

"Receipts.—The total receipts from these Societies during 1881 were as follows :

Free contributions.....	£52,489 12 7
For Purchase of Scriptures.....	26,140 7 11

"Colportage.—The number of copies circulated through this agency has been as follows :—

By eight colporteurs whose salary and expenses are paid, in whole or in part, by the Parent Society.	18,231
By two colporteurs at the Agricultural Hall, Islington, at an Exhibition of Domestic Labour Saving Appliances, in three weeks.....	968
At the Cattle Show (Christmas).....	309

River Colportage :—

Sold at the Liverpool Pier Head.....	2,543
Sold on the Rivers Tyne and Wear, and at Hartlepool	1,619
Sold by the agents of the Thames Church Mission.	3,434
Gifts to sailors, troops and emigrants.....	3,407
Sold by the agents of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society.....	4,377

Total 34,888

as against 34,341 in the preceding year."

FRANCE.

"France changes fast. Fifty years ago the French Government called the New Testament "the first and most salutary of books," and paid your Committee £400 for 20,000 copies for elementary schools. Now the Bible is proscribed in all schools.

"On the other hand, the new law of colportage has removed vexatious restrictions. The men can sell their books in the streets of Paris, whence they were formerly chased like dogs by the police, and a policeman is an active promoter of the circulation of Bibles. An authorisation is no longer required. The colporteur has only to declare his will to colport, and the *maire* is bound to give him a written acknowledgement of his declaration. One *maire* who four times refused such an acknowledgment was summoned, and was not only ordered by the Court to affix his signature forthwith, but also to pay 20 francs as costs to the colporteur. He had argued in his defence that he had only been obeying the priest. So the colporteur offered him a Testament as a better adviser. This was accepted, and they shook hands cordially on parting.

"Two colporteurs who were employed twenty years ago have lately returned to the work. They said that formerly everyone fled at their approach, as if they were infected with the plague. Now people want to know what the colporteurs believe, and whether they are Christians.

"No Christian can watch these changes without interest. The present liberty calls for prompt action, for perhaps it may not be lasting. Fear mingles with hope. The old dominant Romanism strives to reassert itself, and in some parts it stabs a colporteur in the arm with a knife, or throws his books into the fire. Elsewhere the rebound from credulity has brought complete unbelief. A Councillor-General said in an official speech. 'We learned men can believe no longer in things from above. As there is no God from whom we may expect help, we will place our belief only on the earth. If heaven is shut, earth remains.'