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The Bible at Work.

BY THE REV. W. FISHER, M.A.

AS illustrating the activity of the Book and the variety of its dispersion, the following list of places to which consignments of Scriptures have been sent within recent months from the Bible House is as suggestive as it is geographical: Hong-Kong, Colombo, Upsala, Quebec, Philadelphia, Allahabad, Nevis, Baghdad, Montego Bay, Trinidad, Wanganui, Matadi, Buenos Ayres, Saskatchewan, Ekwendeni, Toronto, Dunedin, Johannesburg, Bangalore, Sierra Leone, Durban, Accra, Jacmel, Sydney, Barbados, Calcutta, Belize, Brisbane, Linstead.



A new version is to many an interesting item, rather, perhaps, to most a curiosity, and especially in the name that it is apt to bear. A revision does not touch the fancy even to this extent. But revisions as well as original productions are very serious items to the Society concerned. To print and bind the first edition of 1,000 copies of the Cree Bible, lately revised and practically retranslated by Archdeacon Mackay, has involved an outlay of £1,350. To this has to be added the expense of revision, extended over a period of three or four years, whereby the cost to the Society is increased to £1,800, meaning an average of £1 16s. per copy. Yet the books will be sold to the Cree Indians at what is practically a nominal cost.



The events of the day, whether in the form of political turmoils or physical convulsions, have an almost invariable habit of showing incidentally how very widely the Scriptures are being distributed. It was notably so with the Balkans; it is so with India. Now, as from the ruins of Messina, comes a pathetic letter from Giuseppe Greco, one of the three Bible Society colporteurs stationed in Sicily. He writes to the Society's agent at Rome: "Surely I must call myself fortunate in having escaped with my life, and my family also, from the catastrophe which took place at Messina on the night of December 28. I should like to describe to you the complete destruction of Messina, but that is impossible. I am greatly distressed, and scarcely in my proper senses yet. After two days and two nights of untold sufferings, including hunger and rain, I succeeded, together with my wife and two children, in getting here and in finding shelter under my aged father's humble roof. It is needless to say that we are bruised and wounded. My left knee, especially, has an ugly wound; we are almost naked, and without a penny. All my belongings are gone. I am bereft of boots, also, and knapsack. I wait anxiously news from you. Messina no longer exists." It is interesting to know that last year more than 10,000 copies of the Scriptures were sold in Sicily.



Canada contains one-third of the area of the British Empire, and has nearly 1,000,000 square miles of practically unexplored area. Into this territory there is pouring a steady stream of 250,000 emigrants yearly. Within eighteen months 300 new townships sprang up between Winnipeg and Edmonton, a distance of 800 miles. These emigrants are of varying

nationalities. In 1905 the agents of the Bible Society were asked for the Scriptures in forty-five tongues; in 1906 in sixty; in 1907 in seventy tongues. Hence a very pressing problem for the statesmen of the Dominion is how to Canadianize these polyglot colonists. A contribution in that direction, and at present the chief, if not the only one, is provided by the Scriptures, which are being circulated largely in diglot versions, having English on one side and the tongue of the colonist on the other. What this means may be gathered from the following incident: A Russian and a Ruthenian called at the Bible House at Winnipeg. Being shown diglot versions they literally jumped for joy. They danced and shouted, saying, in their broken English, "Just what we want! Just what we want!"



Whatever office of conversion belongs to the Bible in the ministerial mind at home, most missionaries have peculiar faith in it. The Paris Evangelical Mission in Basutoland celebrated last October their seventy-fifth anniversary at Morija. In a striking address in Suto the Rev. F. Cristeller, who has just re-edited the Suto Old Testament, said: "There was no work done by the first missionaries in Basutoland for which we are more grateful than that of translating God's Book into the Suto language. The fruits we have reaped have been brought forth by the Book. If you travel through the whole country, whether along its plains or among its mountains, you will find in every path that the people have the Bible in their houses, and that they hold it as a treasure." In this version, translated by French missionaries, more than 36,000 Bibles and 125,000 New Testaments have been issued. The expenses of publication were borne by the Bible Society.



Pilkington, of Uganda, like Mackay, had a strong faith in the mission of the printed page. "What we want," he once wrote, "are books, not thousands, but millions. I should like to see £5,000 spent at once on the printing and sending up of books; this would be a glorious way of advancing God's kingdom." Again: "Many more loads of books are coming up . . . and I trust, by our friends at home keeping up the supply, to pour a constant stream of God's truth upon the land." His faith was justified and remarkably confirmed. On one occasion when special services were being held, he asked people to stand up and explain how they came to know the Lord. One after another got up and told how it came about. All said that it was reading the Word of God that enlightened them to see the way of salvation, and each of them gave the passages (mentioning the chapter and verse) that had appealed to them.



In few places has the Bible worked greater wonders than in the South Seas. The Rev. Dr. Brown, of the Australian Wesleyan Mission, says that the natives of New Britain were among the meanest men on earth; yet these people sent £110 in payment for Scriptures. This is characteristic of the South Seas—they pay a good price and the full price. The first Samoan Bible went in a consignment of 5,000 copies—7s. copies and 9s. The cost to the Bible Society in printing, binding, and carriage was £3,000. They were not sold at once, but eventually £3,000 were remitted to the Society as the result of sales, with a donation of £200.