

Just before the close of its year the Society lost one of its most valuable and valued friends by the death of the Rev. W. W. Ross, who had been its Permanent Agent from 1875 to 1879. The success of his special mission to Manitoba on behalf of the Society was one of the most encouraging features in the last Annual Report. The great value of his services have more than once been publicly acknowledged not only by the Board of Directors, but also by the Branches in Manitoba. As he continued to the end ever ready to do anything in his power for the Society, the Directors looked upon him as one whose zeal, tact, experience, and readiness might be called upon, as occasion required, for many years to come. They cannot, therefore, but feel a sense of great loss by his removal from this scene of action.

In the last Annual Report attention was called to the very dilapidated state of the building jointly owned and occupied by this Society and the Tract Society, and the necessity of providing a new building at an early date; and the Directors were able to report that already several handsome sums had been subscribed for that purpose. They regret to say that very little progress has been made in this matter during the past year; but the Joint Committee has lately appointed Mr. William Hewitt to solicit subscriptions for the Building Fund, and as he is well known to the business community, they hope he will be heartily received and encouraged in this good work. The Directors trust that when this need is really brought before the minds of the Christian public of Toronto, they will in this semi-centennial year of the City readily subscribe the very moderate amount required to provide a suitable habitation for two of its oldest institutions.

BRANCHES.

In the past year, as in every third year, the Board wished to have all the Branches visited by the Agents, which for several reasons is desirable, and therefore did not request any to dispense with such help. A few, however, intimated a wish to do so, and the Directors, of course, acquiesced. Nevertheless the visitation and inspection of the Branches and Depositories throughout the field may honestly be reported as fairly complete, and on the whole very satisfactory.

With very few exceptions, the Depositories are reported as being in good condition; but a few cases of negligence have been brought under the notice of the Board. One Agent reports that in a certain place he found on visiting the Depository that "the Bibles were not at all exposed to the view of persons coming in; but were in a box covered up with goods in a room over the store." Another Agent reports that in another place "the Bibles fell into the hands of some man who bought the insolvent estate of the former Depository, and refused to give them up, thus entailing quite a loss on the Branch." Such negligence is very annoying, and these cases shew the importance of officers and committees of Branches remembering their responsibility in reference to their Depositories. But when it is considered how few such cases are among nearly 400 Depositories, the Directors think they may fairly report that the Society's affairs in this department are in a very satisfactory condition.

Only two new Branches have been formed during the year viz:—Fort Erie, and Mildmay, and one new Depository opened at Fort Simpson, on the Mackenzie River in the far North-West; on the other hand one Branch has been struck off the list, and three reduced to the rank of mere Depositories. This makes our present list to contain 403 Branches and 29 Depositories. At first sight this may appear to some as slightly retrogressive; but in fact real progress is being made in occupying the field. Some of the Branches are forming sub-branches, and others though not forming any subordinate organizations,