

Twenty-Five Years in the Levant.

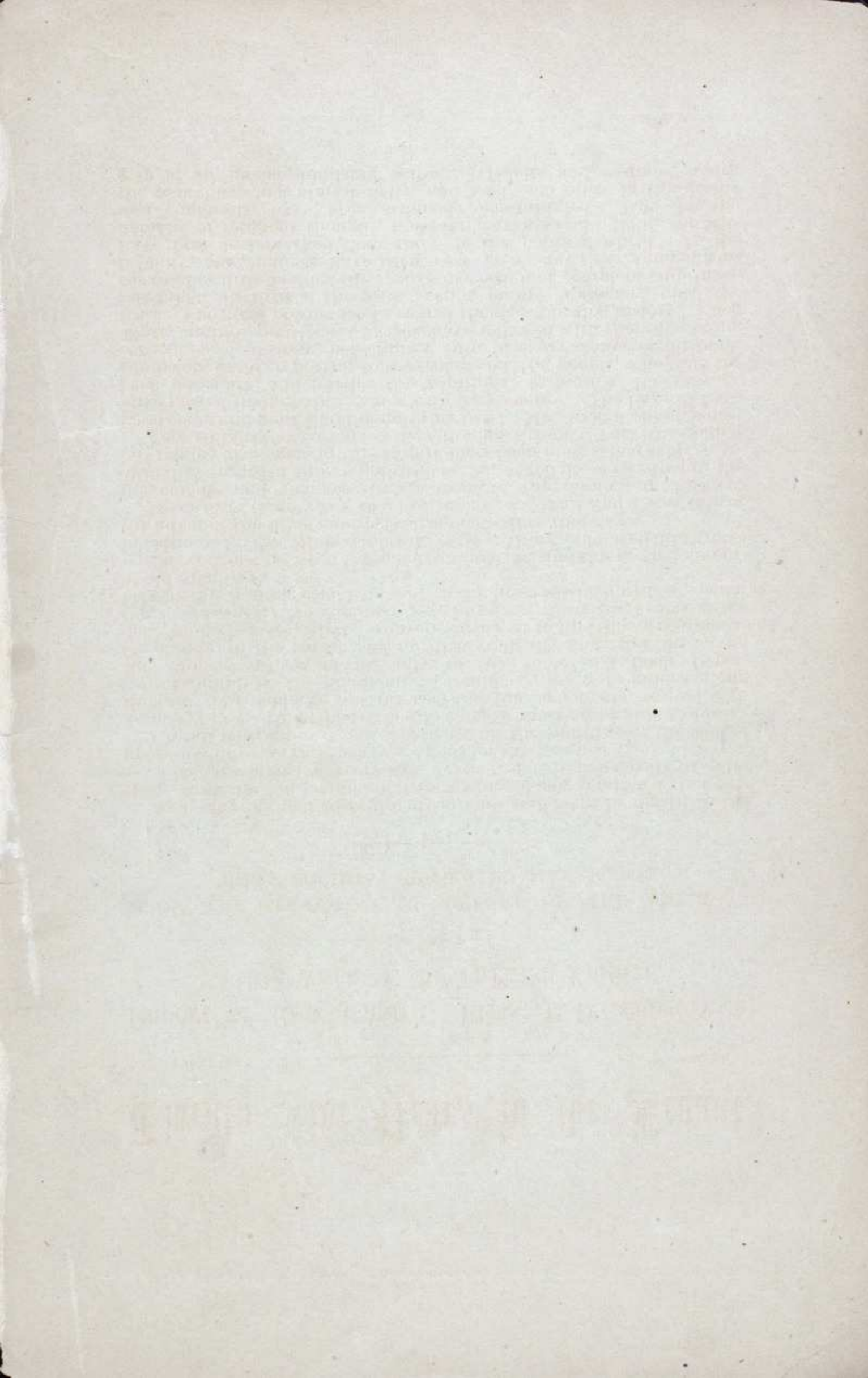
BY

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American Bible Society.

1883.



Twenty-Five Years in the Levant.

Report of Rev. Isaac G. Bliss, D. D., concerning
Bible Work in the Turkish Empire.

FROM THE SIXTY-SEVENTH REPORT OF THE AMERICAN
BIBLE SOCIETY, PRESENTED MAY 10, 1883.

As I take my pen to begin my annual statement in regard to the Bible work in the bounds of this agency, I am reminded that this very day, twenty-five years ago, I reached this metropolis to enter upon my duties as the Society's Agent for the Levant.

I recall with interest our experience on the morning of the 26th of January, 1858. Snow had fallen to a depth most unusual in Constantinople. The cold also was intense, and the pavements covered with ice. Landing at the Stamboul customhouse, we were guided along the slippery streets of the city to the Bible and Book Depot. On account of the ice we had no little difficulty in getting up to the door, and when we entered we were surprised to find the accommodations so scanty. No common joy, however, filled our hearts as we beheld this humble establishment in the heart of the business portion of old Stamboul.

The contrast between those narrow quarters and the present accommodations in the Bible House is very striking, and well illustrates the advance the Bible enterprise has made since that day.

If we take these years in brief review, we shall find them full of movements and changes strange even to the student of history. Whether regarded from a political, social, or religious standpoint, the last twenty-five years in this empire have been most remarkable.

Four sultans have occupied the Ottoman throne. Turkish cabinets have come and gone like the morning dew. Men in and out of power have played their chance games with fiery energy. The hazards have been desperate, and terrible the winnings; to most of the players, confusion, exile, or death; to the lookers on, the people, who bear the consequences, dismay, bankruptcy, ruin in every section of the land. Wars, famines, pestilences, locusts, have followed with their desolating trail. The great powers too have had their part in this history. Each has taken his turn at the great suction pump, diplomacy, until the ear catches little besides the hoarse dry cough of complete emptiness. Socially, the changes have been very great, but their antagonisms have been less marked than those in the political world. In the domain of religious thought, however, darkness and light, conflicts and conquests, have been strangely commingled. The old and the new have met almost daily, and held each other in the deadly grip of an uncompromising warfare. Habits and customs, which

the centuries have nourished, have thrown giant force into their resistance to the demands of unprejudiced investigation and untrammelled consciences. A mere glance down the vista which these years open reveals most vivid pictures of the hand-to-hand struggle which the divine word has had with the powers of darkness; sunny scenes also all the more smiling because of the clouds above and storms so near. These preliminary statements prepare us to appreciate more fully the plain but encouraging facts which a review of the Bible work may bring before us.

Previous to 1858, the American Bible Society had employed two Agents in the Levant, whose successive labours resulted in the dissemination of nearly 100,000 copies of the Scriptures in seventeen different languages. The operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the same general field were much larger, and the blessing that attended their labours was rich with the insignia of the divine guidance and approval. The circulation of our English coadjutors in Turkey and Greece previous to 1858, was probably not much less than 700,000. The translations then in use were far from perfect, and small and few were the editions of the entire Bible in Arabic, Armenian, Bulgarian, Greek, and Turkish. Yet who can measure the forces which these imperfect translations originated, and which have projected themselves into all the service which has followed? If we combine all our statistics *from the beginning to the end of 1882*, leaving out of each society's circulation the books sold at cost to the other society (since otherwise they would appear twice in the account), we have an aggregate distribution of 1,883,157 copies of the Bible and integral parts thereof, in some thirty languages, within the bounds of the Levant agencies of the two great Bible Societies of England and America.

We leave out of this calculation an edition of the Judæo-Spanish Old Testament by other parties; also an edition of the Bulgarian Gospels, printed by Bulgarians, and the Armenian and Armeno-Turkish Scriptures published in Austria and Russia, confining it solely to the issues of the two Bible Societies. Tabulated, these figures stand:

	COPIES.
For Greeks in Asia Minor and Greece	726,000
“ Armenians	407,676
“ Arabic-speaking populations	283,000
“ Bulgarians	163,368
“ Turks	155,246
“ Jews, Koords, foreign residents, etc.	147,867
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Giving the total as above	1,883,157

We by no means aver that these statistics are absolutely correct, but they must be very near the actual fact.

If the aggregate of distribution stated above be not erroneous, it will be seen that the work done in this empire and in Greece by the Bible Societies is more than one-hundredth part of the circulation effected in all the countries of the earth.

Turning now to the service accomplished by the same agencies in the same field *since January 1st, 1858*, we find that out of the 122,066 copies of the Scriptures published in the Osmanlee-Turkish (mainly New Testaments, and portions of the Old and New Testament), four-fifths, or about 100,000 copies, have been put into circulation, and mainly by sale. Since 1866, the average yearly circulation of Turkish Scriptures has been about 5,000; making nearly 85,000 copies as the total for the past seventeen years.

The distribution of the same divine word among the Greeks of Turkey and Greece has reached an average of 17,000 copies a year for the last twenty-five years; bringing the aggregate up to more than 400,000.

