

Missionary Evangelism.

East Tennessee, North Georgia and Western North Carolina.

DEAR FRIEND:

Another year has rolled into eternity, and as the cold winter wind sweeps down on us from the north, it is a gentle reminder that it is time to prepare my annual report showing something of the work accomplished during the past year and to briefly outline the vast territory and needs yet before us.

The prayers and interest of our friends, during the past year, with the offerings that came from time to time, have been very greatly appreciated, and have been a real help to us who are in the front of the battle.

We have received and put out about 97 copies of Bibles and Testaments; the smallest number of Bibles handled any year since being in the work here; three boxes and one barrel of clothing and some tracts.

We have been giving our attention this year, partly, to new fields, the building of two church houses and to evangelistic work. In the revivals held we have counted two-hundred and forty-five definite professions. Many calls we were not able to fill.

Have organized two Sunday Schools. One has 124 scholars and the other about 40. Have organized one new congregation with a prospect of three more very soon.

The Mission School at Culberson, N. C., is still moving on with 33 pupils and a prospect of more soon. Sister Briggs, from Illinois, is teaching this year and is doing excellent work.

Our work, as I have often explained, is among the poor who can do but little toward our support, therefore, we pass through many privations and now find ourselves, with all our efforts to economize and the sacrifices we have made, a little behind, which is very embarrassing to say the least. Two of our workers, who spend nearly all of their time in the work, have some little children they have not yet been able to clothe sufficient to attend Sunday School this winter.

I have just returned from a trip back in the mountains that I wish to describe briefly.

After going back as far as the train would take us, we then started on foot. The first stop was at a little rough plank house about 14x16 feet, only one room. In the room was two beds, cook stove, table, a few old rickety chairs, potatoes, sack of cow feed and the cow at the door. The door fastened with a chain like an old stable door; no windows at all. About one hundred yards to the left stood a little rough open log hut, not fit to call a home, but it was occupied.

A meeting was in progress near, so we attended at night and after preaching several came to the altar and two made bright professions. After service we walked about four miles in the dark and at one place I missed my footing and fell into the mud. Next morning before we were up, the neighbors began to come in, having heard of our arrival. Here we secured a guide and again started on our journey up the mountains. We endeavored to stop at one or two houses in every settlement. The first stop was at a tent, worn with age and use. The family, pigs, chickens and ducks, all seemed to have about the same privileges to occupy the "tent house." In this settlement we were told that the "Hard-shell Baptist" is the prevailing religion. Next, after winding down and along a trail, we were led to a little hovel, very open and hardly fit for a hog pen, old stone fire place for cooking and three or four rickety seats. This was called a home. A widow lived there and her daughter who had been married and had two or three small children. We learned they had never owned a Bible, no minister had visited them for twelve years and none had read any portion of the Bible to them in that time. We read, sang and prayed for them. We're told here that there are about twenty families in about the same circumstances in this settlement.

About noon we reached another settlement of about twenty-five or more families. Houses about the same as described above. They appeared so hungry for meetings. Their houses are small and open, but they will do the best they can for us. Some had been praying for God to send them a minister to hold them a meeting. We promised them a meeting soon.

The next point they had no Bibles, and the man we talked with said, "they don't think of them things here." From this place we passed over a long distance where no one lived, and only a narrow trail leading up and over a great mountain. At 5:15 p. m. we stood in "Eagle Gap," 25 miles from where we left the railroad. It was after dark before we reached a place where we could stay over night. We soon learned that we were right at the head of what is known in this country as "Jeffrey's Hell." This is a great basin, about 14 miles long and 10 miles wide, covered with large timber. Hemlock, cherry, buckeye, poplar, oak and cucumber, all measuring from two to four and one-half feet in diameter. The undergrowth, laurel, ivy, briars, etc., is so thick that no one can get through it without cutting his way with an axe as he goes. It is a den for bear, panthers, wildcats and wild hogs, reptiles, etc. It derived its name from a man by the name of Jeffrey who declared he was going through it or go to hell, so as he was never seen any more, it was from that time called "Jeffrey's Hell." Our party of four, including the guide, had a desire to explore a little; so we descended three or four hundred feet into it, and there among the trees and the underbrush, we knelt upon the thick green moss and had our morning prayers, after which we continued our search for lost humanity. We were told here that about twelve miles further on, with only a trail leading to the place, there is a large settlement where they are practically without the gospel. To reach them and supply them with Bibles we will have to carry the Bibles and go on foot or horseback over a wild country with only a trail to follow for nearly 20 miles.

