

This short description of all I have been able to find in the Roman Catholic bookshops of Italy, of editions of the Scriptures for the people, is sufficient to show how very scanty and inferior to the needs of a large nation the supply is. But to this must be added the fact that no Society or organization of any kind exists for disseminating the Scriptures at large amongst the people. There are, in the Roman Catholic Church, associations and brotherhoods without number for all kinds of purposes, but as yet I have been unable to find any trace of a Society, a scheme, or an effort of any kind, for placing the Word of God in the hands of the people to read and study it. To this, no doubt, must be attributed the fact that the editions I have named have but an infinitesimal circulation. We were told at the Archiepiscopal bookstore in Milan, the best in Italy, that they did not sell in a year more than 100 copies of the smaller edition of the Gospels and Acts; indeed the whole stock was offered to our Milan depository at a large discount.

The above facts prove conclusively that the impression now prevailing in certain circles in England, viz. that the Roman Catholic Church has now made sufficient provision for the circulation of the Word of God in Italy, is a completely mistaken one. Unhappily such is very far from being the case. The Bible Societies (ours and the Scottish National) are still alone in the field, with what little can be done by the Italian Evangelical Churches and private Christians. If it were not for the continual and devoted exertions of our colporteurs, very few Italians, especially amongst those that live away from large towns, would ever know what the Bible is and teaches as to the way of salvation.

We may therefore conclude that the time has not yet come for our Society to retire from Italy, as it has retired from many another country, because the impulse it had given to Bible distribution had acted beneficially on the native Christians and awakened them to a sense of their duty to take up the work for themselves. All we have succeeded in, so far, is in creating amongst a certain number of Italians a desire for the Word of God, a desire which, thank God, seems to be growing year after year. Are we to withdraw when, after so many years of labour and expenditure, Italy begins to promise some success? Are we to deprive the Italian nation of the possibility of obtaining the Word of God after we have excited in this country some appetite for it? Quite the reverse must be our course. We must continue our work with perseverance and in faith, perfecting our methods and our instruments, neglecting nothing, no means, no opportunity, to extend our circulation, raising the tone of our colporteurs that their work may become more and more a spiritual service for Christ, with a view to the extension of His Kingdom and to the salvation of souls.

More than two million and a half copies of the Word of God in whole or in part, had been scattered throughout the length and breadth of Italy. True, many of these copies had been destroyed