The sixteen years last past have been witness to most earnest and abounding efforts to supply the word of life to those who use the Arabic. Of the 180,000 copies published since 1858, 40,000 have been the entire Bible, and very few of this large number remain upon the shelves in our depositories.

The average yearly supply to the Armenians for the twenty-five years under review has been 13,287, of which one-fifth have been Bibles. To no other nationality in the Levant have so many entire Bibles been sold, the whole number rising to 66,746 copies.

The Bulgarians likewise, during this period, have called for and received 135,548 copies of Bulgarian and Slavic Scriptures. We are well assured that these sacred volumes have been not rocks of offense nor stones of stumbling, but precious corner stones, well adapted to foundation work in the building of individual and national character, to which the thoughts of so many in that nation in these passing years are turned.

Nor have the children of Abraham been forgotten or neglected, but every effort possible has been made to inspire in that suffering people courage to recognize, receive, and adopt the words of our Lord as the Messiah that has come to be to them and to all, a Prince and a Saviour.

During the period under review, the efforts of the two societies engaged in this work have culminated in the glorious fact that as the combined result of their labours, 1,128,870 copies of the divine word in thirty languages have been furnished to the inhabitants of this empire and Greece.

In the providence of God almost the same number has fallen to each society, or a little more than a half a million to each. We have not complete statistics as to how many have been given in gratuity. In the early years of the period we are reviewing, the grants were many more than during the latter part. We shall not, however, be very wide of the truth if we put down the round number, 60,000, as grants, leaving the number of sales 1,068,870.

The patrons of this enterprise will rejoice to know that from the sale of these books there have been returned to the treasuries of the two societies the aggregate sum of \$261,745 17, or an average of a little less than twenty-five cents a copy. Of the fruitage of all these efforts we shall speak in another part of the report. Suffice it now to say, that the fragrance is as that of a field which the Lord hath blessed.

We turn now to the operations of our own Society in this Levant agency during the period under review. We call attention first to the general stock account, condensed from the twenty-five years into the following items, making our book department:

DR.		
To books on hand, Jan., 1858	.	3,500
" " printed at Constantinople, Beirut, & Athens.	.	429,908
" " received from New York.	.	124,068
" " bought of B. & F. B. Society at cost	.	200,365
" " bought of others	.	8,303
" " printed in Persia	.	20,400
Total	.	<u>786,544</u>

CR.

By stock in hand in depots, Dec. 31st, 1882	111,971
" " transferred to the Persian Agency	29,097
" " transferred to New York	268
" " sold at cost to B. & F. B. Society	33,549
" " lost by fire at Tarsus, Erzroom, etc.	7,513
" sales and grants reported in account	592,346
" Balance fairly accounted for by distribution unreported from Persia, Mesopotamia, and Syria, in early years of the agency	11,800
Total	786,544

This general account involves a large amount of details, the tabulation of which, under different heads, will give a clearer insight into what has been accomplished. Our purpose in this tabulation will be best secured if we first contrast the work of the first year with that of the last, and then divide the twenty-five years into periods of five years each. The contrast stands thus between 1858 and 1882:

	1858.	1882.
Additions to stock	4,995	70,835
Books purchased . . . . .	.....	23,168
Circulation	2,500	56,628
Colporteurs	4	120
Cash from sales of Scriptures	\$540 00	\$14,589 21

Tabulating the operations of the agency under periods of five years each, we find the figures arranging themselves as follows:

	1858-1862.	63-67.	68-72.	73-77.	78-82.
Printing	36,000	45,000	51,826	81,889	215,193
Books bought	2,420	15,378	25,157	54,821	102,589
Circulation	52,716	84,120	100,285	154,125	204,900
Colporteurs	47	127	186	316	526
Cash from sales	\$9,905 77	\$19,752 17	\$27,445 24	\$35,860 55	\$59,576 61

If we take now the *average per year*, we find the result:

	1st five years.	2d.	3d.	4th.	5th.
Printing	7,200	9,000	10,365	16,374	43,038
Books bought	584	3,075	5,031	10,962	20,517
Circulation	10,543	16,824	21,857	30,825	40,980
Colporteurs	9	25	37	63	105
Cash from sales	\$1,981	\$3,938	\$5,489	\$7,171	\$11,915

The printing for the twenty-five years falls naturally into tables, in the following order:

	Bibles.	Testaments.	Parts.	Total.
In Beirut.				
In Arabic	36,162	56,689	72,366	165,217
In Constantinople.				
In Armenian	28,946	32,500	34,745	177,19
In Armeno-Turkish	22,000	39,000	20,000	
In Arabo-Turkish	1,500	11,500	32,000	45,000
In Judæo-Spanish	7,000	Old Tests.	4,500	11,500
In Hebrew	2,000	.....	5,000	7,000
In Bulgarian . . . . .	.....	5,000	.....	5,000
In Koordish . . . . .	.....	2,000	.....	2,000
Athens.				
In Greek . . . . .	.....	.....	11,000	11,000
London.				
In Persian . . . . .	.....	.....	6,000	6,000
Total	97,608	146,689	185,611	429,908

In Persia.	Bibles.	Testaments.	Parts.	Total.
In Syriac	3,500	8,500	2,000	14,000
In Elkoosh dialect . . . . .	.....	.....	2,500	2,500
In Azerbijan-Turkish . . . . .	.....	.....	3,900	3,900
Total	3,500	8,500	8,400	20,000

The largest number of volumes printed in any one year was in 1881, and amounted to 57,890 copies. The largest purchases were made the same year, amounting to 25,637 volumes.

The number of books printed during the twenty-five years gives an annual average of 17,196 copies; average cost per copy being forty-four cents. The books bought give an annual average of 8,346 copies, with an average cost per copy of thirty-nine cents.

The annual average circulation for the same period was 24,165. The average number of men employed as colporteurs was forty-eight, and the average yearly receipts from the sale of books was \$6,101 61. For printing at the various centres of production, we have expended in all \$200,220 66, or an average per year of \$8,008 82.

For books purchased we have paid \$83,055 74, giving to each year an average of \$3,332 25. The expenditures for distribution purposes, including the cost of bookstores, colportage, commission on sales, and the like, amounted on an average to \$5,214 82 a year, making the total for twenty-five years \$130,370 51.

For translations and editorial service we have expended \$64,955 71, being a yearly average of \$2,598 25.

The entire expenditures in the agency for the twenty-five years amounted to \$674,176 86, making the average cost per year to the Society of \$26,966 87.

At Constantinople and Beirut we have in use twenty-one sets of electrotype and stereotype plates. In the Arabic there are five sets of Bible plates, three sets of New Testament plates, one of the Gospels and Acts, and two of the Psalms.

In Armenian there are three sets of Bible plates, three sets of New Testament plates, and three sets of Psalms plates.

In Hebrew there is one set of stereotype plates of the Old Testament.

The entire expenditure in the electrotype departments at Beirut and Constantinople came up to \$24,581 12.

From these general statistics we turn to the operations of the year just passed. The printing was somewhat less than in 1881, but amounted in all to 46,635 books. The presses in Beirut furnished in Arabic 5,400 Bibles and 6,600 Portions, in all 12,000 volumes. The presses at Constantinople furnished us 16,000 Bibles, 4,560 Testaments, 14,075 Parts, a total of 34,635, in the Armenian and Armeno-Turkish, making the aggregate given above, 46,635 copies.

The books purchased were, from the

	Bibles.	Testaments.	Parts.	Total Copies.
British & For. B. S.	2,213	9,132	7,820	19,165
Other sources	3	2,000	2,000	4,003
Total	2,216	11,132	9,820	23,168

We have also received, from

New York	854	4,618	300	5,772
Recovered	58	7	14	59
Binderies	5,394	15,013	21,409	41,816
Total	8,522	30,770	31,543	70,835

This aggregate is 10,099 volumes more than we reported in 1881.

The year just passed has been remarkable for the large distribution which has been made, and the large returns from books sold.

