

BRIEF HISTORY  
OF THE  
AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

Instituted at Boston, 1814,

AND ITS RELATIONS TO THE

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY AT NEW YORK,

Instituted 1825.

BOSTON:  
PRESS OF T. H. MARVIN, 42 CONGRESS STREET.  
1857.

## Constitution of the American Tract Society.

ARTICLE I. This Society shall be denominated the AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY, the object of which shall be to promote the interests of vital godliness and good morals, by the distribution of such Books and Tracts as may be calculated to receive the approbation of Christians of all denominations usually termed evangelical.

ART. 2. Any person paying twenty dollars at one time into the treasury of this Society may be, at his request, a Member for Life; and any person paying fifty dollars at one time, may at his request be a Director for Life. The Life Members, the Life Directors, the Members of the Executive Committee, and of the Board of Directors, shall constitute the Corporate Members of this Society.

ART. 3. Persons constituted Life Members of the Society by donations not designated by them to be applied to specific objects, shall be annually entitled to the Society's publications, to the value of one dollar, and persons so constituted Directors, to the value of two dollars; or, if preferred, they may receive Tracts at any one time to the value of half the sum given.

ART. 4. There shall be an Annual Meeting of the Society in Boston, on the Monday preceding the 1st Wednesday in May, when a President, Vice Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, two Auditors, an Executive Committee, and a Board of seven Directors, shall be appointed by ballot; and to this meeting it shall be the duty of the Treasurer to make his annual report.

ART. 5. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to superintend the publication and distribution of books and tracts; to procure a place of deposit for the same in Boston; to appoint Corresponding Committees when needful; to appoint, from their own number, a Committee of Finance, and a Committee of Distribution; to make such gratuitous grants of books and tracts, and of money in aid of the printing and distribution of books and tracts, as they may think proper, in furtherance of the objects of the Society; and to make report of their doings at each annual meeting of the Society. They may appoint any agents whom they from time to time may find it expedient to employ in the business of the Society. They shall appoint a Recording Clerk, who shall keep an accurate record of all their proceedings. They shall have power also to make all purchases of real or personal property, at their discretion, which may be necessary for the use of the Society.

ART. 6. The Secretary, the Treasurer, and all other agents employed in the business of the Society, shall be subject to the direction, order and control of the Executive Committee.

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At the Annual Meeting of the American Tract Society, Boston, May 27, 1856, the following resolution was adopted :—

*Resolved*, That in view of the spirit of inquiry in respect to the American Tract Society, it is deemed expedient, and therefore resolved, that the Executive Committee prepare a brief history of this Society, and of the nature and extent of its relations to the American Tract Society New York, and that a copy of the same be sent to each member of the Society."

In accordance with this Resolve, the Executive Committee present the following sketch of its history, and of its relations to the New York Society.

EARLY RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETIES AND TRACT OPERATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES.

When this Society was organized, in 1814, there existed six or more Tract Societies in this country. Three of these were located in New England, and three in the State of New York. The resources of these Societies were limited, and their operations local. As they were nearly all formed on a catholic basis, their friends soon began to feel the necessity of having one National Society, in which evangelical Christians could unite, on the basis of our common Christianity. Such a Society could furnish all the local Societies with publications representing the great essential truths of the Gospel, in which they were gen-

erally agreed. These were the truths they wished to circulate; and such a Society could furnish Tracts containing these, for all, on lower terms, than each could publish its own.

In the United States, as in Europe, both before and after the formation of the Religious Tract Society in London, and of Tract Societies in this country, intelligent and pious individuals issued and circulated, either at their own expense or assisted by donations from others, many evangelical tracts, and such books as the *Rise and Progress*, *Saints' Rest*, and *Christian's Great Interest*. Among these benevolent individuals were the Rev. Dr. John Stanford, who printed tracts in London in 1780, and on coming to New York issued tracts in that city; Rev. Dr. Alexander Proudfit, of Salem, N. Y., who wrote a number of tracts and volumes, and circulated books widely in the new settlements, with the aid of Gen. Stephen Van Rensselaer, of Albany, and others; and friends who issued tracts in Philadelphia. Records of the Rev. Dr. Jedidiah Morse, of Charlestown, show that in the fall of 1802, he printed editions of 19 tracts, amounting to 32,806 copies, which were chiefly distributed in parcels of about 60 each, through missionaries, among the new settlers in Maine, Kentucky, and Tennessee. To Maine alone he sent, in the fall of that year, 170 parcels, directed to 85 different townships. He also printed volumes, receiving donations from friends to assist in bearing the expense, and having a large room occupied as a depository. The Rev. Dr. David Tappan, evangelical professor of divinity in Harvard college, was engaged about the same time in issuing and circulating tracts. Among the young men whom he invited to buy parcels of tracts for their own reading and distribution, was Mr. Henry Homes, the late benevolent merchant and active friend of the Tract cause in Boston, who paid a dollar and received tracts, one of which, the *Shepherd of*

Salisbury Plain, he regarded as the means of his conversion. Other young men became interested, and among them a young printer, Mr. Ensign Lincoln, who printed tracts gratuitously, his associates paying for the paper, and who became a pillar in the "Evangelical Tract Society," afterwards formed in Boston.

The following *publishing societies* were formed in different parts of the country, besides many others organized for tract distribution.

In September, 1803, the "Massachusetts Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," chiefly by circulating pious books, was founded by Rev. Dr. Morse, of Charlestown, and Rev. Dr. Holmes, of Cambridge, and others.

Rev. Dr. Tappan, and Lt. Governor Samuel Phillips, exerted an important influence in the formation of this Society. The latter had bequeathed, at this time, £1,000, a part of the interest of which to be expended in the distribution of pious books in Andover, his native town. He had also given £3,000 for "a more general distribution of like pious books.

At the formation of the above named Society, \$1,165 was contributed to its treasury. For many successive years, Rev. Dr. Eliphalet Pearson was President; Dr. Morse, Secretary; and Dr. Holmes, Clerk. It circulated in 1804, 6,253 tracts; in 1806, 9,174; and in 1815 had printed 8,224 books and 30,350 tracts.

In 1807, a "Connecticut Religious Tract Society" was formed at New Haven, of which Rev. Dr. Dwight was President, and Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., Secretary, which published a series of 26 tracts, and circulated about 100,000 copies.

In 1808, a "Vermont Religious Tract Society" was formed under the direction of the trustees of the Vermont Missionary Society, which issued a number of tracts at Middlebury.

In 1810, the "Protestant Episcopal Tract Society" was formed in New York, Bishop Hobart, ex officio, President, and in five years had published 13 tracts.

In 1812, the "New York Religious Tract Society" was organized.

In 1811, the "Evangelical Tract Society" was formed in Boston, which in 1824 had issued a series of 31 tracts, and 406,000 copies; Messrs. Lincoln and Edmunds, agents. The "Albany Religious Tract Society," formed the same year, had in 1824 printed 277,000 tracts, when it committed its funds to the "New York State Tract Society," then organized in that city.

In 1815, the "Religious Tract Society of Philadelphia" was formed, and issued in five years 795,000 tracts, when it "transferred the printing, publishing, and sale of tracts to the board of managers of the Philadelphia Sunday and Adult School Union," formed in 1817, which, in 1821 to 1824, published 420,000 tracts, and in 1824 "transferred its funds, books and other property to the American Sunday School Union," organized at that period.

In 1816, the "Religious Tract Society of Baltimore" was constituted, and in 1824 had a series of 62 English and three German tracts, and had issued 330,413 copies.

In January, 1816, the "Hartford Evangelical Tract Society," Connecticut, was formed, and in 1824 had published a series of 57 tracts, and 376,237 copies. The "Episcopal Prayer-Book and Tract Society for the Eastern Diocese," formed in Boston in 1816, published several tracts.

In 1817, the "New York Methodist Tract Society" was formed, and in 1823 had published 43 tracts in English, and four in French. The "Protestant Episcopal Female Tract Society of Baltimore," formed in 1817, had issued in 1823 a series of 44 tracts. The "New-Jersey Religious Tract Society, New Jersey," formed in 1817, published a few numbers of tracts.

In 1819, the "Western Navigation Bible and Tract Society of Cincinnati" was formed, and in 1823, had printed a series of 54 tracts, amounting to 700,000 pages.

In February, 1824, the "Baptist General Tract Society" was organized at Washington, D. C., and since merged into the Baptist Board of Publication at Philadelphia; and the same month the "New York State Tract Society" was formed at Albany, N. Y., and entered on the publication of tracts, issuing also a monthly New York Tract Magazine.

