

COLPORTAGE.

This Department of work, to which the Society has always given special prominence, continues to show progress and afford encouragement. It will be seen that the circulation of the Scriptures this year is about the same as last, while of Tracts and Books it is considerably larger ; at the same time the people are reported as increasingly open to the visits of the Colporteurs and becoming more independent of priestly opposition.

Before entering into details, the following remarks as to the character and general influence of the Colportage work seem called for.

It is a work of great trial to the Colporteurs, owing not only to physical difficulties from extremes of cold in winter and heat in summer, from indifferent fare and lodging, from roads sometimes almost impassible, but from the power of the priests, greater perhaps than in any other country, in preventing the reception of the Word of God. To secure this end, they poison the minds of the people by representing it as only fitted to deceive them and lose their souls—a book to be torn up with contempt and burnt. If such treatment is not enough to prevent its purchase, then follow virulent persecution and threats of spiritual penalties, which the Romish clergy know so well to employ in crushing out the light of the Gospel. Add to all this the illiterate state and poverty of the people, and it will be realized that Colportage in this Province is a work of difficulty. Still it must be carried on if the French Canadians are to be made intelligent believers of the Gospel, for while the Word of God teaches, and every one engaged in missionary work knows by experience, that without the omnipotent and Sovereign power of the Holy Spirit no soul will be converted to Christ, yet God has appointed His Word as the means by which the Holy Spirit works savingly.

How then can the French Canadian people be reached in their parishes and distant settlements, where scarcely a Protestant is to be found, and the power of the priest is almost supreme, unless the Colporteur seeks them out in their homes or in the harvest field, carrying with him the Word of God and the religious tract or illustrated papers. To obtain an entrance to the truth he must offer his books and speak to the people in the Market place, at the Railroad depot, and on the steamboat, but especially does he aim, as he goes from house to house, to assemble in the evening the neighbours of some friendly farmer, and expound the Scriptures with prayer and singing, if allowed, until perhaps midnight.

This is a work separate from that of the schoolmaster and pastor, and in the present state of this province, must be persevered in and encouraged if the other departments of mission work, education and evangelization, are to be successful. From this point of view therefore the Committee