This circulation was made up of:

	Total Copies.
7,981 Bibles, 24,350 Testaments, 24,227 Parts	56,628
We have also sold at cost to British & Foreign B. S.	6,792
Transferred to the Persian Agency	2,977
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Making in all that have gone out of our stock	66,397

The actual circulation of the year, amounting as above to 56,628 copies, is an increase over the numbers given in 1881 of 13,482 copies, and is the largest number reported in any one year during my connection with this agency. The receipts from sales are \$1,481 25 more than those of any previous year, and amount to \$14,589 21. Placing the statistics of the distribution of the two years side by side, classified according to nationality, we have the result as follows:

	For 1881.	For 1882.
To the Armenians	6,712	17,232
“ Turks	1,959	4,383
“ Greeks	10,429	10,395
“ Bulgarians	9,789	9,586
“ Jews	1,073	1,415
“ Arabic-speaking peoples	12,126	11,645
“ Persians	31	60
“ Nestorians	17	30
“ English, French, etc.	1,010	1,882
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Total	43,146	56,628

These tables show that the increase was mainly in the sales to Armenians, Turks, Jews, and foreign residents. If we add the sales of our British co-labourers in the same general field, the whole circulation for the year amounts to 102,931 copies, or 11,135 more than we reported for the two Societies in 1881. In the Cesarea district alone nearly 5,000 copies were sold, the result of earnest persistent colportage. In all parts of Eastern Turkey also there has been advance, proving that as the number of readers increases, the cull for the divine word will also increase. The colporteurs in Cilicia did well, and the fruitage of their work is now revealing itself in connection with the great revival with which the City of Adana and other places in that vicinity are blessed. In Eastern Roumelia and certain sections of Bulgaria there has been advance, while in other sections there has been a great falling off in sales. The same is true of Thrace and Southern Macedonia. In Greece the circulation was larger than in any year since the agency was opened. The diminution of sales in the Arabic will be understood, when the sad disturbances in Egypt are called to mind. We marvel that the desolations of war interrupted the progress of the word so little, and that so large a number as 6,784 copies can be reported as sold in behalf of our Society. The work of the colporteurs in the Delta was entirely stopped for five months. Indeed, the work of distribution was greatly hindered in every section of the field, and plans for enlargement which had been well matured, and were about to be put into execution, had to be given up. The colporteur who was sent to Khartoum, did excellent service, but was unable to remain as long as we had hoped. The present state of the Soudan is very unsatisfactory, and forbids any immediate venture in that direction. It is the hope of all, that the uncertainties that still hang about the future of that interesting country will pass away, and

the present "fair demand for the Scriptures" be changed into a loud call from every part of that field.

The statistics of the year past will indicate to the Society and its patrons the growth of the work in this agency, and will no doubt stimulate to still larger efforts for the future.

But these figures, forceful as they are, reveal but one aspect of the enterprise in which the Society is engaged in this land. Our review must also include statements in regard to the translations which have been the basis of these large distribution operations, and the historical outcome of the whole service.

As already intimated, most of the versions of the Bible in use in this empire before 1858 were far from perfect, and the call for new translations was, from every quarter and very imperative. To this call the Spirit and providence of God gave answer, designating the men and introducing them to the service. During the period to which we confine our statements, translations and revisions were accomplished in the following eight languages: Arabic, Armenian, Armeno-Turkish, Arabo-Turkish, Azerbaijan-Turkish, Bulgarian, Judæo-Spanish, and Syriac. Five of these translations had their centre of inspiration and toil in this metropolis, one in Beirut, and two in Persia. In Constantinople eight missionaries of distinguished scholarship and piety had direct, definite, and personal responsibility in Bible translation service. Dr. Goodell gave himself, with all the enthusiasm and perennial devotion of the man, to his translation of the Armeno-Turkish Scriptures, and this his great life-work culminated with his last revision completed in 1863. After his death Dr. Pratt took up the translation with a dignity, strength, and success which showed how complete was the preparation the Master had given him. Five years only did he tarry with us. He was called on Dec. 5th, 1872, to a higher service. Seven swift laborious years were given by Dr. Riggs to the translation of the Bible into the Armenian, and eleven into the Bulgarian. *Success* is the simple beautiful crown which his faithful work wears. Dr. Long, of Robert College, likewise was for a season a partner in the work as now in the joy which the Bulgarian translation gives. Portions of several years were also given by Dr. Riggs to another most important service, viz., the harmonizing of all the Scripture versions so that the same thought should be expressed in all. It fell to Dr. Schauffler to devote much time and labour to the editing of the Hebrew and Judæo-Spanish Old Testament, published in several editions at Vienna and Smyrna. But the force and glow of Dr. Schauffler's learning were not given so much to this work as to his translation of the Bible into the Osmanlee-Turkish, which occupied so many long years. The work he undertook was very great. Indeed so great was it, so important, involving such weighty responsibilities, beset with such difficulties, and demanding such thoroughness and care, that the two Bible societies who had united in the support of Dr. Schauffler, after much deliberation, decided to appoint a committee to take it in hand. This committee was constituted in June, 1873, and was composed of Rev. Dr. Schauffler as the chairman, Dr. Riggs, Rev. Mr. Weakley, and Rev. Mr. Herrick, aided by two accomplished Moslem scholars and an Armenian pastor of excellent linguistic attainments, whose vernacular was Turkish. So poor was the health of Dr. Schauffler at this time that he was often unable to join the others in their daily labours, and after a time he resigned his place upon the committee, which continued its arduous labours for nearly five years, and completed its work May 25th, 1878. In 1867, Rev. Mr. Christie, of the Hasskeuy Mission (to the Jews) of the State Church of Scotland, was called to a careful revision of the Judæo-Spanish Old Testament. This work he completed with great satisfaction to all interested, in 1873. Besides

these eminent men spoken of above in connection with these five translations, fourteen native scholars of high repute were employed. Of these, three were Bulgarians, four were Armenians, one was a Greek, two were Jews, and four were Turks.

In Persia, Rev. Dr. Perkins having reduced the Modern Syriac to a written form, accomplished the work of translating the entire Bible into it, completing the large reference Bible in 1869.

Between the years 1861 and 1864 several attempts were made to begin and carry forward the translation of the New Testament into the Azerbaijan-Turkish. Dr. Young, Dr. Wright, and Rev. Mr. Rhea each gave several months to this work, but sickness and death interrupted their labours. Subsequently it fell to Rev. Mr. Labaree to take up the work, and he is carrying it forward as rapidly as his numerous other literary engagements allow. Several other scholars connected with the Persian Mission have from time to time contributed their quota of criticism and aid to this difficult enterprise.

The great undertaking of rendering with accuracy and idiomatic nicety the word of God into the Arabic was completed after immense toil in 1864. The heavy foundation work was accorded by the Master to Dr. Eli Smith, but ere the heavy blocks on which he spent ten years of hard service reached their proper place he was called above, leaving the relaying of these heavy stones and all the magnificent superstructure, from the corner block even to the top stone, to Dr. Van Dyck, whose privilege in this service will be his song of praise to God through all eternity. That the character of these workers had to do with the excellence of their achievements there can be no doubt. They loved the book and its Divine Author, and could do no otherwise than devote every acquisition to the service to which they were called as translators of the word. That the Lord has owned their work is abundantly proved by the statistics of distribution already given.

We are now prepared to advance another step in our review, and consider some of the facts which the history of the Book in this land holds in its grasp. We know no better way to secure the end we seek than by following the sacred volume in its entrance among the different populations of the empire.

Take the Turks, the dominant race, what of the Bible work among them? The records indicate that very few copies of the Bible were called for by Moslems from 1822 to 1852. The average number, if I mistake not, does not rise above one Bible a year for that period. Very soon after the Crimean war, however, and following sharply upon the issue of the famous Hatti Humaion, there was an unusual call for Turkish Scriptures in the so-called sacred or Arabic character. The wave of interest rose quite high. For several years the sales of Turkish Scriptures in the capital and provinces adjacent averaged more than 100 copies a month. Bibles were publicly offered to Moslems, and that without rebuke from any quarter. Imaums, softas, and men of position sought them openly without fear and with apparent interest. Turkish women even, of no mean social position, were not ashamed to be seen stopping the booksellers in the streets to purchase of them these sacred books. Men of all classes, including officials of high standing, not only bought but read the divine word and avowed their conviction that it was true and from God. It is matter of record that on one occasion one of the secretaries of the Sultan felt called upon to defend the gospel from the slurs and attacks of the advocates of Islamism. When one young Turk was reproved by his friends for reading the New Testament, his reply was, "It is the best, the holiest book I have ever read. It cannot do me harm." The interest spread into the more distant provinces, and the call for the Bible in Turkish from towns in the interior was quite loud.

It is believed that at that time orders were issued to provincial governors to allow no persecution even of Moslems who might be favourable to Christianity. However that may be, there was no little interest among all classes in examining the gospel.

In 1859 or 1860 a New Testament fell into the hands of a Turk in a large town in the interior. It was read through many times by himself alone and then communicated to his wife, who with her husband received the book as from God. Not finding sympathy with their new views from their kinsmen and acquaintance, they removed to Constantinople, and one pleasant evening in April of 1861 parents and children were all consecrated to the Lord in baptism in the house of one of their new-found friends. After varied experiences for a series of years, the father of the family recently went to his reward and was doubtless in waiting with his glad welcome when not long after, the venerable man who baptized him came near to enter the same glorious home, leaning on the arm of the Beloved. The wife and mother still lives, an earnest Christian and a successful worker in the Lord's vineyard.

