

## COLPORTEURING AS IT IS IN JAMAICA

(Annotto Bay Convention report, 1908, starting on page 41.)

To appreciate the experiences of our dear colporteur brothers and sisters who have been greatly used of the Lord in spreading the Truth in this island, one must know something concerning the land and its people. In order that the brethren in other places might know some of the natural obstacles which confront a colporteur in Jamaica, we give this brief description of the physical features of this “isle of sunshine” as it is sometimes called.

Jamaica is one of the British West Indies, situated in the Caribbean Sea, about 100 miles south of Cuba. The extreme length of the island is 144 miles and its greatest width 49 miles. The land, which is studded with numerous hills and mountains, in most places, also abounds with a luxuriant growth of tropical vegetation. The amount and the varieties of fruits and vegetables which the fertile soil produces is beyond the comprehension of nearly everyone who has never visited its delightful shores.

Most of the people are planters and either bring their produce to market to sell to city people at retail or else they haul it to one of the shipping depots where Agents of the big Fruit Companies buy it from them to ship to England and America. The country being so interspersed with hills and valleys, travel is made quite difficult and inconvenient in many places.

The Government Railway has two lines which run from Kingston to Port Antonio and Montego Bay on the northern side of the island. Some of the friends in the country places live 25 miles from the nearest station. To reach their homes it is necessary to sometimes ford rivers over which there are no bridges, and to walk for many miles up the mountain paths which lead to their dwellings. The dear ones do not mind the long walk because necessity has gotten them accustomed to it. Some walk 6 miles to meeting every Sunday, rain or shine. Heavy showers of rain are not infrequent, and these make the small roads quite muddy and difficult to walk upon as well as slippery in the steep places.

It is over these roads, that the colporteurs travel with their volumes, seeking to garner the “wheat.” Suppose, for instance a colporteur is at home, having returned from the “field” for some reason and now wishes to go into the work again. An order for books is sent to the Society’s branch office in Kingston to be shipped to the nearest railway station, or by parcel post to a more convenient Post Office if the package is a small one and the office nearer. The colporteur, if he be a brother, sets out from home on foot to go to the Railway to get the books he has ordered. With him he has his Colporteur Bag which is quite different from the dress suit cases which most colporteurs in America use to carry their books in. Most of the bags are of wood, and are covered with black oil cloth to render them waterproof. The opening is at the side and when loaded to their full capacity

some of the bags hold about 30 volumes besides other traveling requisites such as are necessary to make up one's toilet. Occasionally a small loaf of bread and a few joints of sugar cane are tucked away in one corner, to provide bodily refreshment on the journey. A stray volume, a Tower or Convention Report is usually part of the equipment and this assists materially in supplying spiritual food to sustain the New Man in hours of trial or of loneliness.

To reach the station before the sun's heat becomes too oppressive, it may have been necessary for the brother to leave his home before the break of day; As he nears the station, the town folks are lined up about the railway platform awaiting the arrival of the train, which is often the event of the day. Women with large trays which they balance upon their heads, are endeavoring to find customers for their wares which consist of many kinds and shapes of bread, cakes and pastries which are unknown in America. Numerous barefooted boys are on the alert to carry the hand baggage of the incoming passengers and the Hack men are hoping for a shilling or two from those whom they shall drive to their homes.

Our colporteur brother may perhaps satisfy his appetite with a bun purchased from one of the trays which the women are carrying and if he feels thirsty he turns to some other person who is selling water-coconuts. These are unripe coconuts, and the drink is quite refreshing. Until the arrival of the train, he redeems the time, by engaging some one in conversation upon some portion of the Truth or he may distribute a few Tracts which he has brought with him to those who seem to be intelligent.