*The New York Religious Tract Society.*

*The first brief report of this Society, February, 1813, signed by the Rev. Dr. Alexander M'Leod, Corresponding Secretary, states that it was formed twelve months before, and that in April, 1812, it "purchased from the former Tract Society the remainder of their stock on hand," consisting of 7,986 copies of Nos. 1 to 11, which numbers were continued as the first of the series of the New York Religious Tract Society. In the sixth year, a series of tracts was commenced both in French and in Spanish. In the tenth year, the "Female Branch" of this Society was organized. In the last year of the New York Religious Tract Society, five series of children's tracts, in all 75 numbers, were issued, most of them from the Religious Tract Society in London, and a large part of them are still continued in the children's series of the American Tract Society. The last Report, for 1825, gives a list of 192 Tracts in the principal English series, 15 French, 10 Spanish, and 75 Children's Tracts. During the year, 754,950 copies were printed, being 500,450 more than in any former year, making the whole number of copies published by the Society, in the thirteen years of its existence, 2,316,694. Total receipts of the year for sales and donations, \$5,537 66. This Society had a number*



of auxiliaries, among which, that at Utica, the Female Auxiliary at Brooklyn, the "Providence Female Tract Society," R. I., and the "Georgia Religious Tract Society" at Augusta, were reported in 1816; Female Auxiliary, Raleigh, N. C., and Religious Tract Society at Savannah, in 1817; Young Men's at Troy, N. Y., and Female Juvenile in New York city, in 1818; and the Female Auxiliary, Lexington, Ky., in 1821.

*The New England (now American) Tract Society at Boston.*

The immediate origin of this Society may be traced to a little meeting of the professors of the Theological Seminary at Andover, with the Rev. Dr. Justin Edwards and two or three of their associates, accustomed to confer upon the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, held about the beginning of the year 1814. The high price of a small religious book had suggested to one of them, the Rev. Dr. Ebenezer Porter, the thought that a few choice tracts, printed in large editions, might be afforded to benevolent individuals in the neighborhood at a much less expense than the little books which they were frequently purchasing for gratuitous distribution. The idea was suggested to his brethren, and excited so much interest as to be made the subject of serious consideration, which soon led to a proposition for forming a small Tract Society. In a few days the constitution, afterwards adopted by the New England Society, was agreed upon, defining its object to be "to promote the interests of vital godliness and good morals by the distribution of such tracts as shall be calculated to receive the approbation of serious Christians of all denominations;" and a subscription was opened, giving each member the privilege of receiving back three-fourths of the amount of his subscription in tracts at cost, for his own distribution. The plan was

communicated to numerous friends in Boston, Salem, Newburyport, and adjacent towns, and the sum of \$3,830 was in a short time contributed. The first tract, containing addresses recommending the distribution of religious tracts and testimonies to their usefulness, was issued; and such was the blessing of God on their efforts, that though bound together by scarcely anything but Christian affection, in less than three months previous to the organization of the Society in Boston, May 23, 1814, fifty tracts were printed at Andover, by Messrs. Flagg and Gould, making two bound volumes of three hundred pages each, amounting to 297,000 copies.

From October, 1819, the Rev. Louis Dwight labored one year as agent for this Society, chiefly in obtaining funds, raising \$400 in Andover, \$1,200 in Boston, \$600 in Salem and Newburyport; more than one hundred persons during his agency being constituted life members, of whom seventy-eight were ministers of the gospel. For the year 1821 the Society issued "The Christian Almanac," prepared by Rev. Dr. Rufus Anderson, then of the Andover Seminary, of which the present *Illustrated Family Christian Almanac* is a continuation. On the 26th of September, 1822, Rev. William A. Hallock, who had graduated at the seminary the previous day, commenced an agency for the Society, and has continued his services for the Tract cause till the present time. In June, 1823, the name of the Society was changed by the Legislature of Massachusetts from the "New England" to the "American" Tract Society. In the year ending May 1, 1824, the Society commenced stereotyping its tracts, inserting cuts in some of them, trimming the edges, and using an improved quality of paper, the style in which most tracts were then issued, being greatly inferior to that of the present time. They also issued the "Proceedings of the First Ten Years of the Society,"

with a brief view of Tract operations throughout the world; and in June, 1824, commenced the American Tract Magazine, which one year after was transferred to New York, and was continued till December, 1842, when it was merged in the American Messenger. In June, 1824, the Society had 205 auxiliaries, chiefly in New England, and had formed in the principal cities and towns of the United States 122 depositories, the publications in which were owned by the Society, and sold on commission, at a very heavy outlay and draft upon the Society's funds. The principal series of tracts comprised 172 numbers, besides twelve children's tracts. The sixth, seventh, and ninth reports were written by Rev. Dr. Edwards; the eighth, by Rev. Dr. Church; the tenth and eleventh, by Rev. Mr. Hallock.

The following is a list of donations and subscriptions to print Tracts, received before, or about the time of the organization of the Society; each donor being entitled to receive Tracts to three-fourths of the amount of the sum contributed.

<i>Andover, Mass.</i>		Mr. Henry Jones	150
Mr. John Adams	40	Messrs. Hoopes & Homer	120
Mr. Timothy Ballard	60	Mr. Jonathan Howe	20
Amos Blanchard, Esq.	40	Rev. Joshua Huntington	120
Rev. Justin Edwards	20	Mr. James Murphy	20
Samuel Farrar, Esq.	120	Abner Phelps, M. D.	20
Messrs. Flagg & Gould	40	William Ropes, Esq.	120
Mr. William Foster	20	William Thurston, Esq.	20
Rev. Ebenezer Porter, D. D.	20	Samuel H. Walley, Esq.	60
Theological Seminary	60		
Rev. Leonard Woods, D. D.	20	<i>Charlestown.</i>	
		Rev. Jedidiah Morse, D. D.	120
<i>Beverly.</i>		<i>Danvers.</i>	
William Burley, Esq.	120	Dea. James Brown	120
Rev. David Oliphant	41	Dea. Fitch Pool	20
Robert Rantoul, Esq.	20	<i>Dorchester.</i>	
<i>Boston.</i>		Rev. John Codman, D. D.	60
Mr. Samuel T. Armstrong	60	<i>Methuen.</i>	
Mr. Pliny Cutler	40	Hon. Nathaniel Hooper	60
Henry Gray, Esq.	60	Mrs. Polly Hooper	60
Mr. William Harris	20		

William Hooper, Esq.	120	<i>Stockbridge.</i>	
Mr. Benjamin T. Reed	100	Thaddeus Pomroy, M. D.	20
Hon. William Reed	60		
<i>Newburyport.</i>			
William Bartlett, Esq.	272	<i>Topsheld.</i>	
Moses Brown, Esq.	40	Hon. Nehemiah Cleveland	20
Thomas M. Clark, Esq.	20		
Rev. Daniel Dana, D. D.	20	<i>Portland, Me.</i>	
Mr. James Kimball	20	Rev. Edward Payson, D. D.	84
John Pearson, Esq.	30	Mr. Edward H. Cobb	150
Mr. Ebenezer Wheelwright	20		
<i>Reading.</i>			
Daniel Chute, Esq.	30	<i>Pelham, N. H.</i>	
		Rev. John H. Church, D. D.	20
<i>Salem.</i>			
Mr. Samuel Adams	20	<i>Rockingham, Vt.</i>	
Mrs. Elizabeth Bartlett	120	Hon. William Hall	20
Ebenezer Beckford, Esq.	20		
Capt. Andrew Haraden	100	<i>Vernon, Conn.</i>	
Mr. John Jenks	120	Rev. Ebenezer Kellogg	90
Des. Eliphalet Kimball	120		
James King, Esq.	120	<i>New Orleans.</i>	
Mr. Ebenezer Secomb	40	Alfred Hennen, Esq.	20
Col. Henry Whipple	60		
			23,530

This Society was organized on the 23d of May, 1814, and incorporated by the Legislature of Massachusetts, in 1816, by the name of the "NEW ENGLAND RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY." In June, 1823, the name of the Society was changed to "AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY," by the act of the Legislature.

#### OFFICERS.

*Presidents.*—William Bartlett, Esq., of Newburyport, was elected President at the formation of the Society, May 23, 1814, and re-elected 1815 and 1816. In May, 1817, Hon. William Reed, of Marblehead, was elected President, and was re-elected every year afterwards until his decease in February, 1837. At the annual meeting in May, 1837, John Tappan, Esq., was elected to fill the office of President, and still sustains that relation to the Society.

*Secretaries.*—The gentlemen who have filled the office

of Secretary, are John Codman, D. D., Dorchester, from May 1814 to May 1821; Justin Edwards, D. D., Andover, from May 1821 to May 1825; Rev. William A. Hallock, Assistant Secretary, from May 1824 to May 1825; Rev. Samuel Green, Boston, from May 1825 to May 1827; Rev. Ornan Eastman, from May 1827 to May 1829; Rev. James L. Kimball, from May 1829 to May 1830; Rev. Walter Follett, from May 1830 to May 1831; Rev. James L. Kimball, re-elected May 1831 to May 1833; but was compelled to resign in November, by ill health, and died early in the following year; Rev. Seth Bliss was elected May, 1833, and has been re-elected every year since.