This spirit of inquiry among Moslems culminated in the demand for a better translation of the Scriptures into Turkish, (the work of Rev. Dr. Schauffler), and in the issue of a revised edition of the New Testament in 1861 with the full approval of the Turkish government. With this act the wave crested and began to recede. The Ulema became not a little aroused, and there was in all parts of the country a manifest fear among the Turks to be known as readers of the gospel. Between 1863 and 1868, efforts were made in every part of the land to limit the sales of Turkish Scriptures. This state of things was no doubt the result, in part at least, of the frequent references in those days, in the journals of Europe, to the breaking up of Mohammedanism. The "wane of the Crescent" was the fruitful theme of many an orator, and the assurance was almost universal that the latent forces of decay in the very foundations of Islamism would speedily reach their culminating point, and the fatal tumble come with annihilation in the fall. The followers of Mohammed were not ready for such a catastrophe, and the result was a revival of intolerance and bigotry. About this time our Bible and book establishment was closed by the police, on the charge that in it were published libellous pamphlets and books containing attacks on Islamism. An investigation of the whole matter, accompanied by an official examination of the establishment and the books in it, compelled the government to retract its charges and give to the world the statement, over the signature of the highest officer of the Turkish Cabinet, the Grand Vizier, that their suspicions had been proved incorrect and that our enterprise was legitimate and honourable. The result was that the work even among Moslems received a new impulse. Again, "Mussulmans are ready to receive the word" came from many parts of the land. About this time we became acquainted with some most interesting cases among Turks of earnest religious inquiry as to where the true remedy for soul trouble could be found. An old man, with the weight of long years of sin upon his heart, could find no peace until he had cast his burden on the Lord, concerning whose might to save he had learned by a prayerful study of the Turkish New Testament. Moslem women found their sorrows eased in listening to Christ's words read to them by Protestant Armenian sisters in their weekly meetings for prayer, which these same Moslem women had begged to be allowed to attend.

The sales of Turkish Scriptures made all hearts glad for several years, until again in 1874, the police, under the instigation of parties in high official position, sought to prevent the sale of these books at book-stores and in the market places of the city. They even entered our

Bible House and made foolish threats in regard to closing the establishment, and confiscating all books in the Turkish language. The attention of the Sultan's government was called to this trespass upon our rights. After a full investigation and an effort to discover the instigators of the movement, they expressed great regret at the occurrence, and the work of Bible distribution was soon in its normal condition. From that time to the present the interest of the Turks has risen and receded with ever varying waves. As our tables of statistics show, the call for these Scriptures has refused to abate, the number of sales during the year just past having exceeded the average for the last seventeen years. We may hope that the present hostility to the printing and circulation of the Bible in Turkish may likewise pass, leaving the Moslem conscience more untrammelled than ever before.

Previous to 1858 more than 75,000 copies of the Scriptures had been put into circulation among the Armenians of this empire. So vigorous had been the efforts of missionaries and others in this respect, that more than fifty centres of distribution had been established in the different parts of the country, and the demand for the Bible was greatly on the increase. The leaven had begun its work in many new places, and nothing could stay its diffusive power. In certain districts where the Turkish instead of the Armenian had become the vernacular of the inhabitants, there was a loud call for the entire Bible in the Turkish, in the Armenian character, and the people refused to be content with the New Testament alone. So great was the desire to know the teachings of the word God had given to men, that all classes, learned as well as ignorant, refused to listen to the reading of the Scriptures in the services of the church in the ancient language, and demanded that the reading be in the Turkish. "What," said many, "is the value of a divine revelation, and why should it be read to the people in their Sabbath gatherings, if it be in a language which neither we nor the priests can understand?" This request of the people was honoured by some of the Armenian ecclesiastics, who allowed the Bible to be read in their churches in the Turkish instead of the Ancient Armenian. The increased interest of the people in the Bible as a book necessary to themselves and their families, may in some measure be traced to this concession in certain districts, and in others to the refusal to make it. During the first five years of the period under review very large and urgent were the orders for books which came to us in the Constantinople depot from most of the "centres" referred to. We have a vivid remembrance of the rapid movements laid upon us in 1859 by an order from one city in Mesopotamia, where the year before only seventy-four copies of the sacred volume were disposed of, to send on by "forced marches" 800 Scriptures, sixty of which were the Royal Octavo Reference Bible, and all in Armenian. The sales in 1860 were four times those of the previous year, making in the five years 3,889 copies in that one centre of distribution. In that same field from 1859 to 1872 inclusive, there were sold 3,638 Bibles and 19,749 Portions of the Bible, a total of 23,387 copies. From 1872 to 1882 the sales were somewhat less, amounting to 17,281. Adding the seventy-four sold in 1858 and we have an average for these twenty-five years of 1,630 copies, and that in a section of the empire where in 1858 there were very few readers and very few schools. This rapid dissemination of the word in Harpoot and vicinity was due in a great measure to the efforts of Rev. Mr. Wheeler, now president of Armenia College. Under his inspiring enthusiasm many were persuaded to buy the book, not for themselves alone but to sell again to kinsfolk and acquaintances, in towns and villages far and near. The whole number of Scriptures sold in that field during the twenty-five years amounted to 40,742 copies. The success of the work in Harpoot stimulated others in distant places

to do like things, and interest all who had received the Bible to join in direct personal labours to put the Scriptures into the hands of their fellows. To this end, Bible associations were formed in several districts, whose members were each expected to sell three Bibles during the year. The project inspired not a little enthusiasm; developed faith, prayer, and work for others; carried the light to the hiding places of the wicked, to dens of robbers and habitations darkened by crime; all which labours reacted most beneficially upon their own piety. It was like the mantle of Elijah, giving a new calling to every one upon whom it was cast. It was like sweet perfume, which refuses to be confined to the grasp of the hand that holds it, but distributes its sweetness all abroad. So did these Bible labours disseminate their fragrance far and near.

Twenty years ago efforts were made to open an effective work in the most eastern districts of Turkey and the adjacent provinces of Persia. The outcome of one effort was the sale of 200 copies of the New Testament and parts thereof. A little later a colporteur was sent into the regions of Ararat; but such was the ignorance, poverty, and superstition dominating that whole region, that his self-denying labours were attended with very little success. He offered the Bible to multitudes, holding it up as the word of God. To those who declined to buy he read from its sacred pages, awaking many a marvel at the sweetness of its divine messages. Some asked to kiss the book, but many more reviled the man who brought it to them as a Protestant. One day, weary and worn, he came at nightfall to a very small village and was kindly lodged by a poor, ignorant woman. With the dawn the man of the book was up and on his way to a large town not far distant. After his departure the woman learned that her guest of the previous night was a Protestant. In her excitement she caught up the wooden spoon the man had used, broke it into pieces and threw them into the fire, and then seizing the copper dish from off which he had eaten his frugal fare, gave her anger full vent as she scoured it with ashes inside and out, for fear some taint of the man and his book might cling to it. Perseverance in the work, in the face of almost insurmountable difficulties and at great expense, has in these last days brought unhopèd-for results. The sales in that district, where so few are readers and so many of those who can read are hostile to Bible distribution, have during the past two years amounted to 2,368 volumes.

Passing westward, we find in Pontus, Cappadocia, Galatia, Phrygia, and all the provinces of Asia Minor, most cheering evidence that Bible forces, moving on lines which have radiated from the smaller as well as larger "centres of distribution," have touched springs of development everywhere. The contrast, in all these provinces, between the work of to-day and that of even twenty-five years ago, fills all hearts with praise and gratitude to God. In the extensive field of which Cesarea is the centre, no influence like that of God's word has operated to make men aspire to be better and nobler than they were. When we recall the disintegrating forces at work in all these years in town and city, fostered by the authorities, the debasing bigotries and tendencies to schismatic feebleness in the nominally Christian bodies, ignorantly cherished by the ecclesiastics, so that the difficulties connected with Bible circulation, and indeed all evangelistic effort, seemed at times almost insuperable, and then hold up before our vision the glorious fact, that nearly 5,000 copies of the Sacred Scriptures were, during the last twelve months, sold within the limits of that field, we are ready to exclaim, "What hath God wrought!"

Moving southward over the Taurus Mountains, we come to Marash, a city whose inhabitants in all past times were proverbial for ignorance

and fanaticism. Thirty years ago a few seeds were cast into that unpromising soil. The germination was quick, the returns speedy. The four years which succeeded witnessed the circulation of 200 copies within the city limits, or fifty copies a year. The following six years the sales averaged 225 copies a year; and so the work has moved on to the present, with results whose value to the cause of Christ no figures can reveal. At Aintab also we find the Bible cause clothed with the unmistakable insignia of the divine blessing in its flourishing churches, towers of strength from which the outlook of evangelism is far-reaching and encouraging; its well-graded Protestant schools and well-appointed college, all in triumphant march for the conquest of ignorance and superstition.

