and Spanish population, and reflect on what he has since done, I *should* know where to go to ask for more laborers, even if it had not been written, 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into the harvest.'"

The early history of colportage in *the Western States* has been incidentally elicited in the preceding narrative. The rapidity with which it has expanded, and the efficiency with which it has been prosecuted, are strikingly illustrated in the following statement of Mr. Seely Wood, to whose systematic and faithful supervision and counsel the enterprise owes, under God, much of its present prosperity and usefulness. Mr. Wood writes,

"Including the labors of students devoting only their vacations to this work, the first year five colporteurs were employed; the second, twelve; the third, twenty-eight; the fourth, thirty-seven; the fifth, forty-three; the sixth, seventy-seven; the seventh, one hundred and ten; the eighth, one hundred and forty; the ninth, one hundred and twenty-five; and the last year, one hundred and sixty-one.

"The statistical report of the last year's labors shows that 59 years' labor has been performed; 116,508 families visited, of whom 12,343 were Romanists; 15,835 families habitually neglected public worship; 18,183 were found destitute of religious books except the Bible; 7,533 were found destitute of a copy of the sacred Scriptures; 3,118 prayer-meetings were held, or public meetings addressed; 59,647 were conversed with on personal religion, or prayed with; and 184,159 books, of the value of \$42,701 91, have been circulated, of which \$6,676 04 have been given to the destitute.

"The statistical reports for the last five years show that during that period, 238 years' colporteur labor has been performed, and 411,283 families visited. If an equal number of families were visited in the five years previous, in proportion to the service performed, it would give 575,443 families. The total amount of colporteur labor performed in 10 years, is 333 years. Total circulation of publications \$268,549 78, of which \$41,269 79 have been circulated gratuitously.

"In the field assigned this agency, embracing the states of Ohio, (except the counties contiguous to the Pittsburgh agency,) Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and North Alabama, there are about 450 counties, of which 375 have been visited in whole or in part by a colporteur. Deducting 33 years' service performed in Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa, while those states were connected with this agency, gives 300 years' colporteur service performed in the 375 counties which have been visited; being less than a year's time, upon an average, to each county occupied, in 10 years. Some counties have been visited several times, while others have been only partially visited.

"The population during this period has increased so rapidly that our efforts hardly keep pace with the increase. The object of colportage will not be accomplished by one, or two, or three visits to a family, any more than the object of preaching will be accomplished by the delivering of two or three sermons to a congregation. Every county and every accessible family in the land should be visited annually by a colporteur. This would require upon an average about a year's labor to two counties, or at least 200 years' service to the 450 counties in this field. The large and most populous counties would of course require more than the small ones. Many counties where there is a large German population, would require a German colporteur for that population exclusively. Some of the larger towns and cities contain a foreign population sufficient to keep several colporteurs employed in visiting them. Of the 161 colporteurs in commission the past year, 18 are German.

"There are now in commission 57 colporteurs for Ohio, 20 for Indiana, 15 for Kentucky, 20 for Tennessee, 4 for North Alabama, 3 for Mississippi, and 1 for Arkansas; total 120, including 20 students.

"There are needed at this time 20 additional colporteurs in Indiana, 25 in Kentucky, 20 in Tennessee, 20 in Mississippi, and 15 in Arkansas. Can these colporteurs be obtained? The religious history of the colporteurs who have been commissioned during the last ten years, shows conclusively that there are hundreds of devoted, pious laymen in the various evangelical denominations, who possess a spirit of consecration to Christ, and a desire to labor for the salvation of others, which would lead them into the ministry, would the circumstances in which they are placed admit of it. Though not qualified to preach, they are qualified to convey the printed sermons or essays of the most able and useful ministers of the last two centuries to those whom they are designed to bless, and commend the truths they contain to the personal attention of the purchaser for his soul's sake. There are also many ministers accustomed to itinerant efforts, who are willing to devote themselves to preaching at the firesides of the people in connection with the circulation of books. Again, the numerous students of our colleges and theological seminaries who are preparing for the work of the ministry, now regard it as highly important, in addition to literary and theological attainments, to devote a part of their vacations to colportage as an essential part of their preparation for usefulness in the ministry. Were these colporteurs to be drawn from a single denomination, it might be difficult to obtain the number requisite; but in endeavoring to reach all classes of the population, and appointing colporteurs with reference to their qualifications and Christian character rather than their ecclesiastical connection, it is hoped that by proper effort the whole

field may be fully occupied. Were a general agent constantly employed in each state in representing the cause of Christ in the churches, many colporteurs would be enlisted who could not otherwise be obtained.

"Colportage on the wharves and boats of our principal thoroughfares succeeds well. One colporteur is now employed on the wharves and boats at Cincinnati, and others at Louisville and Memphis. One object to be effected by these efforts on the boats, is to supplant the circulation of books of an injurious moral tendency by furnishing passengers with good books adapted to their spiritual benefit.

"Travellers when away from home, and among strangers, often cast off the fear of God, and devote their leisure hours on boats to reading bad books, and need to be reminded that the eye of the omniscient God is upon them, and that they are hastening to that bourne from which no traveller returns.

