

# BIBLE SOCIETY RECORD

VOLUME 54

JULY, 1909

NUMBER 7

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## The American Bible Society and the Fourth of July

**T**HE RECORD appears this month quite early for a special purpose. It so happens that the Fourth of July falls on Sunday. It has been thought appropriate to ask ministers and churches taking note of this fact to bring forward the American Bible Society as a great national institution, whose foundations were laid early in the history of the republic, and which has always had a recognized standing as an institution influential in shaping the national life.

When the Revolutionary War broke out a great scarcity of the Holy Scriptures ensued, and on a memorial brought before Congress asking that an edition of the Bible might be printed by the Government, Congress ordered an importation of 20,000 copies of the Bible from Holland or Scotland or elsewhere, and the order was accordingly made. In 1777 a New Testament in English was printed in Philadelphia by Robert Aitken, and in 1782 the same publisher printed the entire Bible, which, after examination by the chaplains of Congress, was recommended by Congress to the people.

These facts ought never to be forgotten, and there could be no greater service rendered to our people to-day than to have ministers repeat them on the coming "high Sabbath." This is a Christian nation and the Bible is its corner-stone.

### Elias Boudinot, the First President

Elias Boudinot, the first President of the American Bible Society, ought to be better known in American history, and though we are repeating a more than twice-told tale, it is suitable to set down here some facts in his life. Of the finest Huguenot ancestry, he was himself personally and representatively a typical American of his day. Born in Philadelphia in 1740 and baptized by the Rev. George Whitfield, he studied law at Princeton with Richard Stockton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, beginning his practice when only twenty years of age. In 1772 he was made a Trustee of Princeton College, a position which he held for fifty years. In 1775 he was chairman of the Committee of Public Safety at Elizabeth, and then a member of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey. In 1777 he was appointed Commissary General of Prisoners in the American Army, and superintended the Intelligence Department of the army. He was thus brought into very intimate relationship with General Washington, but was obliged to give up his position to take his seat as a member of the Continental Congress in 1782. He was chosen President of Congress, in which capacity he signed the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain, the chair in which he sat at the time being one of the heirlooms of the Bible House. At the close of the war he returned to local practice, and his name is the first entered on the roll of counselors admitted to practice before the newly organized Supreme Court of the United States. On the re-establishment of Congress he was elected a member of the House of Representatives, and subsequently was appointed by Washington Director of the Mint.

But among all his honors, which are many, there was one which he regarded as his crowning distinction. He helped to lay the foundations of the American Bible Society, and at the age of seventy-eight was elected its first president, recovering from what it was feared was his last illness, to preside over its affairs with vigor for four years, and at his death leaving it an endowment of \$10,000. He is thus the first link in a chain connecting the public men of the nation and the Society. It has been happily continued during the ninety-three years of its history by such men as John Jay, Richard Varick, Theodore Frelinghuysen, and many others.

It will surely approve itself to the judgment of the friends of the Society to ask that July 4th be celebrated with some reference to these historic events, and especially that the endowment begun by Elias Boudinot should be continued in his spirit and power by generous responses to the generous offer of a Christian woman, who has been moved in these later days

to offer one-half million dollars to the Society on condition that one-half million shall be subscribed by others before December 31, 1909. In doing so, we beg to remind all our friends that, while there has been a steady stream of contributions since the first announcement of this offer, the most of these gifts have been in small amounts and have come from a comparatively small minority. We are, therefore, publishing in many papers a special appeal which we may hope will be seen by half a million people. Of the one hundred men and one hundred women who were asked to subscribe \$1,000 each to the fund, we have received the names of two more; and very recently one Christian woman has subscribed and paid \$6,000. Is it too much to hope that the Fourth of July will provoke others to a like generosity?

The amount subscribed up to and including the 15th of June is \$158,836.77, of which \$95,253.99 has been paid in. We append the "Bulletin," which has been published in various religious papers, and add to it a "Programme Suggestion" for July 4th which Mr. Flinn has published in the Southwestern Agency of the Society. It may be useful as a hint to others how to use the day.

## OUR BIBLE AND OUR COUNTRY

Why not make

### Sunday, July Fourth, a Bible Day

This year and present in all the Churches

## The Story of the American Bible Society

ELIAS BOUDINOT, who, as President of the Continental Congress, signed the Treaty of Peace with Great Britain in 1783, was the first President of the American Bible Society.

ULYSSES S. GRANT said: "To the influence of this Book are we indebted for all our progress made in true civilization, and to this Book we must look as our guide in the future."

GROVER CLEVELAND said: "No thoughtful man can doubt that to decrease the circulation and use of the Bible among the people would seriously menace the highest interests of civilized humanity."

From the beginning the Bible has been recognized as the Book of Power, opening the mind and rectifying the opinions of those who read it. It makes nations strong. It has made this nation strong.

THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY blesses with its work many lands.

Its issues last year from its headquarters in New

York, Chicago, Denver, San Francisco, Dallas, Atlanta, Richmond, Havana, Caracas, Guatemala City, Mexico City, Rio Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Constantinople, Bangkok, Manila, Shanghai, Yokohama, Seoul, were 2,142,261 volumes; 642 colporteurs were employed in the United States and foreign countries.

It is difficult to keep pace with the increasing demands. The issues last year were nearly a quarter of a million volumes in advance of the year before.

The issues from the Bible House in New York for April and May, 1909, were 75,000 in excess of the issues for the same months of 1908.

The circulation in the Turkish Empire last year amounted to 126,086 volumes, a considerable increase over the year before. China records the largest annual circulation ever attained, a total of 594,952 volumes. This work cannot go forward unless it is adequately supported. Cannot offerings be made in all the churches for the Society's endowment? This is the year of opportunity.

Let churches and individuals make offerings July Fourth for the Endowment Fund.

Send money to WILLIAM FOULKE, Treasurer, Bible House, Astor Place, New York City, or to any of the Agency Secretaries.

### A Programme Suggestion

Patriotic Voluntary

Song—"Come Thou, Almighty King"

Prayer

Special Music

Scripture Lesson—Neh. 8: 1-12

Song—"My Country 'Tis of Thee"

Reading of the Declaration of Independence

Sermon—"The Bible and the Making of the Republic"

Offering for the American Bible Society

Song—"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

Benediction