It is an interesting fact, worthy of mention in this connection, that in nearly all the evangelical communities of Northern Syria, Bible study, by the choice of the people, forms a prominent part in the instruction in common schools. Parents have found Bible truths so new and precious to themselves, that they have not cared to have their children learn anything else. The study even of history and geography has had little interest to many, save as they illustrate or throw light on Scripture. The immortal truths of God's word were all in all to them. Says a lady of long experience as a teacher in Mission schools in that section of Turkey: "In all my teaching of children and youth in this country, I have found my pupils more interested in their Bible lessons than in any other study. During the last three winters I have had an evening class of young men, not one of whom is a church member, and although I attempted some lessons on the history of the great nations of modern times and on "Physical Geography," they all expressed a decided preference for Bible lessons." In these "schools," "evening classes," and "Bible circles," many from outside Protestant ranks have ever been found, with whom in all discussions (the law of such gatherings being that the ultimate appeal shall be to the Bible,) plain direct proofs from the word of God were decisive. Young men interested in these evening classes have continued their readings in their homes, with great profit to godless fathers and mothers. Said one father, "Since my boy has been reading the gospel so much at home, I cannot use more than *twenty* out of a *hundred* of the oaths I was accustomed to use." A mother bitterly opposed to the "new way" was persuaded to listen one evening to the first chapter of Genesis. "That book must be true," she exclaimed, and ever after her house was open to Bible teachings. She lived many years to honour her Saviour by an humble, godly life. "Two lovely Christian girls" is the description given to two of her granddaughters. Said another woman, "My father, who is a priest, tells me one thing and my husband tells me another. I must learn to read, and read the Bible for myself." Some years ago, in a mountain town in this same district, the mother in a family quarrelled with her daughter-in-law. The quarrel became so fierce that they would not speak to each other. Evening came on and the daughter-in-law left the house, and hearing the bell of the Protestant chapel, went into the prayer-meeting. She there heard the words, "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment and condemn us, for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; but a greater than Jonas is here." These words went to the young woman's heart. Returning home she found her mother-in-law sitting glum by her spinning-wheel. "Mother," she said, "Give me your hand that I may kiss it. I have just learned that the men of Nineveh will rise up to condemn us, who hear so much, because our lives are not better." "Health to your tongue, my daughter, I kiss your lips," and the quarrel was ended.

If we pass westward to Cilicia we come to the cities of Tarsus and Adana. Studying their history, we find that during the period under

review they have several times been the theatre of extended religious movements, based upon a large dissemination of God's word. For several years past the thought has been often in mind, what Paul would say, how his heart would exult, could he come back to his native city and converse with the many there and in neighbouring districts, who are comforted and strengthened by his experiences as set forth in his epistles. What joy would be his, to go into the mountain, not far away from his Tarsus home, and spend a night at Kooz Oglook, and listen to the story of the little band of Bible readers there: how, years ago, a single copy of God's word was left in the village; how in ignorance of its value they tried to get rid of the book, but could not; how in a short time that book became a great light shining into all their habitations, revealing their guilt, and showing the way to the cross; and how, at the foot of that cross, seventy souls, heavy-laden and weary, cast their burdens and became free men in Christ.

To the north of Tarsus and west and northwest of Marash is an extensive tract of country with a considerable Armenian population. The majority of the inhabitants are mountaineers, hardy, rude, ignorant. For several successive years efforts were made to introduce the word of God among them, but they were not successful. Fearless robber chieftains with their bands held undisputed sway in the passes and fastnesses of the Taurus, and especially of the Giaour-Dagh. These marauders were the dread of this section of the empire, and held even the Turkish government in awe. No stranger, however benevolent his errand, could approach their haunts save at the hazard of his life. Their stroke was certain death.

But God had chosen these dens of robbery and murder in which to make the power of his truth known. Therefore these desperate men were sixteen years ago overborne by the armies of the Sultan, and the way opened for the entrance of the sacred word. It was speedily sent by the hands of faithful men, and those who were ordained unto eternal life by scores at Hadjin, Hassan Beyli, and Zeitoun received it. It was "the handful of corn in the top of the mountain, and the fruit thereof shakes like Lebanon."

Previous to 1858, a most important beginning in Bible distribution had been made in Bithynia. This province contains, outside of the chief cities, not far from 100,000 inhabitants, scattered in towns and villages over hills and plains, all within two or three days' journey of Constantinople. Since 1858, no field in the empire has been better worked in the interest of Bible circulation than this. Colportage has been assiduously and persistently pressed. Of the many faithful toilers in this department, Hampartsoomn, who was some years since called to his rest, was perhaps the most eminent in self-denying labours. In those days oppositions were fierce and unscrupulous, but he braved them all in the spirit of his Master. Persecutions of the most violent kind, beatings, stonings, all were his. Instead, however, of weakening his resolution or diminishing his ardour, they put steel into his nerves, iron into his blood, and grace into his heart. He knew every foot of Bithynia, and extended his tours into parts of Phrygia, Galatia, and even Paphlagonia. His offer of the life-giving word and his witness for Christ must have reached, not thousands, but scores of thousands. When our Lord called him to his reward, he called the "prince of colporteurs." In the same field, for the greater part of the period under review, Rev. Dr. Parsons laboured. Humble, patient, indefatigable, he sought no higher, diviner service than that of leading men to accept and obey the Bible. In sickness and health, alone and with companions, he toiled on until struck down by the assassin's hand. Not many leagues distant from the spot where poison ended the life of Hannibal, this beloved brother, while resting

sweetly at the end of a day of hard journeyings, was cruelly murdered by a young man from the same encampment of Yoorooks where, only a few hours before, he had held up the word of life and urged men to take it, study it, believe it, and live for ever. How different the lives, the toils, the forces they started, the end, the rewards, of the great Carthaginian general and the meek, soul-loving missionary!

In this rapid sketch of the Bible-work among the Armenians in the different sections of this empire, we have mentioned but very few items of interest as compared with the many that might have been brought forward. Enough, surely, have been given to indicate not merely the advance which the enterprise has made, but the method and power thereof. The fifty points from which, in 1858, the Bible with fleet but noiseless foot carried its treasures to places previously unvisited, have during the twenty-five years been nearly quadrupled. The entire issues of Scriptures among the people of this nationality have during the same period risen to more than 320,000 copies, one-fifth of which, as before stated, were entire Bibles. These figures are eminently helpful and suggestive. They are golden facts, which furnish new lessons for our faith to learn, which draw pictures for hope to study while she devises new plans for future work. Not by a sudden and daring leap have these figures reached their high elevation. The inheritance which they announce as the possession of the present is not the gift of a capricious fortune, but the well-earned wages of the faithful toil of a multitude of humble but brave workers. Had happier circumstances favoured the undertaking in the beginning and all along this period, the whole development might have been still grander and more satisfactory. The results actually attained, however, are without doubt far in advance of our usual estimates, and they indicate the great moral changes which are in progress in every part of the land. The tabular views of the three Missions of the American Board at work among this people tell an unvarnished tale of work accomplished. The number of churches formed with the great increase of memberships since 1858, the colleges founded, the schools established, the religious and educational books published, the whole outcome of evangelism in this land, during the period to which this review appertains, are indubitable proof of the great power the Bible has had in awakening thousands and tens of thousands of Armenians to a new intellectual and spiritual life.

The Bulgarian people are supposed to number six millions. Eighty years ago they were without books in their vernacular. Education also, in any true sense of that term, they had not, and their first attempts to secure its advantages were most imperfect. With the earliest indications of intellectual awakening came likewise the desire for the word of God in their spoken language. So earnest was this desire, that sixty years ago they themselves, without foreign aid, took up the work, secured a translation of the four Gospels and published them in a small edition. Subsequently an educated monk, with the assistance of one of the bishops, prepared a translation of the whole New Testament, which was printed in 1840 in an edition of 5,000 copies, the whole expense being borne by the British and Foreign Bible Society. From that day to the present the work has gone steadily forward, revealing most encouraging and hopeful aspects. So great was the demand for Scriptures that it was difficult to meet it, and in 1858 the supply was exhausted. In the autumn of that year a teacher went thirty miles to purchase the New Testament for his pupils. Unable to procure the books he returned to his home; went again in a few months and was the second time disappointed, and not till the following spring was his desire gratified. I recall that, in 1859, 2,000 copies of the divine word were despatched in one invoice to Phillippolis.

Among them, however, were Scriptures for Jews and foreign residents. The eagerness to secure the New Testament continued to increase year by year, so that in 1862 it was reported that along the Danube from Widdin to Toultscha, a distance of 550 miles, not a single village of Bulgarians was to be found in which those who could read had not possessed themselves of some portion of the word of God in their vernacular.

