

Alsace and Lorraine, and the vivid picture of German popular feeling and manners is at the same time one of the beneficent and deepening influence of a popular Bible.

The space devoted in the Report of 1837 to France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and Italy—the group of countries which may be somewhat loosely grouped together as practically Celtic in race and Catholic—Roman Catholic—in religion—is very considerable, and in the Report of 1897 they occupy a section correspondingly large. Their very permanence in the Society's narrative is itself significant. Unlike Holland, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark—which have practically disappeared from the Report because they are successfully furnishing matter for Reports of their own—there is for these Catholic countries no immediate prospect of an awakening conscience of the value of the Bible—no indications of national efforts to circulate it among their own people. In other respects there is indeed during the last sixty years a curiously monotonous sameness in the accounts which are given of these countries. One might transfer pages taken from the earlier narratives and insert them in the story of to-day. The sleepless warfare of the priest against the popular gospel is described in the Report of 1837 in terms which may be repeated still. As if he had been the embodiment of some inextinguishable dread of discovery, of some evil conscience, the minister who was set apart for the service of the gospel was found everywhere pursuing the footsteps of the sixty years ago distributor of the Scriptures; the same sad record, illustrated by a thousand examples, repeats itself continually during all the intervening period, and in the accounts of 1896-7—fresh from the pens of M. Monod, of Mr. Walker, of Signor Meille, of Mr. Kirkpatrick—the same old sorrowful testimony appears once more. If it is changed at all it is more universal, more bitter, more carefully organized. "It is not difficult," writes M. Monod of France, "to characterize in a single sentence the year which is just ending—it is one in which the watchward seems, at least in some circles, to have been 'Down with Protestants.' . . . At every spot," he adds, "where a colporteur succeeds in selling a few volumes there rises up at once an enemy seeking to destroy them. And how intense is the conflict the colporteurs' reports bear witness." It is curious and no less instructive, turning for a moment to the French colonies of Algeria and Madagascar, to find the same thing. "I have been actively engaged," says an Algerian colporteur, "from morning to evening, and in every place I have found the priest in my way menacing with excommunication those who should buy my books." In Madagascar the Jesuit campaign is more serious, because more intelligent and relentless than the fierce upheavals of the old heathenism. Even in Manchuria, under the shelter of French influence, the same fatal hostility has recently become marked in its activity. In Spain Mr. Walker is finding to his sorrow that all his work "must be begun and carried on in the face of the sleepless enmity of the priests to a popular Bible." Of his beloved Italy Signor Meille regretfully writes that "the hostility of the Roman Catholic clergy of all ranks to our work is growing more widespread and more systematic every year." Testimonies like these sometimes from the agents sometimes from the patient colporteur, recur continually. Yet the curious and most welcome fact remains that in every one of these countries the Society's circulation has during last year increased and its work surprisingly advanced. In 1895, the Italian returns<sup>1</sup> were 145,000; in 1896, in the face of a hundred difficulties they stand at 168,000, and this includes an advance of 7 000 copies in colportage alone. "We have increased," Signor Meille joyfully writes, "all along the line." The *Depôt* of Rome has risen from 37,000 to 43,000, doubling the issue of New Testaments; Naples from 35,000 to 45,000; Florence from 20,000 to 30,000. The Italian Agency was founded in 1860, and since then, Signor Meille calculates, the Italian people at home and abroad have received through the Society more than 3 000,000 of copies. The Spanish circulation<sup>2</sup> has risen

<sup>1</sup> Total circulation for the year in the ITALIAN Agency, 168,212 (previous year, 145,407); by colportage, 73,598 (previous year, 68,670).

<sup>2</sup> Total circulation for the year (eleven months) in the SPANISH Agency, 72,625 (previous year, 75,892); by colportage, 33,222 (previous year, 31,283). Total circulation for the year in the PORTUGUESE Agency, 20,519 (previous year, 11,294); of this by colportage, 7,242 (previous year, 6,536).