"Another object in laboring on the wharves is to supply immigrants with evangelical books and tracts. Immigrants approach the country in a listening attitude, expecting to be placed under new and better laws and influences, and to conform to the circumstances in which they are placed here. The moment of their first arrival in this country is the most favorable one to produce a good impression on their minds. If they are met on the wharves by a colporteur urging them to faith in Christ, and are furnished with a Bible, an evangelical book or tract, it confirms the report they have heard that this is a land of Christian liberty. On the other hand, if they are met on the shore only by land-sharks, deceived and robbed of their means, and hear little else than cursing and swearing until they reach the interior of the country, they conclude that America is no better, but worse than their fatherland.

"The colporteurs have recently been instructed to furnish every immigrant landing at the wharves, whom they can reach, with an evangelical book or tract. This will increase the amount of grants of publications, but the importance of the measure demands that it be done at the expense of Christian benevolence.

"Another object is to distribute tracts and books among the thousands of flat-boatmen and raftmen landing at these ports, and the crews of the steamboats.

"The moral results of colportage will be more fully developed in the detailed reports of colporteurs furnished you by them. This report completes the seventeenth year of my connection with the Society as an agent for effecting the circulation of its publications; which agency, in connection with associated assistance in volume circulation and colportage, has resulted in the circulation of 1,390,000 books, value \$326,815 18, scattered in more than half a million different families of the land.

"That God may enable us all, by his providence and blessing, with our present experience and increased facilities, to accomplish far more in the promotion of this work during the next ten years than the last ten, is the earnest desire of your fellow-laborer."

In the states of *Missouri, Illinois, and Iowa* some efforts were made as early as 1842-3, in connection with the agency of Rev. S. T. Wells; and for two or three years the enterprise gradually extended, under the supervision of the Cincinnati agency. But from 1847, when the Rev. Charles Peabody transferred his labors from Ohio to this field, much expansion has been given to the system in these great and growing states. Since that period valuable laborers have multiplied, and rapid progress has been made in reaching the wide-spread moral desolations. In reviewing his labors, Rev. Mr. Peabody writes,

"The most prominent thing to my mind in this history, is its providential bearings. To-day a field is opened all white for the harvest; and to-morrow, almost before the prayer, 'Lord, send laborers into thy harvest,' could go up, a laborer stands ready with a heart burning with a desire to save souls, and send abroad the blessings of salvation to every creature, and says, 'Here am I; send me.' It has been an interesting study to watch these developments of God's providence in connection with this great work. I will adduce only a few instances occurring the past year as illustrative of this interesting feature.

"I received a letter from Mr. C—— of Illinois, resigning his agency. Only the next day Mr. P——, who had been a teacher for years, but began to think the Lord called him to more active efforts for the salvation of men, came to my office with suitable recommendations, desiring to occupy the very field made vacant by Mr. C——. Again, Mr. M——'s health failed: almost immediately the Lord had another man, Mr. S——, to take his place in that darkest and most desolate corner of ——. On his way East last autumn, Mr. W—— expressed a wish to remove from the frontier counties of Missouri to —— county. I reluctantly consented, as he was on the very borders of civilization, and among that class of emigration which is continually rolling on before more permanent settlers, and which is generally very poorly supplied with means of religious knowledge. But two days had elapsed before I received a letter from Mr. D——, who was totally ignorant of Mr. W——'s wishes, proposing to take these very counties left by Mr. W——. I might multiply these illustrations; but these must suffice.

"There is room for *one hundred colporteurs* in these three states; and no less number can accomplish all that is to be done by the agency of this enterprise. I would recommend a distribution as follows: 40 for Missouri, 45 for Illinois, and 15 for Iowa. There are now about 250 counties and a population of 1,700,000 in these three states. If one hundred men were in the field at this time, they would each have a population of 17,000. But by the time our number of efficient faithful colporteurs shall increase to 100, the population will be 2,000,000, which will be 20,000 to each colporteur.

"We have now a noble band of men. What you saw of them at Chicago was but a fair specimen. The country is yet new, and the people scattered. Fewer families visited and smaller sales than in older states will be a consequence. But they are an efficient, laborious, praying band of men. My earnest prayer is that more such laborers may be raised up and sent forth into this part of the Lord's vineyard."

It will be seen by another part of this document that during the past year 52 colporteurs have been employed in connection with the St. Louis agency, for the whole or part of the year, 41 of whom continue their labors; and the circulation for this single year has exceeded 47,000 volumes.

Numerous laborers have been employed on the great *Thoroughfares* of the country, with most gratifying results. This movement became the more necessary because of the amount of light and vicious reading matter urged on the attention of travellers; and because of the multitudes of foreign immigrants crowding the steamboats and rail-cars. At New York, Albany, Buffalo, Cleveland, Sandusky, St. Louis, Memphis, New Orleans, Mobile, Louisville, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, and elsewhere, good men have visited boats and cars with books, and the sales have often far

exceeded those of the colporteurs in other fields, besides "casting bread upon the waters" gratuitously, which has "returned after many days."

Within the past six years *five hundred and thirty-one theological students*, from institutions of the various Christian bodies, have been employed by the Society as colporteurs during their vacations, and have performed a vast amount of valuable labor.