*Treasurers.*—Jeremiah Evarts filled the office of Treasurer from May 1814 till May 1817; Amos Blanchard, Andover, from May 1817 till May 1826; John Tappan, from May 1826 till May 1835; Rev. Seth Bliss, Assistant Treasurer, from May 1833 to May 1853; Charles Standard, from May 1835 till May 1838; George Denny, from May 1838 till May 1852; James M. Gordon, from May 1852 till May 1853. The present Treasurer, Nathaniel P. Kemp, was elected May, 1853.

#### EARLY OPERATIONS.

*A General Depository.*—This was deemed essential to success, and in their First Annual Report the Commission say: "For various reasons, it is deemed proper that the Society should direct its attention and its measures, primarily, to this simple design. To publish Tracts, and at the same time to take the care and responsibility of an extensive charitable distribution, would constitute a work so complicated and difficult, that a small Society, on attempting it, would be likely to be discouraged, and to fail.

"This establishment, by furnishing a supply of the

best Tracts, to be sold on the lowest terms, will prevent much of the inconvenience and expense to which single Charitable Societies must be subjected, by undertaking to publish their own Tracts. Here, the same Tracts which they would print for themselves, and a great variety of others, will be supplied upon cheaper terms than in any other way.

“Previously to the organization of the Society in May, 1814, 297,000 Tracts, embracing fifty numbers, and making two volumes of 300 pages each, had been printed. But only a part of this amount could be considered as the property of the Society; because a large proportion had been, or might be, taken by original subscribers, agreeably to the terms of their subscription. The actual capital of the Society was, therefore, at that time, but small, compared with the amount of Tracts which had been published. Hence the Executive Committee, after appointing Corresponding Committees in some of the distant parts of the country, and adopting measures to facilitate the sale and distribution of Tracts, soon found it necessary to solicit further donations, in order to increase their capital, and to enable the Society to extend its operations. Encouraged by the liberality of generous patrons, they commenced, and completed the publication of a third volume of Tracts.”

The General Depository was first kept at the bookstore of Mr. Samuel T. Armstrong, Boston. In the year 1816 it was removed to Andover, and Messrs. Flagg & Gould were appointed General Depositaries. This firm also contracted to print the publications of the Society, and did so until the formation of the American Tract Society, at New York, when that Society engaged to print a sufficient supply for both Institutions. In consequence of this change, the General Depository was removed from Andover to Boston, and was located in the basement of the stone church,

Hanover street, August, 1826, and Mr. Anron Russell was appointed Agent. January 31, 1830, the Depository was destroyed by fire, and the Society sustained a loss of about \$2,500. It was immediately located more advantageously than before, at No. 5, Cornhill, and in June, 1838, was removed from that place to the building at present occupied by the Society.

#### PURCHASE OF A BUILDING.

The Society, at their annual meeting, May, 1850, authorized the Executive Committee to purchase the building which they had occupied for twelve years. The purchase was made in June, 1850, for \$8,400—\$900 in cash, and for the balance, a mortgage note was given for \$7,500, at twenty years from date. To meet the payment of this note at maturity, a building fund was established, in accordance with the plan of the Committee, in procuring the purchase. The terms of purchase were made liberal, by the good will of the owner. The \$900 was paid from a small permanent fund, the interest of which was appropriated by the will of the donor, to the distribution of Tracts in foreign lands. The building fund now amounts to \$13,809. This is invested in sound bank stock and in public bonds. No part of this fund has been taken from the contributions of the churches, but is made up from donations and legacies, with the consent of donors, or given expressly for this purpose; and from rents of a part of the building, accruing for a few years after the purchase. The note due for the purchase would have been paid, were the holders willing to anticipate the payment. The rise of real estate has made the property now more valuable. It is no small benefit to the Society to own permanent and convenient accommodations, for its increasing business. The present building is found too contracted for this, and espec-

ally on the ground floor. *The Committee have for some time contemplated exchanging the estate for one more commodious and eligible.*

#### LOCAL DEPOSITORIES.

To establish *Local Depositories* at important centres, early claimed the attention of the Committee. The first year four were located, and each year the number increased, so that, in the tenth year of the Society's existence, 112 *Depositories* depended upon it for a constant supply of religious tracts, viz. :—10 in Maine; 10 in New Hampshire; 10 in Vermont; 12 in Massachusetts; 1 in Rhode Island; 6 in Connecticut; 22 in New York; 1 in New Jersey; 2 in Pennsylvania; 2 in the District of Columbia; 5 in Virginia; 6 in North Carolina; 1 in South Carolina; 2 in Georgia; 2 in Alabama; 2 in Tennessee; 3 in Kentucky; 9 in Ohio; 1 in Missouri; 2 in Michigan Territory; and 1 in Lower Canada.

In that year the Committee say that 'they cannot but advert with much pleasure to the fact, that so many of the *Depositories* established the past year are in parts where the blessings of a preached gospel are less richly enjoyed; and where the circulation of Tracts promises especial good. Of the twenty-eight new *Depositories*, fourteen are west of the *Alleghany Mountains*, or farther south than those mountains reach; four are in the extreme parts of the State of New York, and one in Vermont, near the borders of Canada. The Tracts sent to these new *Depositories* amount to more than 2,500,000 pages. These, together with Tracts furnished to *Depositories* formerly established, to Tract Societies and individuals, make the whole amount of Tracts sent from the General *Depository*, the past year, more than 10,000,000 pages, or about 800,000 Tracts.'

While the *Committee* had the satisfaction of believing



that immense good had been accomplished by the circulation effected through these Depositories, and that thousands through their instrumentality had been born into the kingdom of Christ; yet it was found that the publications, thus scattered, became shop-worn and otherwise injured, so that great losses were sustained; and in the year 1827, in co-operation with the Society at New York, it was deemed desirable to attempt some improvement in the system of establishing these Local Depositories, hoping that still greater good might be secured. It was suggested, that, if instead of the Society owning them, the people living in those places where Depositories were needed, could be induced to establish them at their own expense, take the entire management of them, make the business their own, and conduct it, not with a view to get gain, but to honor God and promote the salvation of men, a deeper interest would be excited in the Tract cause, a larger number would be circulated and read, and, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, more souls would be sanctified and saved. To this suggestion the Christian public kindly responded; and since that time Local Depositories have been formed on that basis. Most of these Depositories have been discontinued, the demand for the publications of the Society being to some extent supplied by those engaged in the book trade.

#### AUXILIARY TRACT SOCIETIES.

With such facilities for circulation, it was evident that the funds of the Society must be enlarged, if these facilities were to be improved; and the Committee advised a "general and extensive formation of Auxiliary Tract Societies;" and in their appeal to the public in behalf of this object, they inquire, "Cannot this be accomplished with much ease? May not a Tract Society be formed in almost every town, or parish, or village? Would not

such a Society be advantageously connected with every Sabbath school? These Societies, with little exertion, might annually collect twice as much money as they would wish to expend in Tracts for their own use, or to distribute in their immediate vicinity. Having procured a sufficiency for those purposes, they might transmit their surplus monies to the Treasurer of this Society. This would enable the Committee to enlarge the sphere of their operations, and to answer some pressing calls for Tracts, which they have hitherto been obliged to deny. It would also exceedingly facilitate the circulation of Tracts, wherever such Societies are formed."

This method of securing funds proved so efficient, that in a few years about 700 Auxiliary Societies were formed, —140 in Maine; 164 in New Hampshire; 96 in Vermont; and 294 in Massachusetts. Each of them contributed more or less to the funds of the Parent Society. Most of these Auxiliary Societies have now become extinct, in consequence of the churches and congregations having generally adopted the plan of annual contributions, and remitting their donations directly to the Treasurer at Boston. The Auxiliaries were for the united purpose of raising funds and circulation—the latter scarcely less than the former.

#### PUBLICATIONS.

In the year ending May 1, 1824, as already stated, the Society commenced stereotyping its Tracts, with some important improvements, to render them more attractive. In addition to the general series of Tracts, they issued the "Family Christian Almanac," and the "Tract Magazine."

In issuing the first number of "The Christian Almanac," in 1821, the Committee report that "they have also

procured another Tract to be published, and one of a different kind from what they have ever published before. It is a Tract of 48 pages, made up principally of facts relative to the present state of the world, with a calendar or astronomical diary prefixed to it. It is entitled, 'The Christian Almanac.' The Committee were informed, by a company of respectable printers, that they would print and circulate such a publication, provided the Committee would furnish the copy, and that they would devote the avails of it to this Society. And although it was late in the season before it was published, yet, through the laudable exertions of the printers, and the numerous friends of the Tract Society, more than 14,000 copies were circulated."

A comparison of the homely aspect and limited number of "The Christian Almanac" for the year 1821, with the beautiful edition of 100,000 copies, illustrated almost in the perfection of the printer's and engraver's art, for the year 1857, furnishes no doubtful criterion by which to judge of the growth and progress of the Society.

