

THE
EIGHTY-NINTH ANNUAL
REPORT

OF THE

Religious Tract Society,

INSTITUTED A.D. M.DCC.XCIX.,

FOR PUBLISHING RELIGIOUS TRACTS AND BOOKS
AT HOME AND ABROAD.

B254

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1888.
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LONDON DEPOSITORIES:

56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD;
AND 164, PICCADILLY.

BRIGHTON: 31, WESTERN ROAD. MANCHESTER: 100, CORPORATION STREET.
LIVERPOOL: 18, SLATER STREET, BOLD STREET.

OLIVER AND BOYD, EDINBURGH.
JOHN ROBERTSON AND CO., GRAFTON STREET, DUBLIN.

REPORT

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CHINA.

THESE are 489 foreign Protestant missionaries and 541 ladies engaged in missionary work in China, connected with 38 different churches or societies. Associated with them are 175 native ordained ministers and 1,316 unordained native helpers. A body of 32,200 communicants give evidence of the blessing which has rested on their labours.

These figures, which are taken from a table drawn up by the Rev. H. L. Gulick, remind us how widely the Gospel is being preached in China, and how those who receive it multiply. The table does not give the numbers of nominal adherents to Christianity, but they are sufficient to show how great and increasing must be the need of necessary supplies of Christian literature, both to help on the work of the preachers of the Gospel, and to build up and confirm the faith of those who have received it.

The number of native ministers has been increased by 35 during the year, that of the communicants by 4,200.

The Committee have during the past year called the special attention of their friends to the openings which China affords for the activity of the Christian press, and they have to acknowledge with thanks the receipt of some special contributions in aid of this part of the Society's missionary work, which have enabled them already in some cases to increase the grants usually made, and will enable them favourably to consider fresh applications for help in the publication and circulation of Christian literature which may be made to them.

The importance of that work is thus insisted on in the last report of the Central China Religious Tract Society:—

Tract Societies may be regarded as included in those silent forces of Christian activity which are doing immense service in the advancement of the kingdom of God in China, but whose results, though partially apparent even now, will not be fully perceived until after the lapse of many years. It is no disparagement to other branches of missionary enterprise to assert that in the enlightenment of the Chinese mind, in the exploding of erroneous and superstitious notions, and in the gradual diffusion of truth, the publication and distribution of Christian tracts is quietly and unostentatiously doing a work which could not be done in any other way. To the most distant parts of the Empire, along routes hitherto untravelled by the foreign

missionary, these silent messengers make their way, hence it frequently happens that in the most unexpected places and amongst the most unlikely people, one lights upon evidences of the great benefits which result from this special form of missionary effort.

NORTH CHINA.

PEKIN.

NORTH CHINA TRACT SOCIETY

The following letter has been recently received from the Rev. S. Evans Meech, of Peking, the secretary of this Society:—

The total issues from the depository during the year 1887 is 132,487. This is rather more than 4,000 in advance of the year before. The circulation of tracts would doubtless have been greater, but for the fact that the supporters, and perhaps officers of the Society, have been trusting too much to the momentum acquired by the Society when started. Considerable effort was put forth at the outset to set the work going. But after the commencement that effort ceased, and the progress has gradually diminished in speed. At the last annual meeting, it became apparent that something more must be done to form branch depositories at other places, so that missionaries and others might have a constant supply of books within reach. It is always a drawback to any scheme emanating from Peking that we are frozen in about three months of every year. This makes it all the more necessary that there should be these depositories, sufficiently stocked with books to make them independent of Peking during the winter months, and still have all the books needed in their respective localities. Steps to secure this end have been, or will be, taken in Chefoo, Newchwang, and Tientsin.

DISTRIBUTION.

It is interesting to note that the productions of this Society have gone as far east as New York, for work amongst the Chinese there. Others have been sent to Tokio, Japan, for a similar purpose. Westward they are circulated all over the province of Shansi. Farther west the missionaries look to Hankow for their supplies, as the river Han affords direct communication between that port and the south of the provinces of Shensi and Kansuh.

The reception which the tracts meet with varies much. The tract on *Christian Evidences*, by the Rev. Dr. Martin, wins favour among the educated classes, on account of the excellence of its style. But while equally valuable, or perhaps more so, on account of its subject-matter, its very style makes it unintelligible to ordinary readers. On the other hand, those in simpler style, which are within the comprehension of those whose training has been only a limited one, are looked down on by the

literary men, and treated with contempt. Unfortunately, it is only when dealing with individuals that one can be sure of putting the right book into the right hands. In general distribution people will buy the one that strikes their fancy, either on account of the title, or perhaps the colour of the outside cover, or because of something said by the seller with regard to the contents. It is only after getting home and examining the book that they find out the style and know whether they can read it or not.

A man referred to in my last report as having been influenced by the books, has since been baptised. I had hoped to have given a short account of one who was led to believe through reading a tract, down in the country, but the source of my information has failed just at the last. Meanwhile, the books are being widely distributed; and containing, as they do, the truth of God, must produce the desired end. We labour on in faith that the word of God shall not return void, but shall accomplish that whereto it is sent.

The fourth annual report, forwarded by Mr. Meech (for the year ending March 31, 1887), returns warm thanks for the grant of £250 made by the Religious Tract Society, as also for the £100 given in aid of Dr. Farnham's periodicals, now published under the supervision of the North China Tract Society.

