

ANNUAL REPORT.

are giving increased attention to their outlying districts, which is much better than multiplying weak Branches, and so increasing the expense of Agency.

AGENCY.

The visitation was done by the Permanent Agent, nineteen Provisional Agents, and two Local or Provincial Agents: the Rev. O. Fortin, for Manitoba, and the Rev. R. Jamieson, for British Columbia. Their Reports have been almost all of an encouraging tone, some of them very much so. One writes: "From the office-bearers of all the Branches I received a cordial welcome, and if I may judge from the intercourse I had with them, your work has a firm hold on their confidence and affection. The collectors appointed to canvass the various sections were for the most part present at the meetings and seemed ready for their work. Too much praise cannot be given to these self-denying Christian ladies, and I am looking forward for a great advance in the subscriptions all along the line." This the Board regards as a very encouraging report, for if all the Branches would follow the example of those in this Agent's Section, and have their Collectors ready to go to work immediately after their public meeting, it would make an immense improvement in the total results at the end of the year. Another Agent reports: "The visitation of the several Branches entrusted to me by your Society this year afforded satisfactory evidence of an intelligent and hearty attachment to the Bible, and a practical sympathy with your efforts to secure its world-wide distribution."

These are fair samples of the general tone of almost all the reports; but of course neither the Agents nor the Directors wish to represent the affairs of the Society as having arrived at a state of perfection; and as perfection is the goal at which we must always aim, it may be profitable as well as candid, though perhaps not so pleasant, to report and call attention to some of the imperfect features which present themselves here and there. A few of the Agents have still to complain, although there has been great improvement in this respect, that their communications had received very tardy replies or had been entirely neglected, and that sometimes when they arrived at a place they found that no effort had been made to get the people to come to the meeting, in which cases it is very hard for an Agent to get them interested in the work of the Society. One Agent writes: "Could we only get crowded audiences to address, that the Christian public as a whole should have an intelligent idea of the workings and wants of the Society, our income would double in a single year. But how can the public be reached? That is the problem to be solved. The pulpits must take the matter up and take advantage of sabbath day congregations for enlightenment on this whole subject." Another Agent, among several suggestions at the end of his report, says: "Put into operation the recommendation of last year in respect to the boundaries of our Branches." If the Board of Directors could issue decrees which must be obeyed, this would be a comparatively easy matter; but the Board can only, through its Agents, endeavour to induce the Officers of the Branches to carry out its recommendations; and the Directors are glad to be able to report that many of them are giving increased attention to their outlying districts. There can be no doubt however that these two questions: how best to get the country lying between the Branches canvassed, and how our Agents can best reach the ear of the Christian public, are the problems most needing solution.

The Directors regret that they have not been successful in getting special meetings of children during the past year; but several Sunday Schools have been addressed on behalf of the Society, and some have sent contributions. The gentlemen who distribute the Ketchum prizes in the city schools, moreover, have in doing so from year to year, not only told the scholars something about