*Tract Magazine.*—The first number of this Magazine was published in June, 1824. Its object was thus announced by the Committee:—"The want of a periodical publication, to be a medium of intercourse with the Christian public, has long been felt by this Society. They have wished for such a publication to announce to donors the receipt of their charities; to contain lists of new Tracts published, and new Depositories established; to convey information of the wants of different parts of our own country, and other parts of world; and to contain whatever may be interesting in the correspondence of the Society; especially, accounts of instances in which religious Tracts have been blessed, by the Holy Spirit, to the reformation of the immoral, and the salvation of those who were ready to perish." After one year it was trans-

ferred to New York, and was continued till December, 1842, when it was merged in the American Messenger.

#### METHODS OF CIRCULATION.

1. *By Grants.*—Independent of the spontaneous demand for them through the channels of trade, gratuitous supplies are furnished, to a large amount, for distribution by Bethel, army and navy chaplains, on board our merchant marine, by missionaries at home and abroad, and by pastors, travelers and individual Christians. The value of publications thus distributed annually, including the grants by colporters among the destitute, is not far from \$7,000. The total amount distributed in various grants in our own country, from 1824 to 1856, including those drawn by Life Members and Life Directors, is \$102,460 15; or about one-fifth of the whole amount of sales.

More systematic plans for cities and large towns assume the form of *tract visitation*, or the monthly visits of Christians from house to house to circulate religious tracts, accompanied by personal efforts for the spiritual benefit of the neglected classes.

This system was adopted in the city of Boston, in the year 1830, and soon after, in from 300 to 400 other cities and towns of New England, as well as in other parts of the country. It is supposed that not far from 10,000 Christians, male and female, were thus engaged in doing good, and many tract missionaries employed their whole time in eliciting and superintending their labors, and in efforts for the poor.

2. *Volume Circulation.*—When the Society in New York, in May, 1835, *Resolved*, To endeavor to supply with its standard evangelical volumes the entire accessible population of the United States, this Society pledged its co-operation. It was thought by some that most of these

books were so common in New England, that the demand for them would not be great. It was soon found, however, that the necessity for their diffusion was scarcely less than in other sections of the country.

A Conference of Churches in one County in New Hampshire, after discussing the question, "What shall be done to remedy the neglect of public worship in the County?" *Resolved*, To supply every family, so far as practicable, with these books, as the best remedy available. The same thing was undertaken by the churches in several other Counties in New Hampshire and Maine.

Suitable men were employed, who, by securing the voluntary aid of the members of the churches in the work of sale and distribution, effected a large circulation. It was in this way that most of the volumes were circulated by this Society, excepting those sold directly from the Depository from the year 1835 until 1841, when it became blended with the work of colportage.

3. *Colportage*.—or the distribution of religious publications by sale or gift, with spiritual conversation and prayer—was adopted by the Society in 1842, as an effective and economical mode of evangelizing the masses. Combining the power of the press and of personal influence in aggressive, itinerant labors, it is adapted to a wide territory and a sparse and varied population. It was introduced at a period when the spirit of emigration at home was rapidly peopling the new territories; when foreign emigration began to deluge our shores; when a cheap and vicious press was pouring forth its noxious issues, and when the inadequate supply of ministerial instruction was painfully obvious. It has demonstrated its adaptation to all parts of the country and to all classes of our population, native and foreign, protestant, papal and infidel.

## RECEIPTS INTO THE TREASURY.

*Donations.*—During the first ten years, the amount received in donations, as stated in the Annual Reports for these years, was \$12,463 54. During the last thirty-two years, ending May 1, 1856, which period includes the existence of the Society at New York and our connection with that Society, the amount is \$473,424 35. Total receipts in donations, including legacies for the forty-two years of its existence, \$485,887 89. Of this sum, \$65,431 69 were from legacies.

There has been paid in donations from the field occupied by this Society, directly to the Society at New York, and which did not pass through our Treasury, from \$1,200 to \$1,805 annually, for the last ten years.

*From Sale of Publications.*—The total sales of the publications of the Society, amount to \$542,257 17; of which amount, sales by auxiliaries and colporters, chiefly by the latter, has been made, to the amount of \$211,023, or one million volumes—in Maine, \$48,981 29—in New Hampshire, \$36,481 45; in Vermont, \$22,963 94; in Massachusetts, \$96,795 46; and in Canada East, \$5,798 88. The number of volumes indicated by this total amount of sales, is not far from two millions.

## COLPORTAGE.

This, as already stated, was commenced in 1842. For six years previous to this date, competent, pious men were employed to circulate our publications in towns and villages, by the aid of the pastors and churches, endeavoring to supply every accessible family by sale. Thousands of families were in this way supplied with one or more of our books. But this system did not generally reach those living in highways and hedges. Colportage is designed more especially to reach this neglected class. The time

devoted to colportage for the last fifteen years, in the field of this Society, is equal to the labors of one man for one hundred and ten years, of which thirty-nine years was in Maine; eighteen years in New Hampshire; nineteen years and eight months in Vermont; twenty-eight years in Massachusetts; and six years in Canada East. Their reports show, 234,467 families visited. But as several colporters, and more especially the volume agents, made no returns of families visited, a much larger number were visited than these reports indicate.

*The American Tract Society, formed at New York,  
1825.*

The New York Religious Tract Society, located in the commercial emporium, and with men of enterprise and liberality among its managers, in the year 1824 was contemplating the speedy organization of a National or General Society, with impressions favorable to its location in that city.

The American Tract Society at Boston had already the name of such a Society, its issues were larger than those of all other publishing societies in the country united, and its 192 depositories were located in the principal towns throughout the Union, 26 being in the State of New York, and 43 farther south and west. At the same time, its location in an inland town—twenty miles from Boston—occasioned embarrassment in its mechanical and mercantile operations; rendered transportation and communication with the different parts of the country difficult and expensive; and almost forbade the full union of evangelical Christian denominations, for which the spirit of its constitution provided. It was plain that, as a society for the whole country, the location must be in New York or Boston, and there were important considerations in favor of each of the two cities.

In this state of things, on December 1, 1824, the Board of the New York Religious Tract Society, through a Committee consisting of Rev. Charles G. Sommers, Mr. Arthur Tappan, and Dr. James C. Bliss, addressed a letter to the Secretary at Andover, proposing a removal to New York. The subject awakened in the Committee, officers, and friends at Andover, the most anxious solicitude; the Society held a special meeting on the subject in Boston, January 11, with no definite result, but referring the subject to their Executive Committee. At length, early in February, it was agreed that their Assistant Secretary should visit New York, where he found the deepest interest existing in reference to the new organization. Almost daily meetings for consultation and prayer were held with the officers of the New York Society, and distinguished clergymen. The necessity of a house ample to accommodate the new Society was assented to, and liberal sums were offered by individuals for this object.

The officers of the New York Religious Tract Society, in consultation with clergymen of different evangelical denominations, prepared a constitution, and called a public meeting, March 11, 1825, as preliminary to the organization of a National Society. At this meeting the subscription for a House was raised to \$12,500, and afterwards increased to \$25,852.

Letters were immediately addressed to the principal Tract Societies of the United States,\* inviting delegates

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\* At this time, 1824, there were about thirty-eight Tract Societies in this country; twelve of which were in the Southern States. Most of these Societies were catholic, or not denominational, and were local and limited in their operations. The operations of the Society in Boston, in its resources, circulation and number of tracts issued, exceeded all the others. It had, 1824, 280 Auxiliaries, 122 Depositories. Its series of Tracts numbered 172, and 19 of the children's series. Next to this, in importance and efficiency, was the New York Religious Tract Society.



to a convention, which was held, May 10, Rev. James Milnor, D. D., presiding; Rev. Howard Malcom, Secretary; when the proposed constitution was amended and adopted. On the following day the Society was solemnly organized, and proceeded to the site of the present building, where the corner-stone was laid.

#### *Two American Tract Societies.*

As already stated, the corporate name of this Society had been changed, by an act of the Legislature of Massachusetts in June, 1823, from "New England Religious Tract Society," to that of "American Tract Society." There were now, May 1825, two Societies bearing the same name, and alike in their constitutions and objects. It has also been stated that the Board of the New York Religious Tract Society, addressed a letter to this Society, dated December 1, 1824, proposing that this Society should be removed to New York, and make that city the seat of its future operations, instead of forming a new National Society there.

#### *First Meeting of the Executive Committee to consider the subject.*

A special meeting of the Committee of this Society was held January 11, 1825, to consider this proposal.

The records of this meeting state, that "various communications were read on the subject of removing the seat of the Society's operations to the city of New York." "Whereupon, it was resolved, that it is expedient to inquire,—

"1. Can the Society, consistently with the proper treatment of its donors, remove its funds to the city of New York; and if so,

"2. Is it expedient? and if so,

"3. On what conditions?

"If it is not consistent, or is not expedient, to remove the seat of the Society's operations to New York, then,

"4. Shall any measure be taken to secure a union of *feeling and operation* in any other way between the American and New York Tract Societies." By New York Tract Society, was meant the New York Religious Tract Society; for the American Tract Society in New York was not organized till some months after this meeting.

