

REPORT

OF THE

Board of French Evangelization

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

In presenting their Seventh Annual Report to the General Assembly, the Board of French Evangelization desire to express their heartfelt gratitude to the Great King and Head of the Church for the measure of success vouchsafed during the year in connection with this department of the Church's work.

According to the recently published census of 1881, the French-speaking population of the Dominion is 1,300,000, of whom 10,000 are in Prince Edward Island, 41,000 in Nova Scotia, 57,000 in New Brunswick, 13,000 in Manitoba and the North-West Territories, 100,000 in Ontario, and upwards of 1,000,000 in the Province of Quebec.

The great aim of the Board is to give the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this class of our fellow-subjects, comprising as they do nearly one-third of the entire population of the country.

While nothing calling for very special note has occurred during the past year, the work has been prosecuted with zeal and encouraging results, though there have not been wanting discouragements to try the faith of those engaged in it.

As in former years, the agencies employed have been Missionaries—ordained and unordained—Teachers and Colporteurs.

COLPORTAGE.

The value of this agency is every year becoming more manifest, and the necessity of largely increasing the number of labourers in this department more urgently felt. This has especially forced itself upon the attention of the Board during the past year; and with a view to the extension and more efficient prosecution of the work of colportage, the Executive recently held a conference with Mr. James Court, who has had a most intimate connection with the work for upwards of forty years, and whose experience renders his opinion of great value. Notwithstanding all that has been accomplished in the past, there is still, especially in the Province of Quebec, unlimited scope beyond the sphere of either Missionary or Teacher for the self-denying labours of a class of men who are willing to go from house to house, carrying in their heart the love of Christ, and in their hand the Word of Life, telling the story of the Cross to all who will listen, and scattering as they go those leaves which are for the healing of the nations.

For this kind of work men of special gifts and thorough training are needed. The work is most arduous and often most discouraging, especially in those districts where, for days and even weeks together, the Colporteur toils on without meeting a single Protestant family, mingling with a community who from the altar have been threatened with excommunication and social ostracism if they give him shelter. There is scarcely any class of Christian worker more deserving of the sympathy, and with a stronger claim upon the prayers of God's people than the faithful Colporteur. With a view to the more thorough training of young men entering upon the work, the Board have recently adopted the principle of sending out Colporteurs two and two—a young man along with one of considerable experience—and thus far the plan has been found to work well. In addition to visiting from house to house, distributing copies of God's Word and religious literature, the Colporteur endeavours, where practicable, to gather together the members of two or three neighbouring families, and an hour is spent in singing and prayer and a simple exposition of the plan of salvation.

During the past year, seventeen Colporteurs were employed by the Board. Three of these laboured in New Brunswick, one in Nova Scotia, and thirteen in the Province of Quebec. The following are the counties in which they worked:—Victoria, Kent and Westmoreland, in the Province of New Brunswick; Pictou, in the Province of Nova Scotia; Chicoutimi, Charlevoix, Montmorency, Arthabaska, Richelieu, Drummond, Bagot, Shefford, St. Hyacinthe, Chambly, St. Maurice, Maskinonge, Berthier, Joliette, L'Assomption, Terrebonne, Hochelaga, Laval, Two Mountains and Ottawa counties, in the Province of Quebec; and Prescott county, in the Province of Ontario. The circulation of the year was:—

Bibles, Testaments and Gospels	3,064
Tracts and other religious publications, about	24,000
Total	27,064

The Board are at present in correspondence with other Churches and Societies engaged in the work, with a view to an organized effort to have every French-speaking family visited and offered a copy of the Bible within the next twelve months.