

on the 6th of June, 1844, where it was resolved to form a "Society for improving the spiritual condition of young men engaged in the drapery and other trades." Mr. George Williams, the originator of this association, was present at the late convention, and witnessed with devout gratitude to God the remarkable growth of that feeble germ which now brings forth its fruits of holiness in almost every land. To the religious character of the association its members soon added the idea of intellectual improvement, and for that purpose established a library and instituted debates. They also inaugurated the Exeter Hall lectures to young men, which have since become famous throughout the world. These lectures have become a permanent institution, enlisting much of the first literary talent in Great Britain, and attracting thousands to their delivery. In their published form they have reached multitudes throughout the English-speaking portion of the world. In ten years an aggregate of 75,000 volumes was sold, and since that time probably 150,000 more. The Society also instituted Sunday Bible-classes, and employed its members in general Sunday-school and Ragged-school work. It adopted a regular system of tract distribution; and in 1851, the year of the first universal exhibition, its members distributed no less than 352,000 tracts among the visitors to the World's Fair, and held 1,550 public and social religious services in the metropolis.

In December, 1851, the first Young Men's Christian Association in America was established at Montreal, Canada, and on the 29th of the same month the first in the United States in the city of Boston, Mass. Similar societies rapidly sprang up in New York, Buffalo, Washington, Cincinnati, St. Louis, San Francisco, and elsewhere, to the number of twenty-five in two years. The felt necessity of some means for the interchange of thought and opinion led to the calling of the first convention at Buffalo, N. Y., on June 7th, 1854. Thirty-five delegates were present, and a voluntary confederacy was formed, having a central committee and annual conventions, whose functions, however, were to be merely advisory in their character.

The great Rebellion, though it threatened the very existence of the confederacy of associations, was really the occasion of marvel-