Arrangements for the careful *Supervision of Colportage* were early made. The "volume enterprise" had furnished a class of laborers whose familiarity with the principles of the institution, and whose varied experience admirably fitted them for the oversight of the several bands of colporteurs occupying large states or districts of country. But for this, the rapid expansion of the system might have been impracticable. While, with experienced and reliable "captains of tens and of fifties," stationed at important centres, as at Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Mobile, New Orleans, and St. Louis, serving as recruiting stations, magazines, and accounting bureaus, the little army could be multiplied with safety. Every superintendent of colportage has enjoyed a practical training in the details of the volume enterprise or the colporteur system. All of them have been in the service of the Society from five to seventeen years, and have earned the confidence of the Committee by their prudence and fidelity in their responsible trusts. The brief reports incorporated in this document of the progress and results of colportage in their several fields, furnish the best illustration of the efficiency and usefulness of this class of Christian laborers.

Besides this arrangement for the oversight of colporteurs, and the aid afforded by general agents in the same behalf, the Committee early saw the importance of bringing the executive officers into occasional contact with their fellow-laborers. To economize time and money, and to secure the benefit of mutual experience, it seemed wise to convene a number of colporteurs at a central point, for conference with a secretary and superintendent, and such general agents as might conveniently be present. Thus, in June, 1844, a *Convention of Colporteurs* in Michigan, assembled at *Adrian*, and in September the German colporteurs in Pennsylvania met the secretaries from New York and Boston at *York*. In connection with the latter meeting a county association was formed, which has continued its liberal coöperation to the present time. Similar meetings were held in 1845, at *Syracuse, Detroit, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh*, and *New York*. In August, 1848, a deeply interesting meeting of colporteurs was held in *Lewisburg, Va.* And in September and October, 1850, still larger and more important conventions were held at *Cleveland* and *Chicago*.

As a happy illustration of the character and influence of these several gatherings, we insert the report of one of the most recent and useful, held at *Cleveland, Ohio*.

SKETCH OF THE COLPORTEUR CONVENTION AT CLEVELAND.

Fifty of the laborers in the service of the American Tract Society, including two of the Secretaries; the Rev. Mr. Kirk, delegate from the American Tract Society, Boston; seven general agents; two superintendents; seventeen German colporteurs; and more than twenty English colporteurs, convened in Cleveland, September 24, 1850.

The Rev. Dr. Hallock was appointed Chairman; Rev. H. B. Holmes and Mr. H. N. Thissell, Secretaries; and Messrs. Cook, Goertner, and S. Wood, Business Committee.

The Rev. Mr. Kirk preached the opening sermon on Tuesday evening, by invitation of the convention; subject, *the unsearchable riches of Christ*. It was one of those solemn, fervid exhibitions of redeeming love which characterize the preaching of Mr. Kirk; and the application of his theme to the occasion was exceedingly happy. The key-note of the convention and of the work of colportage was rightly struck, and every subsequent exercise was in delightful harmony with it. A similar public service was held the succeeding evening in another church.

The business of the convention commenced on Wednesday, A. M., September 25, and, with barely sufficient intervals for meals and rest, continued five days, exclusive of the Sabbath. The first exercise consisted of a narration of the individual Christian history and experience of each member, and of the dealings of God with his own soul. No sketch could convey just impressions of this service. The internal life of fifty men frankly revealed, and the providence and grace of God practically illustrated in their history, furnished such a spiritual repast as is rarely enjoyed. Seventeen of these men were from Germany. Several had been delivered from Romish superstition; some from infidel or rationalistic errors. Nearly all had enjoyed the instructions of pious parents, and with few exceptions, they had been led to Christ in early life. Some had been battling with sin for a quarter of a century or more; others had been converted by the blessing of God on the labors of colporteurs here present. It was deeply affecting to learn from these narratives, that one valued German colporteur traced his conversion to the fidelity of another, who, in turn attributed his salvation, under God, to another then present. And as such facts were developed, the convention was more than once bathed in tears.

Such an illustration of Christian *unity* as was afforded by this meeting, has rarely been witnessed. Here were members of *ten* different evangelical denominations, namely, Congregational, Presbyterian O. S. and N. S., Baptist, Freewill Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, Lutheran, German Reformed, German Evangelical, and Evangelical Association. Each told his story in simple language: no two narratives were alike. And yet, with characteristic diversity, there was entire unity in the great cardinal points of evangelical doctrine and experience. Not a word would have indicated to the observer the denominational affinities of a single individual, if the peculiar use of the word "penitent" in one instance be excepted. Ruin by sin and salvation by grace lay at the foundation of all. All traced their salvation to the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause, and gave all the glory of man's redemption to God as the author.

The delightful results of this exercise were manifest in all the subsequent proceedings. Each member seemed knit to the other in fraternal affection. Each knew

the other as Christians are too little wont to do, as a brother beloved. And through all the animated discussions of the body, not an unkind word or thought marred the perfect harmony of the occasion. The spirit of heaven pervaded the meeting, and the conviction became deep on all who attended it, that *God is here*.

About sixteen hours were devoted to these personal narratives, interspersed with devotional exercises. Then followed statements from colporteurs respecting their fields of labor, and the manner and result of their efforts. The varied adaptation of colportage, and the degree of success of different colporteurs, were strikingly exhibited, and instances of self-denial developed. One had conquered the difficulties attending the circulation of religious truth on the thoroughfares, and amid opposition and ridicule had diffused 4,000 or 5,000 volumes a year on steamboats. Another had sought out his German brethren in the inhospitable climate of Canada. Another had toiled eight years among the Roman-catholic Germans of Ohio and Indiana—not in vain. Others had gone to fields where irreligion and infidelity abounded. All had endured hardness, and some had perilled life itself for the gospel, and yet all rejoiced in the privilege of doing any thing for Christ. Such facts as the following showed the spirit that prevailed. One colporteur had laid aside \$50, to finish the ceiling of his small dwelling; but the church near him was unfinished, and he gave the \$50 to complete the place of worship, and still lived in an unplastered house. Another, illustrating the remark that it was the privilege of the Christian to turn his self-denials into joys, said that though he had lost an eye, and his companion the use of a limb in the service of Christ, they counted it all joy to suffer for Christ and the gospel's sake.