*First meeting of the Society to consider this subject.—  
Authority given to the Executive Committee.*

On the evening of the same day, January 11, a *special* meeting of the *Society* was holden in the vestry of Park Street Church, at which the Rev. Dr. Edwards, Hon. Samuel Hubbard, Jeremiah Evarts, Esq., S. V. S. Wilder, and others, took part in the discussion, of which meeting the following is the record.

*Rev. Dr. Bates was called to the chair, and opened the meeting with prayer.*

A correspondence between the Committee of the 'New York Religious Tract Society' and the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society was read, on the subject of removing the operations of the American Tract Society to New York.

An animated discussion took place, which resulted in the acceptance of the following resolutions:

*Resolved*, That this Society cordially receives overtures from a Committee in the city of New York, inviting us to co-operate in measures for imparting energy and efficiency to the Tract system of this country.

*Resolved*, That the Executive Committee of this Society, be requested to correspond with the Committee in the city of New York, on this important subject, and to take such measures as they may think will best promote the Tract system of this country.

After prayer by Rev. Dr. Woods, the Society dissolved its meeting.

R. S. STONAS, *Recording Secretary.*

*Second Meeting of the Committee.*

Fifteen days after the first meeting on this subject, i. e. January 26, 1825, another special meeting was held. From the record of this meeting it appears, that "various communications were read, and the subject presented in them discussed." "Whereupon it was voted, that the Assistant Secretary, Rev. William A. Hallock, be commissioned to go to New York, to carry into effect the request of the Society, made at their meeting January 11, 1825."

At this meeting a Committee was also appointed to consider and report on the expediency of removing the Depository of the Society from Andover to Boston.

*Third Meeting of the Committee.*

The next meeting of the Committee was April 27, 1825, to "consider a communication from the American Tract Society, New York, to this Society, inviting it to send a Delegate to that Society, on the second Wednesday in May." They directed the clerk to answer, informing the Society in New York, "that as there would be no meeting of this Society previous to the second Wednesday in May, they could not act upon the subject of their letter."

*Delegation from the New York to the Boston Society.*

The day on which the Society in New York was organized, May 11, 1825, it appointed Delegates to attend the Anniversary of this Society, May 25, and to confer with them on the subject of a union. The six members of the Publishing Committee of that Society, one of whom was the Rev. Justin Edwards, Secretary of this Society, were appointed as this Delegation, of which Rev. Dr. Milner was the chairman.

*Annual Meeting of the Society.—Met the Delegation from New York.—Union with the Society in New York.*

The annual meeting of the Society for 1825, occurred May 25, when it adjourned for a business meeting the next day, May 26, which was fully attended. It being the week of the then general election, many members and friends from the country were present. We copy from the records of that business meeting the following:

The Society met, agreeably to notification, at the vestry of the Old South Church. Hon. William Reed, President, in the chair. The meeting was opened with prayer by Rev. Dr. Spring, of New York. Rev. Dr. Milnor, Rev. Dr. Spring, and Rev. Mr. Sommers, delegates from the 'National Society' in New York, being present, were invited to sit and participate in the deliberations of the meeting.

The proposition for union, and co-operation, between the Society at New York and the American Tract Society was taken up, and a statement made of what had been done by the 'National Society.'

The preliminary measures taken by the two Societies relative to an union were called for and read: Whereupon, after an animated discussion, it was

*Resolved,\** That it is highly desirable for this Society to become a Branch of the 'National Society,' established in New York, and that the Executive Committee be authorized to consummate this union, upon such principles as will promote the great object of both Societies.

SAMUEL GREEN, *Recording Secretary.*

*The Committee meet to confer with the Delegates from New York.*

On the evening of May 26, the Executive Committee met to confer with the Delegation from New York. The records of that meeting of the Committee state that:—

The Committee proceeded to a negotiation of the terms of union with a Delegation from the American Tract Society at New York, composed of Rev. Dr. Milnor, Rev. Dr. Spring, and Rev. Mr. Sommers. The meeting was opened with prayer by the Rev. Mr. Sommers.

\* This resolution was offered by Rev. Dr. Griffin.

The following resolutions were then unanimously adopted:

Whereas it is one principle of union between this Society and the American Tract Society established in the city of New York, that our present series of Tracts be continued in circulation by that Society, with such alterations as shall be acceptable to the Publishing Committee of that Society, and the Executive Committee of this, therefore

1. *Resolved*, That a Committee of this Board be appointed to act, with full powers, in connection with the Publishing Committee of the American Tract Society at New York, in preparing and perfecting this permanent series, and that the Rev. Leonard Woods, D. D., be the Committee for that purpose. *Also Resolved*, That it is the wish of this Committee, that the second series of Tracts be published by the Society at New York, on the same terms.

2. *Resolved*, That it is desirable that this Committee should, for the present year, continue to prosecute the business of printing Tracts according to the above arrangement, as far as the great design of the National Institution shall permit.

3. *Resolved*, That this Society agree to transmit their stereotype plates and engravings to the Society at New York, as the interests of that Society shall require, and to receive the Tracts of that Society in remuneration, the plates and engravings to be estimated at cost.

4. *Resolved*, That it is the wish of this Committee, that the Executive Committee of the Society at New York should, as soon as convenient for them, take the publishing of the American Tract Magazine under their charge, on the condition of their supplying us with as many copies as we need, at cost, and of their inserting in those which we take, an account of the receipts of our Society.

5. *Resolved*, That it is the desire of this Committee, that the Executive Committee of the Society at New York, should publish the Christian Almanac for 1833, from the Boston edition, with such alterations as they deem proper; and that in future years they should make arrangements for publishing this work at New York.

6. *Resolved*, That it is the understanding of this Committee, that the Tracts taken by this Society from the Society at New York, shall be furnished on as low terms as they can be published by this Committee, in this place.

7. *Resolved*, That a copy of the above Resolutions be communicated to the Delegates from New York, and that, provided they give their assent to the principles involved in these Reso-

lutions, this Society shall become a Branch of the American Tract Society established at New York, and that its union with that Society shall be then, and on those principles, consummated.

Attest,

SAMUEL GREEN, *Clerk of Com.*

*Report of the New York Delegation.*

"The delegation appointed by the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society, to represent that body at the annual meeting of the Society of the same name at Boston, and to confer with them on the subject of a union, respectfully report:

"That two of their number, the Rev. Dr. Knox and the Rev. Mr. Summerfield, were prevented, the former by indispensable duties, and the latter by severe indisposition, from proceeding to Boston. The other members of the delegation arrived at that place on Tuesday evening, the 24th instant. On the following day, preparatory conferences were held with the members of the Executive Committee of the Boston Society. In the evening of the same day, the delegation attended a meeting of the Society itself, for the reading of the Annual Report, the delivery of addresses, etc., in the Old South Church, and on the urgent request of the Committee of Arrangements, took part in the exercises. On the following day, the Society's meeting for business was held, when the important question of its union with the national institution was fully discussed; and the delegation being privileged to sit with the Society, and share in its deliberations, communicated whatever information circumstances required in relation to the past proceedings of the Society in this place, the negotiations between the Executive Committee of the two Societies, and their own views of the most eligible prospective measures. The delegation are happy in bearing their testimony to the truly Christian temper with which a protracted and very interesting discussion was conducted, and to the marked respect and kindness with which their own communications were received. It will not appear extraordinary, that some considerable variety of sentiment should for a time have obtained, and that several members of the Boston Society, to whom the subject of a union with the national institution was new, should hesitate in acceding to the propriety of the measure, or

differ in opinion as to the time and manner in which it should be accomplished. But the result of a candid and free inter-communication of sentiment, and a full consideration of the reasons urged for a generous and prompt accession to the wishes of the Executive Committee of the Society, was such as might have been anticipated from the characters of the esteemed individuals to whom the decision of the question belonged. Without a dissenting vote, the Boston Society agreed to become a branch of this, and authorized their Executive Committee to take the necessary steps for a consummation of the union. In the afternoon of the same day, the delegation attended by invitation the meetings of that Committee, and after uniting in prayer for wisdom from above, the terms of union were adjusted in detail in so satisfactory a manner, as to induce the delegation to communicate a written expression of their approbation to the committee, and to lead them to expect that a formal document of the same kind, if desired, would be transmitted from their constituents. The delegation have great pleasure in stating that the esteemed President of this Society was their associate on all the occasions above mentioned, and that they derived great encouragement and advantage from his presence and advice. They have also great reason to express their gratitude to the brethren in Boston, for their kind and affectionate reception and treatment, and to the Executive Committee in particular, for the promptness and facility with which they proceeded in carrying into effect a measure of such vital importance to the great object of both Societies as that which, under the blessing of God, was so soon and so harmoniously accomplished. It would be a criminal ingratitude to the great Being who rules in the hearts and guides the affairs of men, if the delegation were to omit the declaration of their persuasion that the deliberations were conducted under the influence of his Spirit, and that to him belongs the honor of their propitious termination. Let us receive it as a pledge of his approbation of our work, and conduct all our future operations with a single eye to his glory.

