

testimony, it is to the goodwill of the Russian authorities to the Agents of the Bible Society, and the readiness of the people to welcome the colporteurs when they appear. Of every seven copies of the Scriptures circulated by the Society last year, one passed into the hands of a subject of the Russian Empire. The circulation in the northern<sup>1</sup> and the southern<sup>2</sup> Agencies amounted to 540,000, and the numbers are steadily increasing year by year. A place of authority and influence much greater than it possesses even now may yet be held by the Russian race. The reports of the Bible Society—and none perhaps more than the last—give hopeful assurance that the influence will be exerted by a Bible-loving and a devout people.

These wider conclusions are illustrated by many pleasant incidents. The story of Mary Jones has been often told, and it will always have a significance of its own; but it may be paralleled, in the devotion it shows, by not a few from the journals of the Russian colporteurs. Dr. Nicholson mentions the case of a youth who set his heart on a rouble Bible, but without any means of paying the price. He disappeared, and the next day the colporteur found him, the rouble in his hand and a deep light in his eyes. 'How did you get it?' he was asked. His reply was given with characteristic simplicity: he had walked twenty-five miles to an employer of labour, engaged himself for a rouble's worth of work, and walked twenty-five miles back again. Yet the incident, among many similar, hardly engages the attention. In another instance given by Dr. Nicholson—it is a very rare one—the purchaser objected to the book as provided by our English Society. The answer of the colporteur—himself a Russian—was conclusive and emphatic: 'Every Russian knows how much we owe to the English Society.'

The closing during the year of the Society's Depôt at Kiev may seem to some extent inconsistent with views so pleasant, but those who are most intimately acquainted with the Russian mind and methods of government will not attach an unduly discouraging importance to the incident. Mr. Morrison can indeed strike a judicious balance between the weights of opposing scales. 'If the Governor-General of Kiev,' he writes, 'wrongly informed of our methods and our action in the district under his charge, thinks it right to prohibit our work as far as he can, we have the highest officials under the government conferring favour after favour upon us. If an Armenian priest in the fine fervour of his zeal tears a New Testament to pieces and vows vengeance against our colporteur for circulating "Freemason" literature, we have the Katholikos of all the Armenians, the famed Mighertich Khrimian, graciously saying the kindest things about the Bible Society, and promising to aid us by every means in his power. If a Georgian priest drives a colporteur out of the village with words of contumely, we have the Exarch of Georgia, the highest ecclesiastic in the land, and an honoured member of the Holy Synod, aiding us to print the Scriptures in the very capital of his country.' It is evident to which side the weight of encouragement turns.

The visit of Mr. Sharp, and of Mr. Morrison, to Tiflis and Etchmiadzin, is in some respects the central incident of the year. A detailed account of it cannot be given in this place. Mr. Morrison's account as he follows the route from Odessa to Batoum, thence through the Mingrelian forests, across the level Georgian plains, and over the delightfully wooded Suram hills to Tiflis, and the valley of the Kura, may be read in the pages of the volume to which this is a summarising preface. But some of the results may be stated in a sentence. 'Recognised Georgian scholars,' Mr. Morrison writes, 'have since then been appointed carefully to read and revise the Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the New Testament, with a view to bringing out editions of these books as well as of single Gospels. The revision work has gone on

<sup>1</sup> Total circulation for the year in the NORTH RUSSIAN Agency, which includes Northern European Russia, Siberia, and part of Central Asia, 358,753 (previous year, 344,268); of this by colportage, 123,539 (previous year, 116,243).

<sup>2</sup> Total circulation for the year in the SOUTH RUSSIAN Agency, including Southern European Russia, Cis- and Transcaucasia, Transcaspia, and Southern Turkestan, 168,555 (previous year 170,683); by colportage and book-hawkers, 79,173 (previous year, 74,464).