At a proper stage of the meeting, the secretaries discussed various important topics. The senior Secretary imparted full and valuable information respecting the early history of the Society, and the principles and proceedings in the publishing and foreign departments. The junior Secretary gave a sketch of the origin and progress of Colportage, and explained in detail the interior arrangements for facilitating the Society's plans of doing good. Replies were also given to hundreds of written or oral questions on subjects of practical interest. Nearly two days were occupied with these interrogatories, extending to every topic affecting the personal intercourse of the colporteur with families, and his various relations and duties. Perhaps the Society and its work never had a more thorough sifting; and it may be doubted whether it ever appeared to be more clearly of God.

As the field expanded before the minds of the convention, and the practical results of colportage were developed, the necessity of a greatly increased scale of operations became more and more obvious. And at last the subject was referred to a committee, consisting of the Rev. Mr. Canfield, one of the beloved pastors of Cleveland, and two of the members of the convention, who reported the following preamble and resolution, which were adopted after prayerful consideration.

Whereas, notwithstanding all which has yet been done to meet the increasing religious wants of this nation, thousands of souls, not only in the newer, but also in the older sections of our country, are to an alarming degree destitute of the means of grace, and other destitute thousands are coming to our shores from foreign lands; and

Whereas, from developments made in this convention, it is clearly seen that the labors of pious and self-denying colporteurs are eminently adapted to impart a knowledge of the unsearchable riches of Christ to multitudes ready to perish in their sins, and also to explore our moral wastes and prepare them to receive ultimately all the appointed ordinances of the gospel; and the Head of the church has greatly blessed them to the accomplishment of such results: therefore

"Resolved, That this department of benevolent effort, so worthy the confidence, the prayers, and the pecuniary support of the American church, ought to be enlarged by bringing more colporteurs into the field; and that NOT LESS THAN ONE THOUSAND of these pioneers and helpers of the gospel ministry ought to be commissioned and employed in our country without unnecessary delay."

Besides the regular sessions of the convention, and the preaching on the first two evenings, a public meeting was held each evening. The meeting in the Baptist church on Thursday evening had reference to *the destitutions of the country*, and was addressed by two of the colporteurs, one of the Secretaries, Rev. Mr. Montgomery of Wisconsin, and Rev. Mr. Kirk. That in the First Presbyterian church, was devoted to the *immigrant population*, and was addressed by four German colporteurs—including the three who held the relation of spiritual father, son, and grandson—and by Rev. Mr. Rauschenbusch, one of the Secretaries, and Rev. Mr. Kirk. On Saturday evening a meeting in the Methodist Episcopal church was occupied with a discussion of *the condition and influence of the popular press* by one of the Secretaries, Mr. S. Wood, Rev. Mr. Goertner, and Rev. Mr. Rauschenbusch.

The pulpits of the Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Moravian and other German churches, having been tendered to the convention, supplies were furnished for them all by the clerical members of the body.

The closing public service was held in the Baptist church, which was crowded to its utmost capacity. The principal topic of the evening was *the responsibility of individual Christians*. Rev. Dr. Hallock, Rev. Messrs. Holmes, Goertner, Vail, and Kirk addressed the meeting with great effect. To a late hour not an individual left the house, but sat with rapt attention. In closing his address, Rev. Mr. Kirk, in behalf of the convention, gratefully acknowledged the kindness and hospitality of the citizens of Cleveland. Rev. Dr. Aiken and Rev. Mr. Canfield responded with much beauty of expression and tenderness of feeling—giving utterance to their convictions of the value of the colporteur enterprise, which had been developed to their minds in this convention as never before—charging the Secretaries to convey their thanks to the Committee for appointing the convention in this place, and proffering their churches and a hospitable welcome to any similar gathering in future. It was a touching scene, not soon to be forgotten.

A word respecting the manner and the measure of Cleveland hospitality. We came hither unheralded. No public announcement had been made of our purpose to meet. We had no denominational sympathies to appeal to, and no great names to attract. A company of plain, toil-worn disciples, gathered from eight different states, came here in Christ's name, to consult and plan for the promotion of Christ's kingdom. How were we received? Refined Christian homes were tendered to us with beautiful frankness and cordiality. Churches of various denominations were opened to us, and their pastors cheered us all along with their presence and counsel. Our welcome in this charming city has been such as to cheer us greatly, and to reward many a day of toil. Perhaps eternity may reveal the fact that the influence of the convention, and the prayers of its members for spiritual blessings on this community, have not been altogether lost.

In reviewing the incidents and proceedings of this important convention, the following reflections have suggested themselves:

1. Such a gathering of the disciples of Christ is worth all it costs, as a demonstration of real Protestant unity—not theoretic and speculative, but vital and practical. If fifty Christians, from different countries, and of ten different communions, can "dwell together in unity" during a week—pouring out all their hearts in the most confidential manner, and forming definite plans for spreading all of truth that

has immediate relation to edification and salvation—why may not *all* Christians cordially harmonize in efforts for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom? There is a way of peace: may God grant his ministers and people the grace to pursue it.

