

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 still 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.'

But the outlook is by no means dark. You have sixty colporteurs in France, and they have sold 76,300 books, large or small, within the year. The copies issued by your Agency through all channels have been 19,000 more than the year before. They were over 131,000, or 420 a day. On one occasion a colporteur distributed 6,000 Gospels to troops embarking for the war in Africa. Not one was torn up or thrown away. 'The country is ripe,' says Lord Radstock. 'Enlightenment is progressing and France needs the Scriptures,' says your Agent.

Belgium.—The battle between superstition on the one hand and worldliness and atheism on the other continues. Between these conflicting extremes it is the blessed office of your Society and of others to step in and ask a hearing for God's own words to man.

The country is not twice the size of Yorkshire. Its population is about five millions and a half. You have now supplied it with 674,000 Bibles, Testaments, or Portions, and you employ in it eight colporteurs. The fruit of their work sometimes comes to light.

Germany and Switzerland.—A year ago a sudden and heavy bereavement cast its shadow over your Agency for Germany and Switzerland. The warm heart which had sped the work had been taken away, and none could forget that they should see the workman's face no more. The memory and the name of the Rev. George Palmer Davies remain, and in the record of another year a chastened expression of how much he is missed occurs again and again.

No one quite his counterpart could be looked for in his place. Your Committee felt it best only to make a provisional appointment at first. For that appointment many circumstances seemed to point to Mr. James Watt as the best man. He had conducted your Agency in South Russia for fourteen years with marked ability and success. And your Committee have felt at the close of a year's trial, that they could not do better for the prosperity of the German Agency than make Mr. Watt's appointment to it permanent, and relieve him as soon as possible of the extra charge in Russia.

Setting aside figures connected with the Dusseldorf Exhibition of 1880, the circulation of Scriptures in Germany by itself, the receipts for sales, and the contributions of friends, all show a gratifying increase. The total issues, including sales to other societies, were 321,800 copies. The systematic supply of Scriptures to the Prussian army has reached its jubilee. From the first it has had Royal favour and assistance. In fifty years the troops have bought nearly three-quarters of a million of Bibles and Testaments.

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