

siastics. That opposition grows yet more fierce as your veteran agent, Mr. Millard, moves his men across the field in a spirit as fervent as that of the priests themselves—not against the truth, but for the truth. His report—the thirty-eighth of his long and fruitful incumbency—bristles with animation, full charged with the joy of struggle and the satisfaction of success.

ITALY.

With respect to Italy, which Signor Meille will speak for to-day, there are signs of slight improvement. Your Committee have never desired to veil by a series of sanguine sentences the disappointing fact that in Italy liberty has as yet done much less than was anticipated for spiritual religion. The three great facts of the year—the Exhibition at Turin, the terrible cholera outbreak, and the several expeditions to the Red Sea—have in various ways affected the work. The first of these—viz., the Great Exhibition—is, perhaps, the chief cause why, in a year during which colportage was suspended in some districts, and hampered in all of them, the distribution by sale should have reached the highest figures on record, till, with the addition of 1,500 copies given away, they rose well above the unprecedented number of 80,000, of which 55,000 were due to colportage. No colporteur deserted his post in the cholera panic even in Naples, and none met his death in duty. One fine fellow, Stampacchia, carried his family to a place of comparative safety, and then went back to his work. The band of colporteurs has been strengthened during the year by the addition of two earnest young Christians, themselves the fruit of the work. The details of the fuller report, of which this is but a pale shadow, will prove how well founded is the claim which these men are establishing for themselves, viz.: to be considered as not simply sellers of the Evangel, but most truly themselves Evangelists.

SPAIN AND PORTUGAL.

In both these countries there has been an advance in the number of copies circulated. In Spain, from 46,000 to 50,000; in Portugal, from 5,000 to 6,000. In the whole Peninsula, it is chiefly single gospels which make up even these numbers. It is the day of small things, in danger always of being undervalued. The want of education diminishes readers, the absence of the power to read fortifies prejudice. In Spain the distress is described as "terrible," and the threefold providential horror of earthquake, pestilence, and famine has made the past year second only in its power over the imagination to the great earthquake year of Lisbon. Portugal escaped all these, and in wonderful contrast with her neighbour impressed the autumn traveller with her "exceeding richness." In both countries your agents find reason for thankfulness in the attitude of the chief civil authorities. They do not help much, but they do not hinder at all, and sometimes they have obscure opportunities for hostility which they do not use. In both countries the Word of God has raised up its own messengers, and strengthened the band of colporteurs with one or two zealous recruits.

In summing up what has been done in the Peninsula, it is impossible to avoid an expression of regret. The field is wide, the seed is incorruptible, and the sower has not spared his hand. It is the honest and good heart alone that is painfully missing. There is still wit in Spain, and pride in noble memories, and names that recall palmy days which Spain has not sunk so low as to despise. But the moral links seem broken along which else virtue might have travelled to vivify the nation. It is, after all, only the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.