2. Conventions of this kind are invaluable to the colporteurs. Notwithstanding the ample supply of documents for the instruction of colporteurs, and the efforts to prepare them for their work by correspondence and personal intercourse of superintendents, general agents, etc., there are innumerable topics of practical moment which will only be discussed in such meetings. Instead of isolated toil, each laborer is enabled to profit by the experience of the others, and learns the views of the Committee and executive officers of the Society on all important points. And the spiritual quickening and refreshment of such an occasion give power to subsequent efforts. It is believed that all present felt, as quaintly expressed by one of the German colporteurs, that "his soul was *sharpened*" by the meeting.

3. General agents become familiar with the field, the men, and the work, and gather invaluable materials in such meetings for pulpit addresses. They also compare views with each other as to the best and most successful methods of accomplishing their responsible and difficult task, and go forth with enlarged conceptions of the enterprises they advocate.

4. The Secretaries gain a more intimate knowledge of the spirit and efficiency of their fellow-laborers, and of the wants of the country, and the adaptation of the Society's various plans of usefulness, than by any other process. They learn to appreciate the difficulties in the way of successful toil in different parts of the country, and can sympathize better with their associates in their disappointments or successes. And while there is a limit to the time and strength required to attend assemblages of this character, it is clear that occasionally the executive officers of the Society should go forth to different parts of the country and meet their fellow-laborers at convenient centres. They will find a blessing in it, and may hope to convey blessings to others. If possible, some members of the Committee should accompany them. The presence and influence of the respected delegate from the Society at Boston were invaluable to the convention and to the community.

5. As a means of multiplying the intelligent friends of the Society, such meetings are not unimportant. Again and again has the expression fallen from the lips of ministers and people in Cleveland, "Our views of colportage have undergone a change. Now we see the spirit and magnitude of the work, and it has a new place in our affections." The sincerity of such sentiments is attested by the fact that subscriptions have already been made in this city to the amount of more than two thousand dollars, with a delightful cheerfulness. Several gentlemen have proffered one hundred and fifty dollars each, and a spirit of liberality pervades the community. Our German brethren, few in number and of limited means, have given handsomely to multiply German colporteurs. Let the same facts and views which have been presented in the public meetings and official discussions of this convention be brought before other communities generally, and there will be no lack of means to sustain a thousand colporteurs, or to prosecute any other noble enterprise to which the providence of God may call the American Tract Society.

The Committee regard occasional conventions of the spirit and character of the above, as of great value, and as far more than compensating the expenditure necessarily involved. Could the beloved pastors of churches more generally attend these gatherings, and observe the character and spirit of the colporteurs, it is believed that their interest

would be deepened, and their confidence in the enterprise greatly strengthened.

The *provision for the support of colporteurs*, and the supply of the poor with publications gratuitously, has been furnished by charitable contributions. From the outset, the enterprise has rested on the basis of simple benevolence; and it has been sustained in a manner highly honorable to the piety and patriotism of the country. No sooner had the first colporteur been commissioned, than the late Mr. Charles Valentine of Cambridgeport, Mass., voluntarily assumed the payment of his salary. And from that period to the present, individuals or associations, male or female, have cheerfully assumed the salary of a colporteur, or provided an amount equal to his ordinary grants to the destitute; so that with the contributions at large among the churches, the requisite funds have been furnished to sustain all well-qualified candidates hitherto presented for the service. The whole number of such associations or individuals now exceeds two hundred. The largest donor for the support of this system has been Alexander Stoddart, Esq., of Mobile, who has paid \$3,000 annually for four years. The whole amount contributed *specifically for colportage* during the ten years, has been \$227,502; and the amount expended, exclusive of grants of publications, has been \$365,776. Acting on the principle of looking *above and abroad* for indications of duty, rather than within upon the treasury, it is an occasion of devout gratitude to God, that the Society, while pressing forward into nearly every opening field, and employing every suitable candidate—with no other reliance than benevolent aid—has never been left to serious embarrassments, or dishonored any claim upon its treasury.

The statistical results of colportage for the past ten years furnish the most complete illustration at once of the necessity and efficiency of the system. The whole number of families visited has been 2,168,793, embracing perhaps 11,000,000 souls, equal to nearly one half of our present population. With 1,103,344 families the colporteurs have engaged in personal religious conversation or prayer. Of the whole number, 374,320 families were destitute of all religious books except the Bible; and 137,711 have been found, since 1846, without the sacred Scriptures, of whom 84,707 have been supplied. Two hundred and twenty-four thousand nine hundred families were Roman-catholics or errorists of some other class. The statistics for the past three years show that 223,345 families habitually neglect evangelical preaching.

The number of books sold by colporteurs has been 2,424,630; while the total circulation of volumes for the past ten years has been 4,979,645.

Several million tracts have also been distributed by colporteurs. The number of books gratuitously circulated among poor, destitute, or erring households has been 652,668. Besides this vast amount of evangelical truth in a printed and oral form thus diffused over the land, the colporteurs have held prayer-meetings or addressed public meetings to the number of 60,578.