Having received the volumes for which he was waiting, he packs as many of them in his bag as he can. The remainder he re-wraps in paper and ties with a stout cord and some sort of a handle is improvised to prevent cutting the hands. Having suspended the colporteur bag from his shoulder by a stout strap and taking his umbrella in one hand and the parcel of books in the other, he is off. None but those who have done it, can appreciate what it is to carry such a burden for miles, under the boiling heat of the tropical sun. Love alone could prompt such labors, especially where the remuneration financially is so small. Some of the dear colporteurs travel from 16 to 20 miles in a day and often 10 or 12 hours elapse from the time they start to canvass in the morning until they stop for rest from their day's labor.

In the course of the day, our brother reaches the territory that he intends to canvass. It is a new field to him, having never been in that district before. He sees a house at his side. It is perhaps a quarter mile from the road and high up the mountain side. The flesh says, don't go, but the old will is dead and so he approaches the little foot path which leads to it, and starts to ascend. His progress is slow and difficult owing to the fact that the rains have made the way quite slippery. Perhaps he has a slight fall before he reaches the top, but he doesn't mind it. At last he reaches the house which is a sample of many others

throughout the island. It is a small one room affair, which the owner constructed solely by his own labor. A few straight uprights have been driven into the ground and between these he has neatly plaited some split branches. After this has been completed the whole four sides are daubed with clay both inside and out. After thatching the roof and hinging the door and making a window which can be closed in time of storm, the builder-owner steps into it and calls it home. The kitchen stands apart from the house. It is constructed of the same materials as the living room, but is of smaller proportion. A cloud of smoke ascends from the building which assures the intruder that dinner will soon be ready.

In answer to our colporteur brother's, "Good morning!" a woman emerges from the kitchen. She is barefooted and the bandanna kerchief which was upon her head she is using to wipe the perspiration from her brow. With the last puff, she removes the pipe of tobacco which has been tightly clenched between her teeth and says in a sort of cold, unwelcome voice, "Mornin." The brother has an intelligent appearance and his manner is gentlemanly and so the woman has mistaken him for some official in the public service who perhaps has come to compel them to evacuate their humble abode because they have been delinquent in the payment of their taxes; but the brother soon quiets her fears by announcing his mission.

She is one of the thousands who fail to place an order for books, because of poverty, the inability to read, or because some enemy to the Truth has prejudiced their minds against the volume. Nevertheless, the brother's manner impresses her and so he is invited to stay to dinner. After eating a hearty meal of boiled green bananas, cho cho's, yams, akee's and salt fish, our colporteur is on his way.

As he passes along, a number of children who are coming from the country school mock him, shouting after him "Millennial Dog! Millennial Dog! No Hell! No Hell!", etc. The opposers are more open in their expression against the Truth and its people here than in America. One soon accustoms himself to it and like the brother we are following, they pass it by unnoticed. The summer sun had withdrawn itself behind the heavy clouds which hang over the mountains, and soon our fellow soldier of the cross, finds himself enveloped in a heavy downpour of rain. The strong wind renders the umbrella almost useless and before he can reach the nearest house his clothing is wet through, but he goes on rejoicing esteeming it only as a light affliction. Seeing his condition, the master of the house, who has just come in from the farm to escape the shower, bids him a hearty welcome. While supper is preparing, the "Reaper" explains his errand and succeeds in getting an order for the first volume which he leaves upon receiving half payment. In the morning the brother is up early. He offers his host money to pay for the night's lodging, but as is usually the case, it is refused. After a light breakfast, extending hearty thanks to Jehovah and those who have thus befriended him, our brother bids his host, "Good Day," and is once more on the road to engage in his labors of love. His clothing had not dried

from the previous day's shower, when he first put it on in the morning, but as the sun's rays get hotter all traces of dampness are removed.

To-day, a new difficulty confronts him, the river is swollen from the heavy rains and the current has carried the trunk of the coconut tree which acted as a bridge away down the stream. How shall I get across, is the problem which confronts our dear fellow laborer. He removes his shoes, and taking his bag of books he wades in, but the water is too strong and too deep for him, so he is forced to return to shore again. He waits patiently for some time until at last a strong man appears who for a small consideration, carries first the books to the other side, and then returns to take his passenger across on his back. Thus this difficulty is passed and our friend is ready once more for any emergency that may arise. And so it goes throughout the trip, which lasts on an average of about 6 days.

