

"One day," writes one of their number, "I came upon a carpenter taking his afternoon nap. My first thought was not to disturb him. But I could not feel it right to leave him; so, after a moment's hesitation, I touched him and said, 'Will you not buy a Bible?' 'I am a Catholic,' he muttered, turning round to sleep on. 'That is what you say,' I replied, 'but God says, 'Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' 'But I cannot read a book which my priest forbids.' 'Obey God rather than man,' was my answer. At these words he sat straight up and said, 'What you tell me recalls the time when I was working at Hamburg as a journeyman. A companion who lodged with me used every day to read out of his Bible, and when I refused to do the same, he met me with that very sentence: 'Obey God rather than man.' To think that I should have been asleep all these years, and that you should have been sent to awake me before it was too late! At any rate I will read the book now.' 'If,' said an aged priest to a purchaser, 'one grain of what you read in that volume strike root in your heart, it will be worth far more than all the price you have paid for it.'" Well may your agent add: "What then shall be said of the golden grains contained in the many thousand copies which our men have again this year been permitted to circulate?"

AUSTRIA.

It is the share taken by your Austrian Agency in the *War Work* that has brought it alike its chief labour and its chief distinction. To miss such an opportunity of circulating the Word of God would have been an unpardonable act of remissness. The best companion that could be offered to the soldier was the book that revealed a Saviour's love, and pointed the dying to heaven, and commanded the exercise of mercy. Nor would the value of the work cease with the war. The Scriptures would be carried home by the men at its close, and penetrate to remote corners which years of costly colportage would otherwise be required to reach. From the beginning of the war to the end of January there had been disseminated among the troops in Roumania and Bulgaria 242,000 copies, chiefly New Testaments, and among the army of the Caucasus 194,000, making a total of all but half a million of books among the Russian forces. The cost to the Society in books, carriage, and colportage cannot be estimated at less than £24,000.

When, in the autumn, the Austrian troops marched into Bosnia, three of your colporteurs went with them. That journey of twenty-six days was a gallant piece of work. The road was one mass of sticky mud. No shelter was to be had at night for man or beast, torrents of rain kept them drenched to the skin, fever laid its grip on two of them, while all suffered from inflamed eyes. However, the men sold over 1,000 copies to the soldiers on the march, and at last they entered Seraievo, to the joy of your depositary, who had been shut up in the city for weeks. God prosper the work of such stout hearts.

The ordinary work of Mr. Millard's Agency, especially in Austria Proper and Bohemia, has been beset by difficulties and a vexatious interference on the part of the authorities, which ill-becomes a Power that stands before Europe as a guarantor of religious liberty to the oppressed provinces of Turkey.

ITALY.

In this land a staff of nearly forty colporteurs continued to be employed; the circulation, 50,900, was a trifle above that of the previous year. Among many instances given by the Agent at Rome of the power of the word of God

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