The excitements connected with the struggle for independence and entire separation from the Greek Church in ecclesiastical and educational matters, and the earnest contest for the use of the national language in schools and worship, were most unfavourable in those days to quiet Bible study; yet in the five years from 1858 to 1862, inclusive, not less than 20,000 copies of the New Testament and Portions, published at the expense of the British and Foreign Bible Society, found purchasers on both sides of the Balkans. From 1863 to 1876 there was no diminution in the desire of all Bulgarians for a higher intellectual development and a better national status. Enthusiasm for true *spiritual* advancement, however, was lacking, as also the sense of spiritual want. The time even for the firstfruits had not come, and there was little sign of the approach of those spiritual forces "that shake whole communities and move the deep foundations of social institutions." For a time all evangelistic workers were troubled, seeing the indifference to high spiritual truths and the increase of infidelity among the more cultivated classes. Still, instances were not wanting showing that the reading of God's word was awakening longings for a better life. The colporteurs found in their work of Scripture distribution many such. Missionaries also, and pastors, and teachers began to be encouraged, as from one place and another the good news arrived that "the whole population seems to have come under the leavening power of the gospel." In many sections of this district, while the ecclesiastics were as a body unfavourable to the work of Bible distribution, the common people and leading public men rejoiced in it as most essential to the highest interests of the nation. This period was followed by one of great disaster to all Bible enterprises in European Turkey. The Turco-Russian war made that whole field a desolation. Its influences were most discouraging and debasing; and yet the eagerness of the Russians to get the Bible stirred up many of the Bulgarians, both soldiers and civilians, to become possessors of the book. Some of the incidents of this period revealed a love for God's truth most cheering to all who honoured and sympathized with the Bulgarians in that fearful struggle. Our limits refuse space for their full rehearsal here. We can give only two: An elderly village priest, troubled at his great ignorance in all matters and especially of Bible truth, joined a company, in the town where he exercised his priestly functions, whose sole purpose was the study of the Scriptures. When it was known, all the roughs of the village set upon him with their coarse jibes. Infidels laughed at him, and sought by ridicule to turn him from his purpose. His jeering enemies spirted upon him that which was worse than poison. But no treatment of this kind moved him. For a long time only the New Testament was his; but when a friend compassionated him and gave him the whole Bible, he grew still stronger on the food which history and prophecy set before him, and when the day of trial came he was ready.

A young peasant, in great poverty, but full of determination to know the truth, obtained a New Testament, and, having no other time to learn, studied while others slept, and by the flickering light of miserable candles spelled his way, letter by letter, through the gospel narrative. He too became a strong Christian man. He too was ready when the time of trial came.

Those marauding bands, dealing blows harder than death gives, smiting and crushing living hearts, knew not what treasures of spiritual power and comfort those home-loving peasants had concealed upon their persons as they were driven forth from all that was to them most dear in this world. Many things were overlooked, but their Bibles were too precious to be forgotten, and these became unfailing springs of cheer in their places of refuge. When these years of confusion passed, the distribution of the Bulgarian Scriptures fell into its regular lines of advance, and the increase year by year to the present time has been most refreshing. The circulation of the two Societies for the years 1881 and 1882 was 36,793 copies, while the yearly average for the twenty-five years is only 5,422. The great advance in the work since the close of the war should be to us the measure of future possibilities. Certainly the outlook is most encouraging. All the sad memories of the past, all the dangers of the present, should make us faithful to the trust of blessing Bulgaria and Bulgarians with those truths which have made our life.

Passing now to the Greeks, with glad surprise we report, that from the inception of Bible labours in this Eastern world to the present time, more copies of the word of God have been disseminated among this enterprising people than among any other in this part of the world. As indicated in the tabular statistics, the whole number is 726,000. Of these nearly two-thirds have been disseminated since 1858. Previous to that year, the circulation was confined mainly to the schools of Greece, the Islands, and Western Asia Minor. Through the agency of the American Bible Society, nearly 100,000 copies of the New Testament and smaller Portions passed to their hopeful service among the young. In those days the Greek government approved of the use of the New Testament in the schools, and their action was endorsed by several of the archbishops and bishops. In view of this attitude of the government and the higher clergy, liberal appropriations were made by the American Bible Society, in 1858 and 1859, for supplying with the New Testament all the schools which called for them. In 1860, our operations resulted in the distribution of 1,379 New Testaments, mostly by sale at very low prices. During this and the following year, one of the provincial bishops (a member, if I mistake not, of the Holy Synod) interested himself in the dissemination of the Scriptures among the people of his diocese. He urged the priests under him to make themselves better acquainted with the word of God and conform their lives to its teachings. He did more—he purchased with his own money at one time 400, and at another 500, copies of the New Testament, and distributed them among the schools and poor people of his district. The following year, a tour of exploration revealed that the people in one of the largest of the Greek islands showed great readiness to receive the Scriptures. Another tour found Corinth given wholly to cards and wine, and the inhabitants of Zante and Cephalonia free with their curses and refusing any interest in the word of God, though offered to them on the very thresholds of their homes.

In the early years of the period under review the distribution was confined almost entirely to the schools; but when colportage was established a great change took place. The people, when invited to purchase the Scriptures, were led to examine the book for themselves, and their prejudices against the New Testament in Modern Greek as a translation not to be trusted were very greatly lessened. This change in the views of many members of their flocks was not at all palatable to the clergy, and not many years passed before the government of Greece and the Holy Synod took ground in open opposition to Bible distribution.

In many places the colporteurs found their access to the people completely cut off. Men of the baser sort were the instruments

selected by the ecclesiastics to hinder the sale of Scriptures. In 1873 the authorities in Corfu peremptorily refused to allow the Scriptures to be sold or even offered for sale. In 1874 all the principal towns and villages of Continental Greece, several of the Ionian Islands, and portions of Southern Macedonia, were canvassed by our colporteurs. These visits brought to light the real enemies of the work. Everywhere the people, left to themselves, were ready to buy the word of God. In Mount Athos even the monks were most anxious to take the Scriptures at the hand of the colporteur, but were not allowed to do so by their superiors. The enemies of this Bible work were invariably ecclesiastics. By their instigation the employés of the British and American Bible Societies were from time to time arrested, their books seized, and their work prohibited. The attention of the authorities was often called to this injustice, but with little result. But in 1876 the pressure was so great that they were obliged to come to some decision. It seems that the question was referred to the synod, and the result was that about the 1st of June that year the government issued an order prohibiting the use of certain books in the schools. The list contained forty-eight books, and the *first* mentioned were the Holy Scriptures in the original Greek, and the translations published by the British and American Bible Societies. All the books in the list, the Scriptures not excepted, were pronounced *pestilential*. The people were warned against them as containing teachings contrary to those of the Greek church. It is due to the Greek people that it be said that many of the most intelligent and upright strongly disapproved of this action of the government, and would have rejoiced to see the Bible introduced into every family of the kingdom. For several years both the Synod and the Government continued persistently and openly to oppose our work, but, notwithstanding this, the sales continued, though in somewhat diminished numbers. The following year the distribution rose again. The colporteurs found in every section of the country men who demanded of the priesthood why the dissemination of such a book as the New Testament should be prohibited. The third year the sales were larger than ever before. It was evident that the desire for the Scriptures was on the increase, and to satisfy it and not oppose it was the dictate of wisdom. There were many in the church and not a few among the ecclesiastics in these days who mourned over the corruptions that abounded on every hand, and were praying for better things. The Lord heard their sighs. The Synod was constrained to issue another "Encyclical," recommending the use of the four Gospels in the ancient Greek in all the schools. This change, while far short of our wishes, is perhaps all that we could expect in the circumstances. It fosters the study of the word of God and leads many to read the New Testament in the home-language of the people. Since the issue of that letter our own circulation has greatly increased, as has that of our British coadjutors also. The sales of the agent, Dr. Kalopothakes, amounted during 1882 to 6,180 volumes, in regard to which he says, "This is a number large in itself, but still larger when compared with the issues of previous years. When I first entered upon the work the entire number disposed of was small and many of these given away. Now the sales are good and few are granted gratuitously. When I recollect too how hard it was for myself even to go about Greece with the Scriptures, and now see how our colporteurs traverse the country unmolested, I feel thankful and encouraged. For many years our colporteurs were looked upon with suspicion and met with little kindness; now we have frequent testimony as to the regard in which they are held by many. They have visited not only the principal towns but the remote hamlets, far from the centres of communication with the outside world, places where no school, no newspaper, no books were found, and they have been the first to introduce

the word of God, becoming pioneers of wholesome ideas of Christian light."

But not only in Greece and the Greek Islands has the Bible enterprise prospered. Thousands of Greeks in the western provinces of Asia Minor have welcomed the word of God to their homes and their hearts. The sales of our own Society among them have averaged about 5,000 copies a year, while those of our British neighbours have been much larger. Most delightful evidence of the power of the truth thus disseminated has come to us from time to time, from Unieh, and Bafra, and Samsoun, etc., on the Black Sea coast, from Smyrna also, Cesarea, and many other places. The seed in some districts has given quick fruit. We cannot but exult in the forces for good this work has originated among this interesting people. They are real, not imaginary, steady in their movement, and prophetic of a large future dominance.