### **Colporteur Experiences of Sister M. F.**

Once I was out colporturing, several miles from home in a strange district. A shower of rain compelled me to take refuge in a small shop where several young men were gathered. Upon my entering and seeing the bag which they were well aware contained the volumes, all of them began hissing and saying all manner of evil against me. I told them if they'd only be quiet and orderly I'd explain the "plan" to them; but one of the number objected saying, they would have the advantage in talking with a woman. I told them that I was at no disadvantage and so we came to a conversation, in which by the help of God, I was able to explain the "Divine Plan" to them in such a way as to convince them of the truthfulness of what I was saying. There were about 10 men present and from all of them I received orders for the volumes, which I delivered later.

Another time I was out canvassing when I met up with a young man who had heard something about the books before. Upon introducing the books to him he spoke very disrespectfully of them, saying, they were only fit to be given to children as play things. Presently a gentleman came up, who proved to be an old minister in whom all the people had much confidence. Upon hearing the conversation, and being asked for his opinion, he sent away for his "key" to settle the argument. When the "key" came, it proved to be Vol. 1 of the Scripture Studies. I directed his attention to Chapter VIII, which supported the view I was presenting. The parson agreed with me and the young man being convinced, bought a volume on the spot and gave me an order for two more which I supplied later.

I went once to supply an order to a young lady but did not find her home. Her father who had some knowledge of the books, was in the house and upon my entering he began using some very abusive language to me, and drove me out of his yard, at the same time telling me that what we teach is blasphemous; because we say there is no hell etc.

I turned to go, but before I did so, I tried to show him that some one must have misrepresented the teachings of the books to him. I began to put out a little of the “plan” to him and he followed me about 10 chains talking with me until we reached the road. Then he stopped and listened attentively, until his frowns changed to smiles. When I had finished talking, he thanked me for the explanation and bade me God speed. From these various experiences I am learning wonderful lessons of faith and humility and I shall ever remain in the Master’s service till he says, “It is enough, come up higher.”

### **Interesting Colporteur Experiences of Brother L. G.**

Canvassing one day at Bowden, a tram driver gave me a free lift from Bowden to Golden Grove, a distance of seven miles and promised to bring me back, but the tram left me in the morning and consequently I had to take another road leading to another district. I called at the gate of an English woman but her husband refused to give me admittance. I passed on and called back a second time, and again the husband prevented me from going in. Somehow the wife got to know that I had called twice but had been prevented from seeing her by her husband. During that time she was reading the 3rd Volume which had been loaned to her, and was so much interested in it that she desired to buy a volume for herself. So anxious was she to get it that she left word with a neighbor that if I could not come in from the front, I must come in from the back way. The third time I called, to my surprise the husband let me in freely; a little boy ran to tell his mother that the bookseller was coming and she hastened out to meet me. On meeting me she said, “The wrath of man shall praise God the remainder that will not praise him he will restrain.” She shook my hand, took me inside, bought the set of Volumes and is now rejoicing in the truth.

Once I called at the home of a man and sold him Volumes 1 and 2. I called on him a second time and he told me I had sold him a pearl and if I had passed without coming in, the Lord would judge me for it. Little did he know that the Chief reaper is directing the work by his own Wisdom. Canvassing at Yallahs Bay the people opposed me, and sent off for an intelligent man to come to their assistance. When he came, the Lord lifted up the Truth before him, through me in such a way, that he was convinced that it was the whole truth; and said to those who were my opponents, “My friends, our doctrine is spurious.” He bought Volume 1 from me and they were all ashamed and every mouth was stopped.

