

circumstances of the country, is thus referred to by the Rev. Dr. Macleod, one of Her Majesty's chaplains: "The colportage system is admirably adapted to meet the wants of this country, especially where the population is scattered as in the Highlands; or migratory, as in our mining and manufacturing districts. Many a man will purchase a book or periodical, when they are offered for sale at his fireside, their prices stated, and their contents explained, who would never think of resolving to purchase a book, save some money to do so, and then dress himself in his Sunday clothes, and proceed to a bookseller's shop—there to expose his wants and ignorance! I am convinced that by colporteurs alone can the masses—even in our towns, much more in our scattered villages, hamlets and glens—be supplied with a fireside literature."

During the past year the sale of periodicals by this society has been above 700,000 copies, and of Bibles and Testaments, 20,000.

The Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799, to supply a lack of instructive religious books and treatises at such prices as would place them within reach of the poor. It has been estimated that there was at that period 20,000 hawkers engaged in selling indecent songs and polluting penny papers throughout all parts of the country. Since then a striking change has taken place; for although the issue of pernicious works is still lamentably large, multitudes of publications, well adapted to counteract the evil, have been issued, and find their way into almost every house in the land.

A statement was made in 1851 that there were circulated annually in Great Britain 29,000,000 of infidel and immoral publications, and this was represented to be a larger number than the whole circulation of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, the Religious Tract Society, the British and Foreign, and the Scottish and Trinitarian Bible Societies, together with some 70 religious magazines combined. The numbers were, however, in this instance, greatly exaggerated, even including newspapers, as well as other periodicals, and they are deemed to have been the mere guess-work of a pamphleteer. The numbers issued by the Religious Tract Society alone were then not much short of the total number assigned to immoral publications; and from that period the distribution from the Society's depot in London has increased at the rate of nearly two millions per annum, they having amounted in 1851 to 20,887,064; in 1856 to 31,529,185; and in 1861 to 41,883,921.

The agency for distributing this mass of good literature is all voluntary, excepting that employed on board of emigrant ships, and the sales made through the ordinary channels of trade for books and periodicals—a fact which tells well for the general interest felt in the mental and moral progress of the working classes.

The publication of tracts and books for children, with illustrations calculated to render them attractive, was commenced by this Society at an early period of its history, and they were followed by cheap editions of old authors or original works, written in a plain and popular style; to which were subsequently added educational works; and, lastly, it was deemed advisable to engage in the production of periodical literature, mostly illustrated and suited to various ages and classes.

The contributions of the public to this Society, and the profits arising from its publications, are, after the payment of all expenses, devoted to tract distribution at home and abroad. The annual receipts and expenditure of the Society now average £100,000, and since its establishment the total distribution of its publications has been about 959,000,000 copies.

The British and Foreign Bible Society was established in 1804, for the supply and the circulation of the Sacred Scriptures without note or comment. The Translating, printing, and distributing the Sacred Scriptures, in whole, or in part, has been promoted by this Society, directly or indirectly, into 160 languages or dialects. The number of versions, in whole or part, hitherto completed is 190, of which 140 are translations never before printed. The issues by the Society last year were upwards of one million and a half copies, and its total issues of the Scriptures, or portions of them, now amount to 40,910,474 copies. The total receipts of the Society for the past year were £168,443 15s. 5d., including £77,760 17s. 8d., for the sale of the Scriptures. And the total expenditure of the Society, from its establishment in 1804, has been £5,250,547 13s. 6d.

The Working Men's Educational Union was founded in 1842, for the purpose of "assisting all persons desirous of imparting interesting and popular literary and scientific information, imbued with a sound Christian spirit," whether by the delivery of lectures, the formation of libraries, or the promotion of mutual instruction, or other classes for adults. It interferes as little as possible with local agency, its object being to promote, encourage, and assist that of others, by the preparation and publication, in a cheap and popular form, of the diagrams, drawings, maps, etc., necessary for explaining to the uninformed; for fixing the attention of an auditory, and for rendering lectures of an improving character interesting as well as instructive. The average number of diagrams sold annually, in the nine years since the Society had been established, is 11,908.