\* JAMES MILNOR,  
\* GARDINER SPRING,  
\* CHARLES G. SOMMER\*"

*Proposals Accepted.*

The following letter contains the acceptance, on the part of the American Tract Society at New York, of the overtures made by the American Tract Society at Boston.

NEW YORK, MAY 31, 1825.

To the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the  
American Tract Society at Boston:

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society of this city, on Monday the 30th inst., the Rev. Dr. Miller, from the Committee of Delegates appointed to represent this Society at the anniversary meeting of the American Tract Society in Boston, and to confer with its Executive Committee on the subject of a union of the two Institutions, made a report to which was appended,

1. A certified copy of a Resolution adopted at a meeting of the American Tract Society in Boston, on the 26th inst., authorizing its Executive Committee to consummate a union with the National Tract Society established in this city, upon such principles as will promote the great object of both Societies.

2. A certified copy of a series of Resolutions adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society at Boston, on the 26th inst., and declared to contain the principles on which that Society consents to become a branch of this Institution; and

3. A note from said Delegates, approving of said Resolutions.

*Wherefore, Resolved,* That the Report of the Delegates be accepted, and that their doings be ratified by this Committee.

*Resolved,* That this Committee fully approve the Resolutions adopted by the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society at Boston, on the 26th inst., as reported by the Delegates, and are happy in the consummation of the union of the two Societies, on the principles therein recognized.

*Resolved,* That in the absence of the Corresponding Secretary of the Society, a copy of the foregoing Resolutions be communicated to the Executive Committee of the American Tract Society at Boston, by the Secretary of this Committee.

SIDNEY E. MORSE, *Secretary of the*  
*Exec. Com. Am. Tract Society.*



*Executive Committee to the Public.*

The Executive Committee of the American Tract Society in Boston, about the same time presented to the Christian public their own view of the union thus happily consummated, in the following

*Statement.*

It is well known to the public that a correspondence was opened, during the last winter, between members of the Tract Society in New York and the Executive Committee of this Society, in reference to the establishment of a national institution in that city, and the more extensive diffusion of religious tracts through America. It would be wholly superfluous to give the friends of the Tract Society a particular account of that correspondence, or of the various subjects which it brought under consideration. It is sufficient to say, that our Committee did all in their power to obtain necessary information respecting the proposed union between our Society and that in New York, but did not deem it proper to enter into any engagements, choosing to refer the whole subject to the decision of the Society. The measures which have been adopted in New York, so honorable to the Christian zeal and liberality of gentlemen in that city, and so auspicious to the cause which the American Tract Society has long labored to promote, have been laid before the public. The national institution which has been established, and for which the sum of \$20,000 has been contributed before the commencement of its operations, sent a delegation to the American Tract Society, which held its annual meeting in Boston on the day of our general election. The members of the Society, then assembled, were far more numerous than at any previous meeting. The Society attended to the communications of the delegation from New York, consisting of the Rev. Doctors Milnor and Spring and Rev. Mr. Sommers, and also of their Executive Committee; and after a full discussion of the subject before them, unanimously passed the following resolution; namely,

*"That it is highly desirable for this Society to become a branch of the National Society established in New York; and that the Executive Committee be authorized to consummate this union*

*upon such principles as will promote the great objects of both Societies."*

After the meeting of the Society, the Executive Committee, in connection with the delegation from New York, proceeded, in conformity with the above resolution, and with perfect unanimity in respect to every measure proposed, to consummate the union of this Society with the Society at New York.

The principles of this union will be reported in detail to the Society at their next meeting. It is sufficient now to say, that according to the plan mutually agreed upon, the American Society at New York will adopt our present series of tracts as the basis of theirs, subject to such alterations only as will fit them for circulation among the friends of evangelical truth of different denominations; and will supply all the tracts we receive of them, for our depositories, at as low a rate as we can publish them in New England. They have also chosen the former Corresponding Secretary of our Society to be a member of their Publishing Committee, and have given him full power to act with the other members of that Committee as to the additional Tracts which shall be published by the National Society. The terms agreed upon respecting the Tract Magazine, the Christian Almanac, and all other subjects, are such as must be entirely satisfactory to both Societies.

From this brief statement, it will be apparent what reason we have not only to be satisfied, but to rejoice in what has been done. The American Tract Society, which has been in successful operation for so many years, and has taken such strong hold on the affections of the Christian community, retains its distinct organization, its constitution, its members, its funds, its officers, and its auxiliaries; and will, it is hoped, make increasing efforts, and have increasing success in promoting its great object, *the dissemination of the most useful religious tracts*. There will be no loss, but, it is believed, great gain, as to the economy with which the great business of publishing tracts in America will be carried forward. There will be great gain also as to the extent to which religious tracts will be spread. The establishment of the institution in New York, with which our Society and other societies are to cooperate, will, it is hoped, contribute ultimately to a tenfold increase of the tracts annually disseminated; while the plan

of union adopted secures the inestimable advantage of having the same series of tracts—and that series the best which can be prepared by the united labors of all concerned—disseminated through all parts of our country, and among different denominations of Christians. Who can tell how much will, in this way, be accomplished towards removing hurtful prejudices, and uniting all the friends of Christ in their affections and prayers, and in their endeavors to advance the prosperity of Zion? Amid the dissensions of past ages, such a cooperation of Christians of different names might have been found impracticable. But, blessed be God, a new era has arrived, and things once impossible have now become easy.

The union of different societies in their efforts to disseminate religious tracts will be likely to give a far greater impulse to the public mind in favor of this mode of doing good; and we trust the result will be, that a vastly greater amount of useful tracts will be spread through America, than would be done by the efforts of different societies acting separately.

On the whole, we think it will become more and more evident in future time, that all the friends of evangelical truth ought to regard the events above recited, as a new reason for gratitude to the King of Zion. And while we commit this blessed cause to his almighty protection, and indulge the most cheering confidence in his infinite mercy, and while with pious emotion we exclaim, *What hath God wrought!* we find ourselves urged by a thousand motives to go forward, with increasing ardor, in our endeavors to do good to the souls of men.

In behalf of the Executive Committee,

May 31, 1828.

LEONARD WOODS.

*The Union Ratified by the Boston Society.*

This Society, at its Annual meeting, May 29, 1828, adopted the annual Report of the Executive Committee, in which they say:

"The Committee cannot but reflect, with the highest gratification, on the amicable, and as they hope beneficial, connection, which has taken place between this Society and the American Tract Society instituted at New York.

The superior facilities, which that city possesses over every other in this country, for holding direct and easy communication with all parts of our own land, and with every commercial nation of the world, render it peculiarly adapted to be the seat of a great national institution; and the promptness and liberality, with which its conductors and friends in that vicinity have contributed to its growth and efficiency, give the most animating promise, that its ultimate usefulness will correspond with the pious wishes, the extensive views, and the spirited enterprise of those who devised it. The managers of this Society have, during the last year, erected a house for the accommodation of its business, at an expense of \$20,000. These funds were appropriated to that object by the donors. More than \$10,000 have been contributed for printing Tracts. The series of this Society already consists of 185 Tracts, making nearly six volumes of 400 pages each. The Society has printed 697,000 Tracts, comprising more than 8,000,000 pages. It has already begun to form State Auxiliaries; and by the catholic spirit which pervades its constitution and its measures, it is leading the smaller societies, through our country, and of various denominations of Christians, to co-operate, and become its auxiliaries. Although it is a younger member of the same family with us; yet, since it has, as your Committee trust, come into existence and been nourished with the same pious feeling and zeal, they by no means regard its rapid enlargement and power with a jealous eye, but hail with joy its high aim and cheering promise to concentrate in itself the piety, the wisdom, and the vigorous united effort of the nation, and to become the radiating point, from whence the messengers of truth and salvation shall go forth over the breadth of the world. With this Society your Committee will always be ready to co-operate in every way which shall promise to conduce to the prosperity of the two Institutions, and the furtherance of their common object. With this view, your Committee, soon after the union of the two Societies, gave official information of the fact, and of the terms of union, to the members and Auxiliaries of this Society; that, as both Societies are united in pursuit of the same object,

have the same series of Tracts, and furnish them at the same prices, the members and Auxiliaries of this Society might consult their own convenience, and determine for themselves, whether to continue their connection with the Society in Boston, or transfer it to the Society in New York. Several of the former Auxiliaries to this Society, and many new Tract Societies which have been formed, have found it more convenient to receive their Tracts from the sister institution.

"The Committee have not introduced this subject of the union with the American Tract Society at New York, as furnishing a reason why this Society, or others in this vicinity who have increased its usefulness by their contributions, should relax their efforts, or should feel the obligations to make continued and augmented efforts in its behalf, in any measure diminished. On the other hand, they would present this union, as a new excitement to effort; because they believe, that on the present arrangement, the funds of this Society can be productive of more good, than if it acted separately from the Society in New York."

