

The Australasian Union Gleaner

MILTON HOOK

Milton Hook, Ed.D. (Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, the United States). Hook retired in 1997 as a minister in the Greater Sydney Conference, Australia. An Australian by birth Hook has served the Church as a teacher at the elementary, academy and college levels, a missionary in Papua New Guinea, and as a local church pastor. In retirement he is a conjoint senior lecturer at Avondale College of Higher Education. He has authored *Flames Over Battle Creek*, *Avondale: Experiment on the Dora*, *Desmond Ford: Reformist Theologian*, *Gospel Revivalist*, the *Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series*, and many magazine articles. He is married to Noeleen and has two sons and three grandchildren.

The Gleaner, reporting primarily on the sales of literature evangelists, was circulated for only three years, from January 1895 to June 1896, and in its printed form from July 1896 (volume 1, number 1) to December 1897 (volume 2, number 6.). It became redundant with the publication of the *Australasian Record* at the beginning of 1898.

The Australian Tract Society (ATS) published its regular reports in *The Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*. The first was an annual report that appeared in November 1887.¹ After this initial summary they were published quarterly. The secretary, Josie Baker, compiled them in her Sydney office, even including the number of pages of periodicals lent, sold, and given away.² This situation prevailed until the end of 1894, when the ATS transferred from Sydney to rental rooms at the Echo Publishing Company in North Fitzroy, Melbourne.³

The change in location was accompanied with the appointment of Anna Ingels as office secretary. At the same time all booksellers in the field came under the direct supervision of Charles Michaels, general field agent.⁴ Michaels and Ingels continued the custom of compiling and publishing reports on behalf of the ATS with the addition of sales figures for subscription books. Their reports were issued monthly instead of quarterly. Not all issues, beginning in January 1895, have survived, those archived being in typed and mimeographed form as they came from Ingels' desk. Covers titled *The Gleaner* were stapled to each report. They were intended for colporteurs only and bore no volume or issue numbering.⁵

The reports had morphed into a more sophisticated publication by July 1896 but still titled *The Gleaner*. Printed by the Echo Publishing Company as an eight-page periodical, each issue contained religious articles and poems, news items and experiences of the colporteurs in addition to their monthly sales summaries. These reports listed the salespersons and the books they were selling, publications such as *Patriarchs and Prophets*, *Bible Readings*, *Ladies' Guide*, *Home Health Book* and *Sunshine at Home*. A table of *Bible Echo* sales was included because the circulation of this magazine was also under the supervision of the ATS.⁶

In late 1897 Asa Robinson was elected president of the ATS and Edwin Palmer its vice president. Edith Graham replaced Ingels as secretary.⁷ Their office continued to issue the monthly reports. The entire run of *The Gleaner* ran for only three years, from January 1895 to June 1896 and in its printed form from July 1896 to December 1897.

With the introduction of a new publication in Australia, the *Union Conference Record*, in 1898, the ATS discontinued *The Gleaner* and published their reports in this new periodical designed for all church members.⁸ Summaries of book sales in New Zealand began to be included in 1899.⁹ The Australasian reports continued for many years, recording the number of orders gained by each colporteur and the total value of the books sold by each person. Not knowing the monetary percentage of the sales that each colporteur received in their pocket, the general church membership could only judge the relative success of the booksellers. Personal incomes were therefore meant to remain private.



SOURCES

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NOTES

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2. Josie L. Baker, “The Australian Tract and Missionary Society,” *The Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, December 1888, 188.?
3. A[rthur] G. Daniells, “Important Changes,” *The Bible Echo*, December 3, 1894, 376.?
4. *Ibid.*?
5. *The Gleaner*, 1895–1897, periodicals, Avondale College Archives, Cooranbong, NSW.?
6. “Monthly Summary Australian Canvassing Work,” *The Gleaner*, July 1896, 4?
7. A[rthur] G. Daniells, “Australian Tract Society,” *Union Conference Record*, January/February 1898, 13, 14.?
8. “Summary of Australian Canvassing Work,” *Union Conference Record*, January/February 1898, 15.?
9. “Monthly Summary of the Australasian Canvassing Work,” *Union Conference Record*, January 15, 1899, 7.?

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