From the Dublin Tract Repository, 10, D'Olier-street, there have been issued within the past eight years, 34,000,000 of publications, consisting of pamphlets, small books, tracts, etc.

The Pure Literature Society was established in 1855, for promoting the extensive circulation of periodicals, and of all such books, maps, prints, diagrams, and other publications, as the managing committee may deem really good and useful, whether they be issued by individuals or by societies. This Society abstains from the publication of any description of literature, but within the seven years of its existence it has been the means of distributing about 1,000,000 periodicals, and has issued 55,160 well-selected books, at half-price, in aid of 687 libraries.

The hawking or colportage of carefully selected books and well-chosen prints was systematically commenced in England in 1851, at the instigation of the present Bishop of Rochester; and within the last ten years much has been thus done to promote the circulation of pure literature in the rural districts, and to introduce into the cottages of the peasantry illustrated periodicals and decorative prints of an instructive and pleasing character. The clergy and laity of the Established Church have organized for this purpose sixty-two local associations, which are united with the "Church of England Book-Hawking Union," an association employing about eighty book-hawkers. Their aggregate sale now amounts to about £12,000 per annum. By the extensive circulation of well-chosen cheap periodical literature, these societies are, to a very considerable extent, driving out of the field publications of a highly objectionable character which had a large circulation; and in various other ways book-hawking and colportage wisely conducted is proving itself an educational agency of considerable power and usefulness.

The numerous publications used for special instruction in the schools of the poorer classes, are mostly issued by one or other of the school societies—the National, the British and Foreign, the Home and Colonial, the Sunday School Union, or the Ragged School Union; but those societies generally supply other publications as well as their own, and no accurate estimate as to the total numbers they issue can be given.

A class of publications intended to impart a general knowledge of sanitary science, in its applications to every-day life, has been introduced within the last few years, and it now forms an important branch of the instruction conveyed to the laboring classes by means of the various agencies under review. Many in the middle and upper ranks of society would doubtless derive much practical benefit from a perusal and circulation of the publication in question, the popular style in which they are written recommending a subject that concerns all classes of the community.

The production and circulation of such works is a main object of the Ladies' Sanitary Association, and since its establishment in 1857, it has been the means of distributing from its office in Prince-street, Caveandish-square, 468,500 copies of small publications, sold mostly at from one penny to twopence each, and at a reduced price to its subscribers.

Considering the immense influence which books and small publications exercise over the mind, as well as the great improvement in the general character of our cheap literature within the last fifteen or twenty years, and especially the extensive distribution of the Scriptures, we feel justified in attributing, in no small degree, to "the circulation of this pure and instructive literature," the striking change in the conduct of our manufacturing operatives, at the present time of severe privation and suffering, as compared with the riotous proceedings of former days; a remembrance of which, even now, causes us to shudder. The operatives then had our pity, but we now regard them with mingled feelings of admiration and sympathy. May their conduct prove instructive to some exalted in authority, who knowing not the value of moral influence in governing a people, fetter the human mind, and incarcerate those who, having experienced that the ways of true wisdom are pleasant, and her paths peace, would lead others to walk therein.

2. EVILS OF NOVEL READING.

The 'novel-reading mania' is alarmingly on the increase notwithstanding some sage philosophers, half a century ago, indulged in a belief, that at their resent time there would be a universal demand for the *real* and the *truthful*. But the love for the marvellous, the scandalous and the ludicrous seems yet to keep pace with civilisation and refinement, and the augmentation of works of fiction and romance in the same ratio. The reading world to-day demands more fiction than fact—more fancy than truth; and these vile scribblers and vain contributors well understood how to prepare the well 'spiced-up' poisonous draught for the palate of the reading millions. Nor are these 'filthy-lucres' publishers and corrupt vendors, when making a purchase, blind to the wants of this frivolous 'light-reading' age. They are well aware that, by mixing this veil