

cases the Missionary is the Bible ager; the book must accompany the man. It cannot precede him; it cannot outstrip him: it cannot make its own silent voice heard where his voice cannot penetrate. If it does so, it can only do so exceptionally and in a limited sense. But this is not the case in Italy. In Italy the colporteur is ever beforehand with us. The centres of evangelical effort sparkle here and there upon the map with great intervening blots of darkness, but the written word of God has swept like a wave of light over the whole country. We cannot go to a village or a town where the colporteur has not been before us. He has already anticipated us; he has prepared the way, and I am very thankful to have the opportunity of testifying to the useful labours of these humble and self-denying men. The colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Italy are the pioneers of Protestantism in that land; and in opening a way through mountains of indifference, in making the rough places of opposition plain, and the crooked places of prejudice straight, have laid the whole Christian world under very great obligations. In many cases they are men of humble extraction, without refinement, only newly emerged from the darkness and corruptions of Popery. They have, no doubt, the imperfections which belong to their class and early training; and now and then, here and there, one stands convicted as an hypocrite and hireling; but for the most part the colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society are, I believe, converted men who labour for the glory of Christ and for the love of souls, and have testified to the sincerity of that love in "journeyings oft, in weariness and painfulness, in perils of the wilderness, in perils of the city, in perils of robbers, in perils of their own countrymen." As, in the wonderful providence of Almighty God, province after province has been annexed to the newly-formed kingdom of Italy, these colporteurs have rushed in and embraced the opportunity afforded them to flood that province from one end to the other with their priceless wares. Recently, when Rome itself was taken, they entered over the breach of Porta Pia, as was meet, because where should the Bible be except in the van of human progress? And with them entered an old friend of mine, who rejoices in the baptismal irony of Pio Nono—not he of the Vatican you will understand, but a great, shaggy-coated Abruzzo dog, who, after having dragged his load of Bibles over his native mountains, has at length carried his wares into the Eternal City itself. And there he can be seen keeping guard over your depot in the Corso as gentle as a lamb, and yet with immense and terrible strength dormant in his limbs—a kind of living allegory of the blessed book with which he has been so long associated. Then with all my heart and voice I say this day, God bless the colporteurs of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and comfort and sustain them in their self-denying work, and give them their reward in heaven. As to the results of the work of these men—the results of the good seed cast thus broadcast over the face of Italy—they are in some measure visible, but in a very great measure they are as yet unseen. In some respects, I say, they are visible. I should like to be able to quote a few instances in illustration of this point, but I fear to trespass too much upon your time. I will, however, give you one. In our work of evangelisation such cases are continually cropping up, indicating that a secret pro-