

A Bible Automobile.

Porto Rico, the Island without the Bible.—The Spirit of Independence.

By Edith Mary Irvine-Rivera.

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IT is encouraging to know that here in Porto Rico where Catholicism has reigned for more than four hundred years, and where but a few years ago the Bible was unknown or, if known by a few, read secretly, to-day it may be found in the homes of many, and is being read by many of the natives.

The American Bible Society under the direction of Rev. W. F. Jordan has accomplished much in the distribution of the Bible, its portions, and the Gospels.

The Bible Society agency was organized here in 1898, and the majority of Porto Ricans had never seen a volume of the Holy Scriptures; and the colporteurs began to till an absolutely barren field.

They were met with opposition of every kind. The priests warned the people against allowing the Book a place in their homes, and forbade their reading it; but the colporteurs worked on unswervingly until the report for 1901 says that up to that date 2,570 volumes had been circulated.

At the close of the year 1910 the Bible Society had sold 74,614 volumes, including Bibles, Testaments, and portions; and in 1911 the Society circulated 35,130, nearly half as many as during all the preceding years.

Mr. Jordan says that the increase in sales was due to a house-to-house canvass made by the colporteurs, and that they had been richly compensated for their efforts by conversion of souls as a result of the personal work.

Not only he, but every representative of Protestantism in Porto Rico, has felt the effect of this valuable labor spent among the people in general. Just a few years back one could travel miles upon miles, and visit barrio after barrio, without seeing a Bible; but now it is nothing unusual to find one in the professional man's library, in homes which are not professedly Protestant, and even in the peasant's humble hut; and its presence is forcible in every vicissitude.

Men have more principle than they had yesterday; women think more

broadly and independently; and many, illiterate but reaching out after the true and good, have bought the Book and actually learned to read after coming into the possession of it.

There are many such cases; but one woman, a member of the writer's Sunday-school class, has had just such an experience. She could neither read nor write, but from a yearning desire to know more she began to pick out letters from the Bible and to acquaint herself with them, and to-day the woman who can recite the most Scripture in that class is the woman who yesterday didn't know one letter from another.

The latest scheme which Mr. Jordan has invented for the carrying on of his own work is the purchase of a light automobile for the purpose of reaching the rural districts more rapidly and at less expense, and so far the little machine laden with so precious a cargo has given good results.

At the close of last year Mr. Jordan became anxious to do the same kind of work in Haiti that he has been enabled to do in Porto Rico, and with this aim in view Rev. Mr. Williams was left in charge of the work here while the new field of labor should be visited and opened up.

Mr. Williams is an enthusiastic Bible worker as Mr. Jordan, and his long experience in Cuba fits him amply for the work here.

He believes in striking high, and he says that he believes that not many years hence the Bible will be carried to every part of the globe by aeroplane. He says the advantage of distributing the Bible by means of aviation would be that the colporteur or agent could reach his destination without impediments of any kind, and thus save more time and reach more localities.

Time will prove whether Mr. Williams will be able to carry out his idea, and in the meantime we in Porto Rico are quite satisfied with the Bible automobile, which is able to traverse city and country, and speedily carry the gospel to every creature.

Arecibo, Porto Rico.

