

The past year has been to the community generally one of continued depression and discouragement. "Hard times" and "scarcity of money" are expressions reiterated again and again by the officers of Branch Societies in all portions of our field. No doubt, under an overruling providence, the moral effect of such experience may be good. It is as difficult for a community, as it is for an individual, to enjoy without injury a long continuance of great prosperity, and the checks which from time to time we receive tend to repress a spirit of wild speculation, and cause people generally to realize the uncertain and unsatisfactory value of all earthly things.

Notwithstanding discouragement in ordinary business, we have no reason to complain of any falling off in our circulation of the Word of God, nearly thirty-three thousand (33,000) copies of the Scriptures, in whole or in part, having been issued from our Depository in Toronto, in twenty-eight (28) different languages, during the year. This is an increase of 1,316 over the previous year. (For details see page 11).

BRANCH SOCIETIES AND THEIR VISITATION BY AGENTS.

A great majority of our Branch Societies are healthy, vigorous and fruitful, under the management of earnest, active officers, assisted by a large army of collectors (male and female), who canvass for subscriptions in aid of the Bible Society, and otherwise help in this important work from year to year.

To those friends special thanks are due and are hereby sincerely tendered, for their valuable services to the glory of God and the advancement of His cause.

We regret, however, to say that there are a number of branches in a languid condition. Special efforts have been made by the Committee on Agency and Colportage in Toronto, and the visiting agents, to revive the interest of the officers and people in those localities, and place the societies on a more efficient basis, and thus strengthen and *stablish* branches in existence, rather than press for the extension and formation of new organizations during the present depression of trade.

In visiting the branches the unusual severity of the past winter was felt by the agents, some of whom had the unpleasant experience of being delayed for several days in snowbound trains, etc., etc.; however, no personal accident occurred to any of the forty-four gentlemen who participated in this work. In several cases, anniversary meetings of branches had to be postponed, and second and even third dates arranged before successful accomplishment. Much expense could be saved if the officers of Branch Societies and the local clergymen would unite, at least once in each year, in advocating the cause and claims of the Bible Society, and co-operate in the management of the work and conduct of the annual meetings, without the assistance of an agent. The meetings are generally well supported by the local ministers of the Gospel, although a few have been found who refuse to take any part themselves, and thus discourage the members of their churches from doing so. The reasons given are generally very trifling. Plans are now under consideration with a view to reduction in the expense of agency visitation.