

SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,
INTERNATIONAL
BIBLE READING ASSOCIATION.

CIRCULAR LETTER, July, 1899.



A GATEWAY IN SPAIN.

SOMETIMES members of the I.B.R.A. tell us that they have found things in the Bible of which they had never heard before. That means that our plan has helped them to search the Bible more thoroughly. The Bible has always been its own advocate, and those who read it most love it best; while those who despise it are usually persons who have never read it thoughtfully.

A Bible colporteur in Spain one day came to the town of Montalborigo and sought to find customers for his goods. It need scarcely be said that in Spain the priests of the Roman Catholic church have great power, and do all they can to prevent their people from reading the Bible. The colporteur had succeeded in disposing of some of his books when someone informed the priest of what was going on. Hastening into the market place, the priest angrily demanded what right the colporteur had to be selling these books in his parish, and snatching a big Bible out of the hands of a purchaser, he flung it on the ground exclaiming "these books of the devil shall never enter my parish." It seems very strange that ministers of a so-called Christian church should speak like this of a book written by men whom they themselves worship as saints. Their action is quite sufficient to prove that their practices are not in accordance with the book or they would welcome it as a friend. Having destroyed the book, the priest abused the colporteur and called upon the people to drive him out of the town. This they did, and, pelted with stones and rubbish, the poor man fled from the place, thankful to escape with his life.

Some time after, the colporteur was journeying in the same direction and it was necessary for him to pass through the town again. It can easily be imagined that he approached the place with some fear, but he thought, perhaps, that the event might be forgotten or that he would not be recognised.

His hopes were, however, destroyed by the first man who met him stopping and putting the question, "Are you not the man who sold the Bible?" He was obliged to confess that he was, but feared the result of his reply, and was astonished beyond measure by the response of his questioner, "Then welcome, for we all desire to purchase your book." Looking into the face of the man, he enquired "But are you not the people who only a few weeks ago cast stones at me and drove me away." "Most certainly," was the reply, "but a change has come over us, so that each and every one desires one of your books."

You will wonder what had happened to bring about such a change, and it is explained by the fact that the people had read for themselves. When that Bible was thrown down in the market place, it was picked up by a shopkeeper who, with an eye to economy, thought it would be very useful to him in his business. He took it to his shop and, tearing out the leaves, used them for wrapping up small quantities of his goods, so that they were distributed in the homes of the people, who, without knowing their source, read the words and talked about them with their neighbours, and thus created the desire to know more of the book they had been taught to despise.

There are some articles, the virtues of which are thrust upon us constantly, and appear to require constant and very expensive advertisement to keep up their sale. In the I.B.R.A. we have not spent much time in extolling the praises of the Bible, but have rather asked you to seek its virtues in the book itself. No doubt there are members who sometimes think they do not find much in the Bible to interest them, but that is, perhaps, because they do not read aright. These Spaniards read the Bible leaves as something quite new to them, and so they read intently, and thought and talked about what they

read. Many of us as we read these daily verses find them deeply interesting, and though we have read them, perhaps, many times before, are constantly cheered by some new light shining in them, and so the book, so old in years, is ever bringing us new pleasure. We ask all our members to read with *expectation*. It is they who *search* the Scriptures who find eternal life, and that will be worth more than all beside.

We thank all the members who have responded to our request and sought to bring in new members for this year, and are glad to inform them that the result is a *larger increase* of membership for 1899 than for either of the two previous years. This is a source of real satisfaction, because it is a joy to know that our work is progressing, but still further because some thirty thousand more are reading with us day by day the "wonderful words of Life," and are thus brought within the range of that glorious light which shines from the pages of Holy Writ, revealing the wonderful love of God. Our hope and prayer shall be that that Love may sweetly lead many of our members to yield themselves to its influence, and devote heart and life to the service of Him "who loved us and gave Himself for us."

Yours sincerely,

(On behalf of the Committee),

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