#### SUMMARY VIEW.

We have now given, from the Records of the Society, and from those of the Executive Committee, all the documents relating to this subject bearing upon the origin, nature, and extent, of the relations of this Society to the National Society.

The first proposal was from the New York Religious Tract Society, that this Society move its seat of operations to that city, and thus become more of a National Society. This was declined, but a willingness was expressed to take measures to secure a union of *feeling and operation*, and our Assistant Secretary was sent to New York, to confer with friends there to effect this. The result was the organization of the American Tract Society in that city.

Then, secondly, proposals came from the new Society

to unite with them "in measures for imparting energy and efficiency to the Tract system of this country." Correspondence on this subject led to the appointment of a Delegation from that Society to this.

Thirdly, this Society cordially met the Delegation, and with them amicably discussed the whole subject. These fraternal counsels and prayers, resulted in this Society's becoming so far a branch of that, as to unite in co-operating with it for the more efficient and extensive promotion of the same great object, for which each was founded; while each retained its own independence, and the control of its funds and operations. (See pages 32-34.)

#### *Difficulties in the way of the Union.*

The records show what some of the difficulties were, and from those now living, who shared in the discussions and responsibilities of the measures adopted, we learn of other difficulties. The records show that this Society was not willing to be removed to New York, and become merged in that Society. It originated in New England—had secured chartered rights—had grown and prospered till it was doing more than all the other Tract Societies in the country—had numerous auxiliaries, some of which were found in all the States—its publications were widely circulated and esteemed for their evangelical and catholic character—its friends and patrons were numerous and increasing—it had a national name and character, and was well established in the confidence of evangelical Christians. If the seat of its operations was not the best for the largest influence, its roots had struck too deep in New England soil, to be transplanted. This last point settled, the proposal to form the Union which was finally consummated, encountered other difficulties, but which happily yielded to fraternal discussion.

The good men who had to decide this movement, wished to secure a decidedly *evangelical* character in the publications of the new Society; and especially those statements and applications to the conscience of the evangelical doctrines which they regarded as best adapted to promote the conversion of sinners, revivals of religion, and experimental as well as practical piety. It was thought by New England divines of that day, that views on these important subjects prevalent in some parts of our country, were unfavorable to these results, if not opposed to them. To remove this objection, the New York brethren agreed to take the entire series of the Tracts of this Society, numbering 177, as the basis of their own series, and the series for the young, numbering 19, to be continued in circulation by their Society, such alterations only to be made therein as should be acceptable to the Publishing Committee of that Society, and the Executive Committee of this. They also agreed to pay for our stereotype plates and engravings at their cost. And as a further guarantee for the integrity of these publications, in their evangelical and theological character, the Society in New York had already elected Rev. Justin Edwards, then the Secretary of this Society, on their publishing Committee. They had also elected for their Secretary, Mr. Hallock, the Assistant Secretary of this Society. Then, in addition to this, another security on this point was the appointment of a committee by this Society, with full power to act in connection with the publishing Committee of the Society in New York, in revising this series of our own Tracts, and Rev. Dr. Woods was appointed this Committee. But important as this Society regarded this security for the evangelical character of the publications of the new Society, the additional motive of the twenty thousand dollars raised for the new Society by its friends in New York, was a consideration

in deciding the question. This Society made over to them no property for which they did not pay.

*Field of the Boston Society.*

It was agreed that for the more convenient and more efficient prosecution of the general object which both Societies are seeking to promote, this Society should take the supervision of, and collect its funds from, the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, with the exception of those counties lying west of the Green Mountains, in the two latter States. This part of New England made Boston its commercial centre. The rest found access to New York easier. But since iron roads have been stretched from Boston across the Green Mountains, and to the distant sections of New England, this Society has embraced the whole of these four States, as the field for which it more especially cares and from which it collects its funds.

*Funds paid the New York Society.*

For four years after the union, no funds were paid by this Society to that, except for publications. But soon the destitutions in our own country awakened more attention, and more funds were given to supply these. About the same time earnest appeals for the millions destitute in foreign and pagan lands were made, and funds solicited to supply them. In 1842, colportage was first commenced in this country, by these Societies. To supply these destitutions, this Society has made appropriations through the National Society as it was able.

The funds which this Society pays to that, as donations, the Committee appropriate to aid that Society in its work in foreign and pagan lands, or for colportage in our own country; so that this Society controls and appropriates to specific objects, all its donations, and employs that Society



to expend the money on objects of our own selection. That Committee, after obtaining from their foreign correspondence, and from missionary Boards, the wants of the foreign field, send us a statement of the amount they expect to remit, for the current year, together with the specific sum appropriated to various countries, societies, and missions, and request us to pay such of these specific appropriations as we choose to select and pay. The whole amount appropriated by this Society for the foreign field, since 1833, is \$84,925 95, in annual appropriations of from \$500 to \$10,000; and except about \$1,000, this sum was remitted through the National Society.

Since the system of colportage was adopted, in 1842, the larger portion of our appropriations has been paid for this object, in the West and South. Besides expending \$42,635, for colportage in our own field, we have paid \$146,471, to the Society in New York, since 1842, for the support of from fifty to seventy colporters, employed by that Society in those parts of our country. This money is paid toward the support of individual laborers, and their quarterly reports are sent to us, for the patrons who furnish us the funds for this specific purpose. These congregations, societies and individuals, which send us funds for colportage, generally select the field in which the money is to be expended; so that a large part of these funds are appropriated specifically by the donors themselves, when they are paid into our treasury.

#### *The Publishing Committee.*

The Publishing Committee of the National Society is chosen annually by the Board of Directors of that Society, and by the provisions of the constitution shall contain "no two members from the same ecclesiastical connection; and no tract shall be published to which any member of that Committee shall object." In the har-

monious co-operation of the two Societies, nothing has been done to prevent the free action of that Board of Directors in annually electing the Publishing Committee. It was understood by those who were active in effecting the union, that the wishes of the Society at Boston, whose operations, at that time, were more extensive than those of all the other Tract societies in the country united, would be duly regarded in the annual election of the Publishing Committee. At the formation of the Society in New York, three weeks before the Union was consummated, the Board of Directors elected Dr. Edwards, who was then the Secretary of the Boston Society and a member of its Committee, as one of the Publishing Committee of the National Society. It is also known to be a fact, though not a matter of record, that when, in 1829, Dr. Edwards, having engaged in his temperance agency, resigned his place in the Publishing Committee, the Secretary at New York communicated with the Secretary at Boston, and it was mutually understood, that the election of Rev. Samuel Green would be acceptable to the Boston Committee. The same course was pursued in 1834, on the death of Mr. Green, in reference to the election of Rev. Dr. Fay, who resigned in 1839, and Dr. Edwards was re-elected. In 1853 the same course was pursued, in reference to the election of Dr. Adams; and this Society has reason to expect the continuance of such courtesy and Christian confidence, as a means of perpetuating the harmony which has thus far happily existed between these two affiliated Institutions.

#### *Publications.*

Being supplied, by the terms of the union, with the publications issued by the National Society, on as low

terms as we can produce them, and being so highly evangelical in character—embracing such a variety of topics, relating to experimental and practical religion, and to sound morals, and so well adapted to all classes of persons, and also in all the languages spoken in our country—the Committee have found no occasion to issue an independent or a different series. Soon after the National Society began to publish its standard volumes, several printing houses in Boston made proposals, at the request of our Committee, for supplying this Society with these, of the same quality and style, on their lowest terms. It was found that, by accepting the lowest of these proposals, the Society would gain nothing in publishing these books here. Then the experiment was tried, of purchasing these books of that Society in sheets, and binding them here; but we soon found that nothing was to be gained by this course.

Whenever our Committee have requested, of the New York Committee, an increased discount in the prices of their publications furnished us, they have uniformly and cheerfully allowed it. Soon after this union, the price of our Tracts was reduced one-third from what they had previously been.

The most entire harmony, and mutual respect and good will, have prevailed, for thirty years, between the executive officers of the two Societies. They have been intimately united in counsels and labors, and mutually respectful of their relations to each other, in prosecuting their common work, as proposed by the terms on which they agreed to co-operate. Neither Society is merged in the other. Each maintains its distinct and independent existence, on the basis of its constitution, and its distinct and independent character as a corporation.

## OBJECT OF THIS UNION.

*A more comprehensively National and Catholic Union of evangelical Christians in the United States, was the object of this Union of the two Societies.*

That the founders of both of these Societies were among the wisest and purest minded men, no one can doubt. They were impressed with the great idea, that the essential truths of evangelical religion are held in common by all real Christians, and they believed that united sanction and combined effort to spread these truths, would give them a wide circulation and great power. Christian union, therefore, in sentiment and action, was the object they sought to accomplish, and was made the basis of the Societies they founded.