From this point we went in a north-westerly direction to another settlement with circumstances similar to those already described only they had a school and a house where friends hold meetings occasionally. Inquiries here disclosed to us a stretch of twenty miles of inhabited country beyond this place where they were without any gospel privileges whatever. No churches of any kind, no preaching, and probably no Bibles. It was on the receiving of this bit of information that my heart turned sick. I have had many similar experiences while traveling in the mountain districts and many of the different places and incidents come fresh to my memory again. When I was among Christian influence and refinement in my native "Hoosier" state, I never thought of such a state of depravity and the need of Gospel work anywhere in our beloved "Christian America" as I have seen since the beginning of my travels and labors in these mountains ten years ago.

Having traveled extensively over twenty counties, going into the poorest homes and sharing their kind hospitality, hearing their sympathetic pleadings for the gospel in its purity and receiving a large number of calls by letter and otherwise, saying, "Come over and help us," it gives me a broad view of the situation.

As I sit here and take a trip in my mind to the hundreds of places where I know just the conditions; as the great harvest field which is "already white unto harvest" looms up before me, I sit in wonder and amazement. What can I do? is the great question. I kneel down and pray. Again I resume my writing, while tears spring to my eyes unbidden and I think of the multitudes who are going to land in a devil's hell and somebody is going to be responsible. Oh! I must do my best. I must die at my post. Any sacrifice is not too great to save one soul from hell. Some one may say, "But those people could do better." Yes, but we must find them just as they are, and in the back way places, too, or they will die and be lost without being awakened. We must find them and wake them up. Much is being written about the rescue work in the cities and much good is being done there which is all well and good, but there is real "slum" work to be done in these mountains. Brother, Sister, can't you help us? I feel pressed to do something I have never yet done since I entered this work. I have made some feeble efforts to show the conditions and needs of the people in the back mountain settlements and have asked a number of friends to pray for God to supply our needs and expenses while we spent our whole time in the work. Quite a number have prayed, and some have sent small donations besides, which has been greatly appreciated and has been a great help, and without this aid I could not have done what I have, but now I feel like just asking kindly for help. With plenty of means and Bibles (the large print Testament is the most useful) at my command I can do so much more and reach so many more places, than with the scant supply of the past.

Brother, Sister, to whom this may come, wont you make a little sacrifice for Jesus' sake along with us who are making a whole sacrifice? We do not care to dress fine, only comfortable and decent, but we want means to carry and send out the gospel of Jesus among the poor. Dear Brother Bryant, one our of faithful workers, is on a 50 miles tramp today from one point in the mountains where I left him yesterday to another for a meeting over Sunday, because I had no means to pay his fare around on the railroad. But he goes without a murmur. I can get the men if I can just get the means to keep them in the field all the time. If you cannot send any help yourself, please pray for us and see if you can't get some others to give you something to send.

Please help us with large print Testaments, clothing or MEANS to make a special effort to reach these lost people away back in the mountains the coming year. Pray over

the matter and please do not cast this lightly aside. I am known by friends in nearly every state and Canada as a mission worker in these mountains. I can supply you with any number of references. Correspondence is invited and any question bearing on this work will be given due attention. Please let me hear from every one who may receive a copy of this letter.

I hope our friends will not forget that February and March are always our hardest months. How I wish I could express to them my gratitude and thankfulness for their prayers and kind assistance in the past. Surely God will reward them.

If any one feels interested to do so, please send for copies of this report for distribution. Hand it out or mail to your friends. Please help put it out. It is intended only for the glory of God and to get help to reach the people we have herein described. We kindly solicit the prayers and sympathy of every Christian.

We assure you that we have been trying with all our God-given powers to make the investment of those who have been contributing aid in the past, yield them a good interest on their investment, so they will get their rewards in the world to come. Some have written me that they had received pay in great blessings already for what they had done.

Believing you will feel an interest in the work and not pass this lightly by, I am yours very humbly in the Master's service.

A. J. TOMLINSON,

CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE

December 31, 1907.