Had the statistics of the first three or four years been as full as in later years, the aggregate would be considerably enlarged. As it is, the thoughtful will find abundant materials for reflection, and the pious will see the occasion of devout praise from this condensed record of evangelical toil.

REVIEW OF THE LESSONS OF COLPORTAGE.

From this review of the brief history of Colportage, it is obvious that *the enterprise is of God*. His gracious hand is manifest in its origin, progress, and successes. His providence laid its foundations in atoning blood, and in the pressing necessities of a vast and growing nation. His grace has inspired the compassion and self-denial which have characterized its beneficent pathway. His Spirit has moved the hearts of so many of his children to consecrate themselves to these humble toils, and has crowned their labors with his blessing. He has opened the door of access to the unevangelized millions in their continent-wide dispersion. He has elicited the liberality of his people, and drawn their hearts out towards the destitute and the perishing. Devoutly and gratefully do we recognize that hand in all the past; joyfully do we cling to it for all the future. The child of Providence, Colportage leans on the paternal arm, and seeks the guidance of a Father's hand.

The facts of colportage for ten years furnish the amplest demonstration of the *reality and the beauty of Protestant Christian unity*. Members of not less than twenty different communions have shared in these toils—not one having been selected or rejected *because* of his denominational relationship: they have spoken ten different languages; they have mingled with all classes of our population; they have encountered sectarian prejudices, and infidel cavils, and papal boasts; they have addressed tens of thousands of public assemblies, and exhorted and prayed in a million habitations: but the cases are rare indeed of complaint of any departure from the catholic basis of the institution; while the harmony of mutual confidence and fraternal intercourse has almost never been interrupted. "The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" has been delightfully preserved throughout. Thus they have had power

with God and man. The simple, sole errand of salvation has disarmed prejudice and overcome opposition, and gained unrestrained access to the perishing with gospel truth. The Lord Jesus Christ has thus been honored, in the partial answer of his memorable petition, "That they all may be one; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." The Committee are increasingly persuaded that it is only thus, by united action, that the gospel of Christ can be universally diffused among the neglected population of this and other lands.

The illustration of the *power of the press* afforded by the history of colportage is most impressive. The varied mechanical arts necessary to the speed and perfection of printing have advanced, until a single newspaper press will issue a thousand times as many words in a minute as a speaker will utter in an hour. Whatever may have been the might of this agency while in its infancy, as employed in the great Reformation under Luther—however potent in its youth in bringing religion down from the palace to the cottage, as wielded by the Puritans of the seventeenth century, or as employed by British Christians in antagonism to infidelity at the close of the eighteenth century, it remained for associated, systematic Christian enterprise in the noon of the nineteenth century, to develop the full power of this amazing instrument of light in its ripened manhood.

The grand idea of making the spiritual classics of our own and other times the popular literature of the world, and especially of our own continent; the aggressive movement by which the masses are reached and supplied, if need be, without money and without price, and the actual circulation of 6,567,795 copies of standard religious works by a single institution—an amount probably exceeding the number of such volumes issued in this country for the preceding two centuries; the supply of two hundred thousand families monthly with an evangelical journal like the *American Messenger*—with the ten thousand proofs of the utility and saving efficacy of the truth thus diffused, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit: surely no other demonstration is needed of the potency of the evangelical press as an agent of evangelization. And that power is cumulative. One book but prepares the way for another. The issues of these ten years but form the appetite and create the necessity for tenfold greater issues. And the complete power of the evangelical press will only be seen when *every household* shall be furnished with the holy Scriptures and helps to the study of its sacred pages, with an adequate library of the choicest spiritual authors, and with such periodicals as come freighted with intelligence of the progress of Christ's kingdom and with incentives to holy living and Christian action. Then it will be that a spiritual tele-

graph, stretching from one abode to another, will constitute the net-work by which the great family of man may be bound together in a common brotherhood, along whose wires the electricity of love, kindled at the cross, may flash around a regenerated world.

The entire *safety of employing the talent of pious private members of the churches in evangelical labors*, has been amply demonstrated in the history of colportage. Whatever apprehensions may have been entertained at the outset, and whatever dangers may attend the employment of lay talent without supervision or control, it may be doubted whether an equal number of Christian laborers in any relation ever toiled for ten years with less of drawback, or interference with other useful agencies. Scarcely a complaint has reached the ears of the Committee of the least collision with, or want of deference and respect for the ministry; or that unqualified men have passed from the colporteur ranks into the sacred office. On the contrary, with scarce an exception, those who have gone from this sphere to the pulpit, have been led by their labors to appreciate the necessity of mature preparation for the responsibilities of a station whose duties they have come to regard as among the most difficult and onerous in the world. Indeed, professors in colleges and theological seminaries have expressed with much unanimity their conviction that colportage itself is one of the best schools in which to gain a knowledge of human nature, become acquainted with popular error, acquire a spirit of devotion, and a zest for the appropriate studies preparatory to the pastorate. Many hundreds of students for the ministry, sympathizing in these views, have sought employment for their vacations; and have universally regarded the time thus spent as profitably employed as any other part of their preparatory course. Perhaps one-sixth of all the colporteurs have been ministers of Christ; and those not invested with the sacred office have invariably sought the counsel and friendship of the ministers and missionaries on their respective fields. With unwearied watchfulness in the investigation of the character and qualifications of candidates; with documents clearly defining the relations and duties of laborers; with a system of rigid accountability in all business transactions; with experienced supervisory agencies; with friends in all parts of the country to report any delinquency, and, above all, with the grace of God to direct, restrain, and control, we see not but there are as many safeguards around this as any other human agency. And with this growing conviction, we see few obstacles to the speedy enlistment of vastly increased numbers of evangelical laborers in this and various other enterprises appropriate to laymen; thus speeding on the work of the world's conversion to God. Tens of thousands of the redeemed are wasting their energies on worldly

pursuits, who are needed and should be engaged in active toils for the extension of the kingdom of the Redeemer.