While canvassing in Rocky Point district, I met a girl who said, this man is selling some books which say there is no God and there is no hell. I did not take special notice of her, for I did not acknowledge myself to be that man she spoke of. As I moved off about a chain I met a man in another person’s yard, possessed with an Evil Spirit and as he saw me he yelled out saying, “These are the same books that the Apostle Paul caused to be burned in his day. Nobody should buy them.” I turned to the woman and said to her, “the man is possessed with a demon.” When I had thus spoken, the demoniac

immediately walked away and left me and I made a successful canvass for the books. In all these things his faithful ones are conquerors and more, through Him who loved us and bought us with his own precious blood.

### **Colporteur Experiences of Brother J. B.**

One evening while canvassing over rough and steep places, I got wet and also very weary. As it was the first time I had ever gone to that part of the island, and it was growing dark, and there was no house in sight, I found it very difficult to get a place to lodge. I inquired of those I met if there was anyone who could give me a place of shelter and also a piece of clothing to sleep in for that night until at last I succeeded, for which I give praise to our heavenly Father. The owner of the house kindly took me in, and ordered his daughter to get me some dry clothing. I slept well till morning when they dried my own clothing and gave them to me.

I then had the pleasure of canvassing the gentleman who told me that he was a churchman and would not like to be led away by the books; but I pressed upon him until he finally gave me an order for one of the volumes. After leaving him I went around the neighboring district and secured a few more orders. I had not gone far however when my boots gave way and I was compelled to walk home, which was a distance of 6 miles. During the journey I became so weary that I almost gave up, because the sole of my feet became so sore that I had to walk in the sides of the road where the grass grows in order to get a little ease. When the time came to deliver the books I started out from home barefooted with a bag of books to walk about 10 miles. I kept up courage and delivered a goodly number of the books through much tribulation. In all such experiences His faithful ones are conquerors and more, and I give praise to our Father for them all.

While canvassing in the same district and passing through the same place, darkness overtook me and I went to the same house in which I had lodged before but the family refused to take me in. I went all around inquiring for a place but could find none. Finally I decided to go into a half finished Church and made my bed there. It was November and the night was quite cold. We took some benches for our bed and lay down to sleep. During the night there was a cold rain and as a consequence our feet were almost numbed from cold when we arose in the morning. "The father knoweth what things ye have need of."

Once I was journeying for about 14 miles with a bag of 18 books and some pamphlets. I was obliged to take off my jacket and carry the books on my head as the day was exceedingly hot and I was suffering with eczema at the time. Just about 11 o'clock, a hard shower of rain took me at a spot where there were no houses. At first I did not know what to do, but as I did not have an umbrella, I went under a tree and broke off some

palm branches and covered my bag of books. When the rain was over, I examined the books carefully, and found that not one of them had gotten wet. Thanks to God.

Another day I had quite a different experience. I was caught again in a heavy shower. Most of the books got wet up and spoiled, and my clothing looked as though it had been dipped in blood because the rain had caused the red dye to run from the covers of the books. One day I had to ford a river 9 times and after that I had to climb a great mountain. At times I was so tired that I had to stop and rest at almost every step. My bag contained some 16 or 18 volumes beside pamphlets and in climbing the mountain I slipped and fell many times; but I soon got up again and started off. At other times I have lost my way in the dense woods, but the Lord has always helped me to find my way out.

One day a man carried me over 3 rivers on his back. (Note:—Many of the rivers in Jamaica have no bridges across them and at the fords the water is often knee deep.) Sometimes I have to get up before day break to catch the people at home, as many have to leave the house quite early to go to work. Then again I have had to canvass some at night. Where there are no stores to get anything to eat, I have often had to go to bed hungry.

