

eigners, who are going there in increasing numbers as evangelists, has also, no doubt, had its share in the decreased circulation, more especially of Testaments, by colportage sales. Such Christians generally give the Scriptures to any one who is willing to have them, or who possesses even the mere reluctance of politeness to refuse a gift. And hence an impression is created that such books ought always to be had without money, which forms a serious hindrance to sales by colporteurs.

"An English traveller lately called at the Bible House to complain that the landlord of the hotel where he had been staying in Brittany had told him that in his opinion a copy of the Scriptures was not to be had within twenty miles of the place. It is an old complaint from the lips of good people, who have not altogether realized how different is the position of the Bible in a Roman Catholic country from that which it occupies in England.

"Something of this kind may easily occur. They cross the Channel, and are at once struck by manifestations of a Christianity which they believe to be so overlaid with serious errors as to be well-nigh void of healing virtue. A remedy which at once suggests itself is to give away as many Testaments or Gospels as possible, in every direction. They are surprised that emissaries of the Bible society are not visibly engaged in a distribution which seems so obviously its duty. Not seeing them, they inquire for the Scriptures at bookshops, but in vain. They return to their hotel, and ask a (Catholic) waiter, or landlord, where Bibles can be bought. He shrugs his shoulders, and replies that he does not think such a book can be obtained within twenty miles! Perhaps, there is a quiet, devoted colporteur of this society at the moment threading his way through the back streets of the town, knocking at door after door, and in earnest friendly tones seeking purchasers for the cheap but attractive copies of Holy Scripture, varied in style and form, which he begs them to examine. His calls have been anticipated; and an appalling warning against the man and his wares had been uttered from the pulpit on the previous Sunday. Monsieur le curé follows him from house to house, to secure for the flames any volumes which the unwary may have bought. Meantime, the English tourist has gone on his way, inwardly or openly blaming this society for some oversight or neglect in having placed no Testament in the bedroom of his (Catholic) hotel; in having secured no section for itself in the booksellers' windows; and in having no colporteur giving away Bibles, like leaflets, in the streets.

"It is the *reading* of the Scriptures which the committee above all desire, and this they have reason to know is, as a rule, far better secured in a country like France by steady colportage sales, than by the most unrestricted and gratuitous distribution in the streets and hotels. And where gratuitous distribution may be desirable, it is best to limit it to *Portions*. In suitable cases, to help evangelistic work and to promote virtual colportage, the committee are ready to meet the expenses incurred by other people in the sale of the society's books by a liberal discount.

"In the metropolis there are four colporteurs, but the numerous Christian agencies now at work in it make their labour almost superfluous and in vain. They are undersold even with the society's own books. Gratuitous distribution in some parts renders sales impracticable. 'People all believe that the books were entrusted to us to give away, and that we keep for ourselves any money we get for them.'

While colportage is considered more effective than free grants, in some cases the depots are still more useful. In Paris, *e. g.*, the committee find that by means of such depots they can better reach some classes of society, though the expense is reduced by contributing to the expenses of the shop and allowing the salesmen to deal in other articles. In Holland also, the staff of colporteurs has been gradually exchanged for a system of sub-depots, while the expenditure of the society is limited to a commission on sales.