The Bible work in Persia for a large part of the period under review was in charge of this Agency. The field, however, was too distant, too difficult of access, to be superintended with vigour. The Assistant Agent made two visits, full reports of which have appeared in their appropriate place and time. The service was cared for mainly by the noble men who toiled, but "rest now from their labours," and then taken up by these who followed them, although well nigh crushed to the earth by the heavy responsibilities of their own special work in evangelistic labours, but who are now relieved by the special agent of the Bible Society.

When the translation of the Scriptures into Modern Syriac was initiated there were few among the Nestorians that could read. The men numbered less than fifty, and only one woman had made the attainment. With the introduction of the gospel the number of readers increased very rapidly, and at the beginning of 1858 more than 2,000 children and youth were reported as having laid God's truth in the very foundations of the character they were building. The powerful revivals which have followed each other so rapidly in that field, have proved that the divine word accomplishes that for which it is sent forth. Previous to the establishment by our Society of the Persian Agency in 1880, more than 30,000 copies of the Scriptures in Syriac, Armenian, Persian, Turkish, and other languages, had been disposed of in that field. The system of colportage had been established with far more success than we had dared to hope for. Most delightful incidents were reported from time to time by the men thus engaged and others, of the power of the Bible not only over Nestorians, but Armenians, Jews, and Mohammedans also. Efforts were made to carry the gospel and plant it as a beacon-light upon the very highest points of the Koordish Mountains. The most successful lines of influence in this regard were projected up the western slopes, special efforts having been made in this respect during the past year. Bible truth reached many individual minds from the Persian side also.

Years ago a Persian Bible fell into the hands of a pagan fire-worshipper, who studied it earnestly, was impressed with its teachings, and decided in his own mind that from that book as the head-spring, flowed into the Koran all that is good and elevating in the latter. Into the Persian home of this thoughtful fire-worshipper a young Koord came from his distant mountains. This young man was an earnest lover of truth, seeking it wherever he went. He was much impressed by what he found in the Persian Bible and what he heard from the fire-worshipper. Subsequently he returned to his native town and was soon after called to be secretary to a famous Koordish chieftain. He, however, kept up his quest for knowledge, studying astronomy and other sciences, as then revealed in Persian

and Arabic treatises. He sought out the most spiritual Mohammedans in all that section and talked with them, ever keeping in mind what he had read in the Persian Bible.

Sent on business to Mosul he became acquainted with a leading evangelical Christian in that city. The life of this man impressed him much. The more eagle-eyed his watch, the more beautiful that life appeared. There was something in it which he had never seen before. Tracing it to its source, he found it in the Bible. The principles and aims of that man's life were all consonant with the spirit and teachings of the book read years before in the home of the fire-worshipper. Not long after he found his way to Constantinople. He had a beautiful penmanship. This becoming known he was introduced into the Bible house as a copyist. His thorough knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish were soon discovered, and his suggestions were sought by members of the committee in charge of the Turkish Bible revision. So valuable were his criticisms that during the latter part of their work he was associated with them. In subsequent labours he revealed a delightful spirit, and gave hope to all of his oneness with Christ. Recently he was taken away by death. All who knew him hope that he was one of the "chosen ones," although he was never baptized and made no public profession of his attachment to our Lord.

We come now to our last inquiry. What of the Bible enterprise among the Arabic-speaking races of the empire? Scanning closely the reports of the years immediately preceding the period of which we speak, we find that the sales in Syria, Egypt, the Tigris Valley, and other districts where only the Arabic is spoken, were quite small. Even in 1858, the issues from Beirut were only 220 copies. In 1859, however, they were advanced a hundredfold, and in 1860, when two editions of the New Testament in the new translation were ready for circulation, 4,293 copies were almost immediately sold. So great was the interest in the new translation of the Bible into Arabic, that when the printing of the large Octavo Reference Bible had advanced only as far as the Second Book of Kings, many persons paid for the whole book in advance, content to take the printed sheets as they were received from the press. The civil war in Syria, which occurred the same year, and in which the most atrocious cruelties were enacted, bringing ruin to a multitude of Christian homes, making thousands of women and children widows and orphans, gave large opportunities for disseminating gospel truth. Few of the 75,000 that were partakers of the liberal bounties of Christendom forget those who with one hand furnished them with food and clothing for the body, and with the other gave to all who were willing to receive it, nutriment for the soul. Multitudes were thus brought under the influences of the Bible, who but for these troubles would never have known its glad message.

The translation of the entire Bible into Arabic was completed in 1864, and great were the rejoicings and thanksgivings which it called forth. The demand from all parts of Syria, Egypt, and the Tigris Valley exhausted the editions almost as soon as prepared. In view of this fact it was deemed advisable to electrotype the work. The history of this undertaking is well known, and need not be rehearsed in this connection. As soon as possible, every preparation that could be thought of was made for securing a large and rapid Bible work among all Arabic-speaking peoples. Editions of the Bible and Testament in multifarious forms, adapted to use in the home, the school, and in journeyings, were published from the electrotype plates, year by year, from 1868 to the present time. Power-presses were added to the machinery of production at Beirut. The demand for these books in *Syria* itself did not, however, rise with the facilities for effecting a supply. Faith-

ful were the efforts that were made to give this sacred book to all. But the desire to know what God the Lord had spoken was not awakened to the extent that had been hoped. It has been a sad disappointment that in those regions where Christ spoke his wonderful truths, and prophets by the Holy Ghost revealed thoughts that have stirred the Western nations, so few should have called for these books. The obstacles have indeed been many. Ecclesiastical resistance has been determined and persecutions have been fierce, and so the word has been hindered and has not had free course. Still, we rejoice in what has been accomplished, and are encouraged by the fact that the sales are year by year very slowly increasing in numbers; that so many of the 500,000 inhabitants of the Lebanon, and especially so many of the pupils in the schools of Syria, have copies of the New Testament or of its parts. It is by God's own ploughshares and harrows that the hard soil of Syria is being made ready for the broadcast sowing. Of this none who watch narrowly the signs of the times can doubt. Apart from these agencies are others of great force in daily operation.

Educational institutions vie with each other in giving to the youth of all nationalities—what their fathers had not—the ability to read and understand God's word. The vigorous attempts made to deposit the good seed in the hearts of the dwellers in the Hauran have not been without fruit. The project also of placing at least one copy of the Bible or Testament in each town and village on the great Cælo-Syria plain has been partially successful. No estimate of ours can accurately measure the results of such efforts—just as no scales of man's devising can weigh the light, the beautiful light, of the on-coming day. Influences most mighty may yet start up and crown with peculiar beauty and grace the labours of the humble colporteurs in all the districts of Palestine and Syria. Years ago, a New Testament was left by a traveller with a family in one of the remote towns of the Cælo-Syria plain. No one in the house cared for the book, and it was cast into a box full of papers and other things, where it remained until the head of the household died. The law required the son to gather up and take before the magistrate all his father's papers. What was the son's surprise when that precious book came forth. He had heard of its value as the word of God, and claimed it for his own. From that time a new radiance illumined that young man's path, guiding him to the soul's true refuge. To a young soldier in the Lebanon a book falls as his part of the spoils of a most unjust attack upon a quiet village. On opening that book in the still hour of night, new words and newer truths meet the young man's eye. Sin, and deliverance from its curse, are strange conceptions to the young soldier. But once lodged in his heart, he cannot break their power over his spirit. He learns from that Bible to pray, to love, to work, and all in Christ's name. Calumny follows, persecution also, and exile at last from his own home; but not until, from that young man's own hand, good seed had been dropped into other hearts in that remote Syrian village on one of the rocky heights of Lebanon. The Lord on high cared for the sower and the seed. Not long since, in that village, a little church was erected. The preacher chosen was the soldier. The audience was composed of the very men who were his calumniators and persecutors.

It is impossible to tell just what proportion of the 165,217 copies of Arabic Scriptures, published by our Society at Beirut during these twenty-five years, have remained in Syria and the Holy Land, since for many years the issues from Beirut included what were sent to

Mesopotamia and Egypt. It is true that the call for Scriptures from the Tigris Valley has not been large. Few are the readers in all the Arabic-speaking districts of Mesopotamia, and in no other part of the empire is the despotism of the ecclesiastics greater, or the opposition to Bible distribution more unscrupulous. Most earnest efforts have been made to disseminate the word of God in all the districts of which Mardin and Mosul are distributing centres; but the yearly average for fourteen years has not exceeded 500 copies. The yearly average for the last four years is, however, more than 900; but the seed sown has borne good fruit. If every copy sold could tell its own story we should doubtless marvel greatly at the influences started by it.