One day I canvassed a man and he gave me an order, but when the time came for me to return with the book I did not find him at home. I told his daughter that I would leave the book till later on in the day; but the woman refused to allow me to leave the volume, saying that she couldn't see why her father had given me the order as he had no money and besides he could not read. I insisted on leaving the book, but this only made her angry and she told me that if I were to leave the book, she would throw it out of the house. I paid no attention to her, but gently laid the volume upon the table. I had no more than done so, when the woman threw it off on the floor, When I had stooped down and picked up the book and placed it on the table again she ordered me to leave the house. I told her that I had not come to see her, but her father. This statement kindled her anger to such an extent that she took hold of me and forced me from the house. Though unknown to either of us, someone had been watching the entire proceedings, and at this juncture called out, "You must not ill-treat the young man like that. Remember he is a stranger, and not only so, but he is a gentleman and you should act like a lady towards him." The person was the young woman's brother. He told me to leave the book and look to him for the money. I had only been gone from the house a few hours, when he sent me the two shillings for the book and said he was sorry for what his sister had done. I praise God for all these various experiences he has permitted to come upon me.

### **Colporteur Experiences of Sister O. G.**

I have been engaged in the Colporteur field for quite a while now, and I have no cause to regret entering the service, as I am learning some wonderful lessons which are fitting me

for the Kingdom. The following are some of my experiences and how I have been exercised by them:

I remember once I was out colporteur, and up to 8 P.M. I had not secured a place to rest for the night. I traveled from house to house; but at every place I was turned away with sharp insults. At last I was brought to the condition where I decided to sleep in a large cave. Just as I came to this conclusion, a young man who had been watching me came forward and directed me to his brother's home about half a mile away, where I was well provided for during the night. From this experience, I learned to trust the Lord more; knowing that he is quite able to take care of his children. I also learned more humility, for as soon as I humbled myself, and was willing to sleep in the cave, the Lord counted it as though I had actually done so and sent me immediate relief from the trying situation.

Another time I took an order from a man and as I approached the house to deliver the book, I saw him crawling under the house to hide from me. I went to the wife and asked for the husband. She told me he was away and not expected back till the following week. I opened my bag and took out the book and then called the man out from the cellar. After he had made his appearance, I told them the responsibility of giving an order; but that I sympathized with his weakness and that he must try and be more manly in the future. I see from this experience, that the people of the world need our pity in many respects and I am learning how to do so now, in order that I may be qualified to sympathize with them in the next age.

At another time I went out to deliver the second volume to a lady to whom I had already sold Volume 1. As I neared the yard, she ran out to meet me, bawling out, "I am lost, I am condemned." I went up to her and said coolly, What is the matter my dear lady? She told me that the book she had bought from me had condemned her, and that she was lost. I told her that the whole race is lost, and not yet found. I also informed her that she is indeed under condemnation, but that it is not she alone, and that it was not the book that had brought the condemnation upon her but father Adam, who over 6,000 years ago by eating the forbidden fruit of Eden, had brought the condemnation of death upon himself and all his race, who were then in his loins.

Once I was in the field for 3 days, without putting out even a single pamphlet. On the 3rd day my purse being exhausted, I placed myself directly in the hands of the Lord asking him to direct me what to do. I was led to try again so I went to a lady's yard and canvassed her. She did not buy a book, but told me to wait till her little boy came home from school, and if he could read the book she would buy one for him. I waited patiently till I saw him coming but he was such a little fellow that I knew he could not appreciate the book. I went up to him and patted him upon the head saying "Oh my! What an intelligent looking little fellow. He will surely be able to understand the book in time."

These words encouraged his mother, and she bought the first volume for her son. She also ordered the second volume and I continued visiting the home till finally I delivered the full set of “studies” to her. From this we see that we must be wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

Once I sold a volume to a man who paid me only a part of the money. On returning at the appointed time for the balance, I met the daughter who asked me if I was the lady who had sold her papa the red book. I said yes. “Well ma’am,” she replied, “if you go into that house today, you will meet ‘hell’.” I went on notwithstanding this threat, and found the man in the yard in a very sulky mood. I decided to overcome him by my pleasant manner, and so instead of allowing him to speak his mind to me I began by saying, “Good evening, sir, I am very pleased to see you, I am sure you have been reading the book; for I can see it in your looks. Yes, these books brighten one’s whole life, and that is the reason my life today is such a happy one. These books when properly understood, change one’s disposition altogether.” With several such expressions, I introduced the other volumes, so that his frowns and bad temper were changed into smiles and a pleasant look greeted me as I gazed into his face. The man paid me the balance due on the first volume, bought the second and ordered the third. I continued visiting him till he now has the set of six. I have learned by all these varied experiences to trust my heavenly Father more and more and that he is causing the wrath of man to praise him and the remainder he will restrain.