The *indispensable necessity* of such an agency as colportage, in order to impart the knowledge of Christ to "every creature," is apparent from this history. Whatever might be possible, if thousands of additional ministers of the gospel were raised up and sustained, we have to do with the actual. It is enough to know that hundreds of thousands, even in the oldest and most favored parts of our country, yes, millions of our population, are not reached by the ministry of reconciliation, and in human probability will not be, to furnish the motive and the warrant for the employment of some auxiliary agency by which the light of life may be diffused. The coincident testimony of more than a thousand Christian men, visiting the firesides of the people in every state and territory of the Union, with no motive to other than charitable judgment—that in every township of every county explored, there are households or communities numbered by hundreds of thousands in the aggregate, who are regardless of the sanctuary and destitute of religious reading or Christian influences—ought to carry the conviction to every patriotic and Christian heart, if any thing can, that there is a field of amazing extent and importance for the employment of other than ministerial talent, the cultivation of which is as important as our national well-being and the everlasting salvation of immortal souls. Let the reader ponder the statistics of destitution. They furnish a sad and fearful census of ignorance and irreligion. Let them crowd the memory, and press on the conscience and the heart. Let them group themselves around the altar of prayer, and inspire the intercessions that ascend in the petition, "Thy kingdom come." Let them insinuate themselves into the patriot's hopes and fears as to the perpetuity of the Union. Let them have their influence in all the plans of benevolent action, and in the estimates of stewardship duties. And let the question be fairly met, *How, but for some such agency as Colportage, can these destitutions be supplied, and the present generation of the unevangelized be furnished with an oral and printed gospel?* The benevolent heart will sicken with the utter hopelessness of untold thousands for this life and the next, if an itinerant, book-bearing, fireside-preaching agency be obliterated from the system of means for evangelizing the world.

The efficiency of colportage as a means of evangelizing our *foreign immigrant population*, is apparent from this ten years' review. It is within this period that the flood-tide of emigration has set in, and that the questions relating to our duties and dangers in this relation have assumed an overwhelming importance. When no more foreigners arrived

than could easily be absorbed and assimilated to our population, each ship-load became an acquisition to our industrial strength, and could be acted upon by our religious agencies. But when whole neighborhoods and counties and even states became peopled with inhabitants of other languages, prejudices, and creeds—with no present supply of schools, books, Bibles, ministers, or churches, and with little prospect of being supplied for this generation—it became a problem of fearful interest, how these hordes could be brought under such influences as were indispensable to their temporal and eternal well-being, no less than to the safety and perpetuity of our institutions. The providence of God has led to a partial solution of this problem, in the wide-spread application of colportage to the various immigrant classes. There can be little doubt that competent men in adequate numbers can be found to hunt out every immigrant family, and explain to them the plan of salvation by a crucified Redeemer; that suitable reading matter, without limit, can be prepared and circulated with acceptance and profit: in a word, that the same system which is so suited to our unevangelized native population, may be turned to account for conveying moral and religious instruction to every class of these “strangers in a strange land.” And the fact that the great mass, especially of German immigrants, are intelligent readers, would seem to indicate that the press is to be largely instrumental in their evangelization, at least until an adequate ministry can be trained for their instruction.

An important lesson may be gathered from colportage respecting the proper and *successful mode of treating Roman-catholics* and other errorists. How necessary soever may be the controversies waged with systems of error and their champions, it is made clear by a large experience, that the better way of *truth in love* is alone successful in efforts for the spiritual benefit of *the people*. The heart has commonly more to do with error than the head. Direct dealing, therefore, with the conscience and the affections, is the speediest way of undermining false doctrines. And the facts of colportage will show that action on this principle has been blessed with almost if not quite as much success in the conversion of souls among nominal Papists and other errorists, as among nominal Protestants of the same general character. Indeed, some of the laborers who have “come again with rejoicing” bringing the most “sheaves” with them, have been almost exclusively devoted to the papal population. If, then, we have the key to the great battle between Christ and antichrist, in the simple idea of direct contact with the individual as a sinner needing a Saviour, and the exhibition of Christ and him crucified as his only hope—just as the gospel presents the

truth—eschewing controversy and bitterness of feeling—then may we welcome the outpouring of European millions on our shores without dread; for their coming will be the speediest and best way, as it is God's way, of their deliverance from the thralldom of error and of sin.