Ten years ago the nominally *Christian* village of — did not have an inhabitant that “knew who Jesus was, and the priest was the leader of the wickedness of the place” The first attempts to get the truth before the people was furiously resisted, and the missionary who made it “was so vigorously stoned that he was obliged to flee.” Brought to account for this treatment the people did not venture to molest the messenger who shortly after went among them with an *open Bible*. There was no one who could read, and so he went from house to house reading to as many of the inmates as would listen to him. Up to that time the prison of Mardin always contained men from that village charged with “theft, robbery, or murder.” “Slowly a change came over the place. Every door was open to the preacher. Quarrels diminished, thefts were checked, swearing and licentiousness were dropped by many.” A little company united in a common effort to walk by the new light which had come upon them. Precious souls have been purified by obeying the truth, and the state of things in the whole town is most hopeful.

Fifteen years ago a Bible fell into the hands of a young man in another large town in that district. He became much interested in its teachings, but so many questions were started in his mind which he could not answer that he sent a letter to the missionary asking that a preacher might be sent to the place. The response was speedy. Others joined their studies and inquiries to those of the young man. The influences of that one book spread, and there is now an active working church in that town making its light shine to distant villages and extending its spiritual influences on every hand.

But it is in Egypt that the most successful distribution of Arabic Scriptures has taken place. It was, if I mistake not, in March, 1867, that the Coptic patriarch made a bonfire of Bibles and other good books in the court of the principal church in Osioot, the capital of Upper Egypt. By that means did that noted ecclesiastic hope to put a stop to Bible distribution within the domains of his church. The result he sought was not, however, realized. The act of the patriarch proved one of the best of advertising agencies. That fire sent its light radiating all through the land of Egypt. Indifference was suddenly all aglow with curiosity. Bigotry and hate eagerly bought the book. Not Copts alone but Moslems also were led to examine it that they might learn the reason why the patriarch should so freely spend his *fiery* wrath upon it. Instead of a few hundred a year the sales reached several thousand. For eight years subsequent to the burning the average *monthly* sales at the different stations were reckoned to be 150 volumes. The increase continued, and during the last five years the average *daily* sales attained to nearly the same figure. In 1881, our sales reached to the unprecedented amount of 7,470 volumes. In the early part of 1882 there was every appear-

ance of an advance even upon 1881, but the massacres, the hideous butcheries and lawlessness that ravaged Alexandria, and sought to rule in other sections also, stayed the work, and less than 6,000 copies found their way to the homes of the people. Taking the condition of the country into account we deem this number most remarkable, more remarkable even than that, during the previous five years of peace and prosperity, the circulation of our Society's publications should have been 25,892 copies. It should be borne in mind that our British co-labourers have also in all these years done a good work in Egypt, although we have not their statistics to place beside those of our Society and thus reveal the full work achieved.

The number of people to whom the Arabic is vernacular, and also the medium of classic and religious thought, is supposed to be from 100 to 120 millions. The Lord who gave the word, causing it to be rendered with such accuracy and beauty into this wonderful language, would have it "run very swiftly." He has prepared the way, and it is ours to bring it out of our storehouses and hasten it on its course along the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, by the foot of Carmel, over the plains of Esdraelon and Sharon to Jerusalem once the "Golden," on to the Wilderness of Moab by the way of the river and the sea, up the slopes of Tabor and Hermon, through the gardens of earth's oldest city, along the routes of the kings of the East into the land of Hamath and her towns, over the very pathways of classic story, by the groves and fountains of ancient Antioch, to the shores of the Tigris, down its turbid waters to the pillars and strange relics cast up from Nineveh's sepulchral habitations, by the way of Babylon, through the mouth of the Euphrates, by the Persian Gulf and the coasts of "Araby the Blest," up the shores of the Red Sea, over Sinai's wilderness, across the desert to the foot of the Pyramids, by the canals of Joseph into Egypt's most beautiful oasis, on to the vaulted sepulchres out of which the very Pharaohs of the old oppression have come forth, past the massive memorials at Luxor and Thebes, up the cataracts to the heart of the Soudan, on even to the heights of Central Africa, back to the coasts of Zanzibar, over the Eastern Sea, through all India, and leaping the mountains on to the lofty table lands of the great Mogul, and wherever else any of these millions are found. To them must this beautiful Bible be taken to catch their ear and win their hearts to the one blessed Lord.

We make claim in this review to nothing but a very brief and imperfect sketch of the work accomplished in the bounds of this Agency during the quarter of a century that has so quickly gone by. While we sorrow that so few of the grand possibilities of this undertaking have been realized, we rejoice that God has not altogether disowned the unworthy efforts that have been made to disseminate his glorious truth in this land.

We desire to give high honour to the Society and its patrons who have so generously responded to the demands of the enterprise as they have grown louder and more imperative year by year. We would not fail to give due appreciation likewise to the labours of those who have so promptly and continuously aided in the superintendence of the various departments of the Agency.

Besides the great variety of labours in connection with the work in the Central Depot at the Bible House in this metropolis, the Assistant Agent has, in the short time in which he has served the Society, made three long laborious journeys, in which dangers and exposures have

been neither few nor small. The results of these journeyings are already in the possession of the Society. Dr. Kalopothakes has served in Greece with a fidelity which has overcome large obstacles and gives hope for a wide opening future. Dr. Lewis in Beirut and Rev. Mr. Ewing in Alexandria have not failed to respond to the loud calls that have come to them from so many places for ever-increasing supplies of the Arabic Scriptures. With gratitude also, and full appreciation of their hearty co-operation, we mention the services of all the missionaries from the Euxine to the Arabian Gulf, from the Caspian to the Balkans, from the Lebanon even to the borders of the Soudan. The great "Leader" knows their work, its fidelity, and its results. His recognition of what they have done is full reward to such toilers. Pastors and teachers, merchants and travellers, have aided in the enterprise, giving testimony to its power and expressing the hope that soon no family and no individual, will be without a copy of this blessed book.

The colporteurs employed have all been diligent in their labours. The average number for the twenty-five years has been forty-eight. Their experience has been most varied. Sometimes these faithful men have been warmly welcomed and greatly cheered in their toil, but oftener they have been the butt of ridicule. Foul aspersions have been heaped upon them, and their books and character vilified. Courageous, persevering, all-enduring, have they, as a body, proved themselves to be. They will not fail of hearing the "well done" in the final award.

That a blessing has attended this "Bible distribution" enterprise, in all its departments, no one can doubt. In its initial stages, its progressive development up to its present equipment and strength, God has honoured it. Its moral forces concentrate in the *messages* which, on the wings of every wind, are borne like seeds of autumn to far distant resting places. They lodge in the valley. They tarry on the plain. They hide in the niches of the mountain rock. Whatever soil has received this flying seed there it has remained, awaiting the hour of germination. Dropping the figure, we may affirm that these messages have placed before men of every nationality, condition, and character the divine law, with its demands on their hearts and lives, while they have told also the simple, touching story of a crucified, living Saviour, who will come again as the Almighty, Omniscient Judge of all the earth.

To thousands of the ruling race in this land they have furnished soul-food, which the Koran has not, and therefore cannot give. Moral instincts, which Islamism has failed wholly to obliterate, have been awakened, and the demands they are uttering cannot be satisfied until the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes men free is their possession. What means also this grand fact, that among the nominally Christian population here in the Levant 40,000 copies of the divine word have, on an average, year by year for twenty-five years, been distributed among them, if not that there are "spiritual longings" in the masses which an effete ecclesiasticism does not and cannot satisfy?

It is quite true that not all the seed which has been sown has germinated and come forth again, showing its rich mellow fruit. Some one has said, "Not all God's acorns come to oaks, but here and there one. Not all the seeds of flowers germinate, but enough to make some radiant gardens." Not all the "incorruptible seed" of the word cast into this soil has germinated, yet grand stalwart oaks have come forth,

and stand witnesses that God's word has not been lost. More than 12,000 "plants of righteousness," with buds and flowers and fruit most pleasing, have been gathered into 178 beautiful, radiant, spiritual gardens. They are found scattered all over this Ottoman empire, in Persia also, in Greece, in Syria, and Egypt. Besides these there are "nurseries" also, in which at least 25,000 smaller plants are under culture. When the transplanting time shall come, other and larger and more radiant gardens will be made. In many a distant mountain, on many a village terrace also, *solitary* flowers are blooming, diffusing sweet fragrance through the whole precincts. In many a window too, *single* lights are burning, whose radiance streams far into the darkness, giving guidance to wanderers seeking through the gloom the way to the Father's house.

Under the influence of these memories of the past we enter now upon a new period, a new term of service. We pray for a faith that will not doubt, an energy that will not falter, a calmness of trust that admits no possibility of failure, a consecration that the Master will not scruple to use.



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