### **Colporteur Experiences of Brother H. P. C.**

Upon one occasion, I was taking an order from a lady for a copy of the first volume, in the district of Albany. After introducing the book, in my usual way, stating that no Christian can afford to do without it, another lady who was listening attentively, exclaimed, “That is the very book I want for my son. A few weeks ago he got hold of a book from somewhere, that is teaching him some very bad doctrine,—that there is no hell of ‘eternal torment’ for anyone, and as a consequence he has refused to attend his church. I believe the book you are selling sir, would just help him out of his difficulty.” I assured her that it would and she immediately purchased a copy for her son. Since then I have not heard anything of them; but I trust the young man is now doubly sound in his doctrine.

### **Colporteur Experiences of Sister A. R. L.**

Once another sister and I were colportering in a mountainous district in Westmoreland, called Potters. During our first visit, we sold some Volumes of Dawn through the instrumentality of a man who had bought three volumes at a neighboring estate. This man did not read even the preface before he recommended the books to all the people in the district. After we had gone away he read the preface and misunderstanding it set the

whole district against us by saying that we preach that Christ and His Apostles made mistakes and that men nowadays are wiser than they. When we returned to deliver our orders, as we entered the district, we heard that the people were all waiting to give us a thrashing. The information was really true, and had it not been for God's protection, we would probably have been badly ill treated. Every man refused his order, and those with whom we had left the books on credit at our first visit, returned them to us. When we tried to explain, they said that the men who were against the books were far more intelligent than we were. All that we could say availed nothing and we were obliged to leave amid the angry threats of the inhabitants that if we ever returned they would murder us. We went away rejoicing at being counted worthy to suffer for Christ.

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**Praise and Testimony Meeting Led by Bro. Lionel Gilling.**  
(Annotto Bay Convention report, 1908, starting on page 12.)

I am indeed glad, dear brethren and sisters, to be with you upon such a happy occasion. The love and the sympathy which the Lord's people manifest toward each other, rejoices my heart to overflowing. No truly consecrated child of God can help rejoicing when he or she stops to meditate upon the exceeding great and precious promises contained in the Divine Word which show our heavenly Father's love for us.

Among the many promises which our Lord has given to us, the one which specially comes to our minds at this time, is the promise that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He will be present in their midst. If so small a number as two or three are promised a blessing when they meet together in the name of the Lord, how much greater blessing should we who have assembled here in this convention receive. . .

We trust that you all have come seeking a blessing and have good appetites for spiritual food and that you will eat lavishly from the table which our Lord has promised to spread before us at this time. It is more than an ordinary meal, it is a banquet. Not only is there an abundance and a variety of this food, but it also most wholesome and strengthening to the New Man.

I wish also to remind you, dear brethren and friends that this is not the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society's Convention, that it is the convention of Believers in the Atonement between God and men through the sacrificial death of the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all.

For many weeks past, our desire for this convention to begin, produced in many of us a disease known as "convention fever," which is only curable with the medicine of the

Word compounded by some of the Lord's brethren and administered in the presence of an assembly of saints.

While we are here in Annotto Bay, let us remember that the people of this place are going to watch us, to take note of what we do and what we say, and may their observation of us convince them that we have some of the Master's spirit because we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Let us try by our words and our actions to show them that we are indeed the children of our Father which is in Heaven, for we should be lights in the world, shining for Jesus continually.

I will not say more for I see in your countenances that your hearts are overflowing with joy and that you are all anxious to give testimony to the love that you have for the Brethren and toward our Heavenly Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ who have done such great things for us, whereof we are glad.