The original constitution of the Boston Society, was catholic in its character. The second article required that its tracts "shall be calculated to receive the approbation of serious Christians, of all denominations." Yet it was founded, directed and sustained, for the first ten or fifteen years, chiefly by those of one denomination. Its successful operations had awakened a desire in other sections of the country, for a more comprehensively national and catholic Society, and to be located in the commercial metropolis of the country. This led to the formation of the American Tract Society in New York, which adopted the name, and substantially the constitution, of the Boston Society, expanded to a more comprehensive union of evangelical Christians—a union which, in itself, should be an honor to our common Christianity, and in which Christians of every name, and from every section, might unite to spread those truths which they received and loved in common and regarded as essential to vital godliness and sound morals. This was the plan and object proposed.

*This object was accomplished and has prospered.*

We have seen from the records of this Society, (see pp. 24-5,) that the first proposal to remove the seat of the Society's operations to New York, was declined; but at the same time the Committee expressed a willingness to "take measures to secure a union of feeling and operation in any other way, between the two Societies."

On the evening of the same day the Society met to consider this subject.

The records of that meeting state, that the Society received the overtures from the New York Committee, and were willing "to co-operate in measures for imparting energy and efficiency to the *Tract System of this country*;" and that "the Executive Committee were instructed to correspond with them on this important subject, and to take such measures as they may think will best promote the *Tract System of this country*."

The Executive Committee accordingly, at their meeting fifteen days after this meeting of the Society, voted to send the Assistant Secretary to New York, to carry into effect the vote of the Society. The result was, the formation of the American Tract Society in New York, and a delegation from that Society to this, for the purpose of mutual conference. The result of the conference between the Society and this Delegation, as expressed in their vote, was, "that it is highly desirable for this Society to become a branch of the *National Society in New York*, and that the Executive Committee be authorized to consummate this union, upon such principles as will promote the great object of *both Societies*." See pp. 27-8.

The documents we have quoted show that this union was consummated and ratified by this Society, and satisfactorily to the friends of both.

In the Appendix to the Annual Report for 1825, Rev. Dr. Woods, in behalf of the Executive Committee, says, as above quoted, "It is believed there will be great gain as to the *economy* with which the great business of publishing Tracts in America will be carried forward. The establishment of the Institution in New York, with which our Society, and other Societies, are to co-operate, will, it is hoped, contribute ultimately to a *tenfold increase* of the Tracts annually disseminated; while the plan of union adopted, secures the *inestimable advantage* of having the same series of Tracts, and that series the best that can be prepared by the *united labors* of all concerned, disseminated through all parts of our country and among different denominations. Who can tell," he asks, "how much will, in this way, be accomplished toward *removing hurtful prejudices*, and *uniting all the friends of Christ* in their affections and prayers, and in their endeavors to advance the prosperity of Zion. Amid the discussions of past ages, such a *co-operation of Christians of different names*, might have been impracticable. *But, blessed be God, a new era has arrived, and things once impossible, have now become easy.*" See pp. 32—34.

In the Report for 1826, the Committee say, speaking of the results of the union, "We would present this union as a new excitement to effort, because *we believe that on the present arrangement, the funds of this Society can be productive of more good, than if it acted separately from the Society in New York.*" See pp. 34—36.

The numerous auxiliaries of this Society, in different parts of the country, were notified that it was at their option to continue their relation to this Society, or transfer it to the New York Society, as might be most convenient to themselves. Those located without the field of this Society soon after transferred their relation to the Society in New York, and remitted to it their funds.

That Society invited the smaller local Tract Societies in the different States, to unite with it as auxiliaries or branches, and remit to them their surplus funds, and adopt their publications.

*The plan was received with joy and confidence by good men in all sections of the country.*

The Southern States, as well as the Northern, at that time (1825) had their local Societies, and their own distinct fields of effort. All these interests were yielded up at once, and they became merged in the great plan of a National Evangelical Union.

The Religious Tract Society, of Charleston, became the South Carolina Branch. The Society in Augusta, Georgia; the one in Richmond, Virginia; and the one in Baltimore, Maryland, were united as auxiliaries to the National Institution. The New York Religious Tract Society merged itself in the National. The New York State Society, located in Albany, and the Connecticut Society, in Hartford, became Branch Societies, and the Societies in New Haven became auxiliaries. A Branch Society was soon formed in Philadelphia. The Evangelical Tract Society in Boston, consisting principally of pally of members of the Baptist denomination, also became its auxiliary. Other existing Societies, in different parts of the country, soon did the same, and new auxiliaries were formed in all the western and southern States.

This mutual confidence soon expressed itself in liberal contributions. In the second year of the Society's existence, the Baltimore Society sent to its treasury \$250; the Richmond, \$341; the Charleston, \$350; the Augusta, \$831; the Savannah, \$88. So Wheeling, Norfolk, New Orleans, Huntsville, Louisville, Lexington, as well as the northern cities, sent their funds to the New York Society. These sums may seem small. But the whole operation

was then small. The whole amount of donations to the Society, the first year, was less than \$7,000. Whether small or large, they show that the interest felt, and the confidence reposed, were not confined to any one section of the country, but were general.

The same cordial co-operation and confidence have continued, and steadily increased, in the north, south and west. As early as 1827, there were fifty-eight auxiliaries in the Southern States. In 1828, there were one hundred and thirty-five. During the same year, thirty-four individuals, in those States, were made Life Directors by the payment of fifty dollars each, and sixty-four Life Members, by payment of twenty dollars each. In 1829, the whole number of auxiliaries and branches, immediately connected with the National Society, was six hundred and thirty, all of which sent donations to the Society that year. These were found in twenty-seven States and Territories. More of these auxiliaries existed in New York, Connecticut, and Virginia, than in any other three States. The north and the west gave with increasing liberality, and contributions from all sections have ever since that time steadily advanced.

The publications of the Society have been welcomed by good men in all sections of the country. Colportage has been prosecuted in all the States, and has been cordially approved, and liberally patronised, by evangelical Christians, in all sections, from California to Maine, and from Texas to Canada. The experiment of a union of evangelical Christians, for more than thirty years, for the one single object of disseminating, to the widest extent, the great essential truths of our common Christianity, has so far proved to be practicable, and more successful than the good men, who founded these Societies, at that time anticipated. May such efforts continue, and the spirit which animates them increase, until the



prayer of our common Lord and Master is more fully answered, in the realization of a more comprehensive union of all who love Him, in more vigorous efforts to extend the triumphs of his gospel in all nations.

By order of the Executive Committee.

SETH BLISS, SECRETARY.

*Boston, March 10, 1857.*

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ERRATUM. Page 25, 8th line from the bottom, instead of "The day on which," &c., should read as follows: "The Society in New York having been organized May 11, 1825, their Executive Committee appointed delegates," &c.

ART. 7. The Treasurer shall give such bonds for his fidelity in office, as the Executive Committee may require.

ART. 8. The Board of Directors shall have power to inspect the records and proceedings of the Executive Committee, and report thereon.

ART. 9. No assessments shall be laid upon the members of the Society.

ART. 10. Any Tract Society, formed on the principles of this Society, and annually contributing a donation to its treasury, shall be considered an Auxiliary; and the President and Secretary of such Auxiliary for the time being, shall be, *ex officio*, members of this Society.

ART. 11. That the benefits of the Society may be enjoyed no less in distant places than near the seat of its operations, the prices of its publications shall be, as far as practicable, the same in all parts of the United States.

ART. 12. All meetings of the Society, the Board of Directors, and the Executive Committee, shall be opened by prayer.

ART. 13. The Officers of the Society and the members of the Executive Committee and Board of Directors shall be elected from evangelical denominations of Christians; and no book or tract shall be published or circulated, as long as any member of the Executive Committee shall object to the same.

ART. 14. Special meetings of the Society may be called by order of a majority of the Executive Committee or of the Board of Directors, by publishing one week's notice in one or more of the religious newspapers in Boston, patronized by the denominations of Christians co-operating with this Society.

ART. 15. At any annual meeting, such amendments of the Constitution may be made, as may be recommended by the Executive Committee, and approved by two-thirds of the members present.

#### OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY FOR 1856.

*President.*—JOHN TAFFAN.

*Vice Presidents.*—*RI.* REV. MANTON EASTBURN, *HON.* GEORGE N. BRIGGS, *HON.* SAMUEL WILLISTON, JACOB SLEETER.

*Directors.*—*HON.* RICHARD FLETCHER, REV. EBENEZER BURGESS, D. D., REV. BENJAMIN TAFFAN, D. D., REV. Z. S. BARNSTOW, D. D., REV. CHARLES WALKER, D. D., ISRAEL WASHBURN, REV. BARNAS SEARS, D. D.

*Executive Committee.*—JOHN TAFFAN, HENRY HILL, WILLIAM HOPES, REV. BARON STOW, D. D., REV. EDWARD N. KIRK, D. D., CHARLES D. GOULD, WILLIAM B. REYNOLDS, JAMES C. DUNN, EDWARD S. RAND, ARBER KINGMAN, REV. A. I. STONE.

*Secretary.*—REV. SETH BLISS.

*Treasurer.*—NATHANIEL F. KEMP.

*Auditors.*—JULIUS A. PALMER, CHARLES D. GOULD.