The influence of colportage, on the *rising ministry* is impressively illustrated in this review. It will be seen that no less than 531 students for the ministry, connected with nearly fifty different colleges and theological seminaries, have been employed in colporteur labors during their vacations within the past ten years, with manifest advantage to the institution, the people, and themselves. They have gained money, health, experience, and spiritual influence. They have acquired a knowledge of human nature, without which the learning of the schools is of little more value than mechanical implements without the skill to use them. They have deemed the power of personal, fireside preaching often more efficacious than the more stately performance of the pulpit. They have been brought in contact with error in its living, popular forms, and can modify their future studies with reference to existing heresies. They have been made to understand systematic business habits—indispensable to future comfort in daily life. The *practical* element—so often and sadly neglected in the preparation for the most practical and useful of all professions—has found a training which is likely to affect the life-long usefulness of a candidate for the sacred office. In these, and other ways, have increasing numbers of our future pastors and teachers derived benefit from this system. And it is a result in which the Committee take great satisfaction; assured that the influence of the enterprises committed to their oversight, and all other evangelical instrumentalities, are chiefly dependent, under God, on an intelligent, pious, practical ministry for their wise direction and successful action.

The *incidental benefits* of this system will impress the student of its history. Aiming at the spiritual good of the masses, and having well-defined duties and relations, its ramifications extend to multiplied important interests. Thus the *Temperance cause* has received no small impulse from the 130,000 copies of the "Temperance Manual," and the millions of temperance tracts distributed, to say nothing of the personal exhortations and public advocacy of the Society's colporteurs. The *Sabbath cause* has had no inconsiderable aid from the diffusion of more than 700,000 copies of Edwards' "Sabbath Manual." The *Sunday-school* interest has derived some benefit by the organization or aid of many hundreds of these nurseries of piety, (320 in a single state,) and the supply of thousands of schools with healthful and saving literature, in libraries or separate volumes. The cause of *popular education* owes more than it

acknowledges to the wide dispersion of good books among the ignorant, and the thirst for knowledge thus awakened, for the multiplication of its friends and subjects. *The general cause of benevolence*, and especially the missionary cause, may attribute something of its prosperity to the wide diffusion of missionary memoirs, and such works as "Thoughts on Missions," and the premium essays on "Systematic Beneficence." Indeed, were the indirect blessings in such relations as the above *alone* considered, it is believed that colportage might substantiate its claims to a place among the important charities of the age. It is, however, as a direct, indispensable, and heaven-blessed agency for imparting oral and printed gospel instruction to the destitute, that the system claims regard in a review of its career. If it has not published a pure, Christ-exalting, soul-saving gospel in forms suited to awaken the careless, guide the inquiring, and edify the believing, among millions of the people who were previously unblest with such heavenly teachings, then has every plan and purpose of the Committee been thwarted.

The future of colportage is known to God alone. We would not draw aside the veil; but believing the promises, trusting in the providences, and inspired by the prophecies of the Almighty, would press onward in the discharge of present duty. Whatever may be the developments of Providence respecting the application of this system to Central and South America, to the continent of Europe, or in connection with missions in Pagan lands, it is clear, from the experience of the past ten years, that colportage is demanded in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, on a vastly increased scale. It has required ten years to reach one-half our population, with the colporteur force hitherto employed; whereas every consideration of humanity and religion prompts to the speediest arrangements for the annual visitation, at least, of every destitute household.

In order to such an extension of the system as the country now demands, without reference to its prospective growth, the number of colporteurs now in the field should be increased to one thousand. And even then, if we include Canada and Mexico already partly traversed, the average field of each colporteur will nearly equal the state of Connecticut in extent, and will have a population of more than 30,000. Fully one half of this 30,000, on a general average, will be found un-reached directly by other evangelical agencies. And is it too much to ask, that one man shall be employed for each 15,000 of the unevangelized accessible by our influence? Perhaps the total annual cost of colportage, on such a scale, would be \$300,000. Were 1,000 individuals, associations, or churches to contribute \$150 each, provision would be made for the salaries at the usual rate; and it is believed the friends

of the Society of every denomination would supply the balance in smaller contributions.

The Committee indulge the belief that the number of colporteurs might be increased to 1,000, were adequate means provided for their support. The ratio of advance from eleven men in 1841 to 569 in 1851, would speedily realize this number. There are thousands of pious men in our churches of requisite talents and discretion, who, if it were announced that they could be sustained in devoting all their time and strength to the good of souls, would gladly enter on evangelical labors. And can any one question the ability of Christians in this country to support all the men needed to reach the existing generation of the unevangelized with the gospel?

The action of the convention at Cleveland, cited above, and a memorial from the Maryland branch—one of the most efficient of the Society's auxiliaries—with other indications of Providence, taken in connection with the cheering results of the past ten years' labors, seem to make the course of duty plain, to proceed without delay to multiply colporteurs until every portion of the land shall be traversed at least annually, with these messengers of light. None can appreciate the responsibilities of such a movement more fully than the Committee. Angels might shrink from them. But they are not to be compared with the responsibility of leaving millions of our countrymen to live and die without the gospel; and suffering another generation of the unevangelized to pass from the stage unwarned and unblest. The mute appeal of the swarms of superstitious foreigners in the midst of us; the famine of the word on every hill-side and in every valley of our broad land; the claims of the papal millions on our northern and southern borders; anxieties for our imperilled civil and social institutions; compassion for the ignorant and the erring, and, above all, grateful love for the ever-blessed Redeemer, impel the Committee to the speedy extension of this system of evangelization, until at least ONE THOUSAND COLPORTEURS are in the field. In this campaign, they throw the banner of the cross to the breeze, inscribed, "*Hitherto hath the Lord helped us*"—" *The Lord will provide.*"

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