The publications of the year included a *Pictorial Calendar*, *Sunday School Lessons*, a new edition of Dr. Martin's well-known work on the *Christian Evidences*; and a work for catechumens, by Dr. Nevius: *First Lessons for Converts*.

The report concludes:—

The Bible and Tract Societies have a glorious opportunity at this period of the history of China, of filling the land with the Word of God, and with the explanation and application of Christian truth to the Chinese people. These Societies are in advance of the infidel literature of the West, in advance even of secular literature. How important that they should embrace their opportunity, and press on vigorously to accomplish their great work.

EAST CHINA.

SHANGHAI.

EASTERN CHINA TRACT COMMITTEE.

A grant of £100 has been made in aid of the work in East China. Archdeacon Moule (C.M.S.), and the Rev. W.

Muirhead (L.M.S.), in applying for it give some notes of what has been done during the year:—

PUBLICATION WORK.

Amongst the books and tracts printed and circulated during the past year I may name:—An epitome of Pearson on *The Creed*, translated by the Rev. J. C. Hoare; 5,000 copies of a tract on *Ancestral Worship*; 1,000 copies of a tract called *Mirror of Conscience*; 20,000 copies of a leaflet, giving an epitome of the origin and aim of the Bible; 5,000 copies of a sheet tract, giving an epitome of the Gospel, with a short prayer, and an account of the attributes of the true God.

Large numbers of these smaller books and tracts have been circulated at the chapel services, and during outdoor preaching, itinerating tours in the country, etc., and they have been found very useful.

Mr. Muirhead is making arrangements to print 1,000 copies of his *Answers to Roman Catholics*, and 5,000 copies of another small tract.

I have in manuscript a course of simple expository sermons on the Sunday Gospels in the Church year, and for Good Friday, Christmas Day, etc., designed for the use of voluntary church workers, lay readers, etc., and for private Christians. They will be useful also, I trust, for intelligent Chinese readers generally. These sermons we hope to print during the current year.

DISTRIBUTION.

Supplies of tracts have been sent to several classes within the bounds of our Eastern Committee's operations (the provinces of Kiang su and Chey Kiang, containing a population estimated at about 40,000,000). Communication is maintained with missionaries in these two provinces, who act as corresponding members of our Committee. We thank you very warmly for your kind expressions in your last letters, and for the Committee's generous promise of help.

May God's abundant blessing rest on the operations of your great Society, and may Divine truth, which is—and here lies the strength and glory of the Society—never absent from the pages of its books and tracts, accomplish His most blessed will.

Efforts have been made during the year to form a union between the East China Committee and the Chinese Religious Tract Society, started by Dr. Farnham, but they have not resulted as yet in any arrangement.

MID-CHINA.

HANKOW.

CENTRAL CHINA RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.

The eleventh annual report of this Society has been

forwarded by the Rev. Arthur Bonsey, secretary, who, in forwarding it, wrote :—

I have already written somewhat fully about the interest evinced in this special branch of work at our annual tract meeting, held in January. I am glad to say that the heartiness and earnestness exhibited at that meeting have been followed up by some practical results, and notably in the preparation of new tracts. While last year we received for approval of the Committee only two new tracts, we have this year already three book and five sheet tracts waiting to pass the examiners, and a promise of several more at an early date. Included in the above are two tracts by Rev. Griffith John, viz., *Great Themes of the Gospel* and *Important Truths*, both very popular, and both have done good work, and are still doing it in their original Wenli form. Mr. John has now put these tracts into the Mandarin dialect, and we may safely predict for them a greatly widened sphere of usefulness. These two books will be followed by a few more of Mr. John's favourite tracts in Mandarin, and we believe that this effort will bring our books into a circle of readers which Wenli publications fail to interest or impress.

The preparation and distribution of tracts involves, as you must know full well, great labour; and to me it is a matter of great thankfulness and rejoicing when I see with what steady purpose and unflinching devotion this work is carried on by my brethren, both foreign and native.

It surely must gladden the hearts of all who take an interest in the grand work of your great Society to learn from one and another how well their efforts are seconded by hundreds of willing labourers in every part of the vineyard.

THE TRACTS ARE PAID FOR.

I have been requested by our Committee to call your attention to one feature of our work, upon which they lay great stress. It is the fact that part payment is received for all the publications sent out. From long experience, it has been proved that the Chinaman sets a value on anything for which he has had to pay, be the price never so small; so that, while the principle of demanding part payment militates considerably against a very large circulation, it is, nevertheless, believed that it is a thoroughly sound one by which to guide our general operations. Occasions may, and do, arise when it is desirable to make a free distribution of tracts—as, for instance, to candidates at the great examinations—but, as a rule, the amount received in return for tracts purchased represents a solid ground for the belief that tracts so distributed will be read. This rule of part payment has been strictly adhered to ever since the formation of the Society, and the large amount of work it has been enabled to accomplish is largely owing to the continued determination of the Committee to hold by their rule. It is felt that it is only fair to you that this fact should be pointed out. Since your generosity supplies the wherewithal to carry on our work, it must be a matter of interest to our supporters to learn that the policy adopted by this

Hankow branch enables us to do what could not be done by free distribution. The double good which results from this policy is this—a certainty that the books will be read, and the patent advantage gained in making £280 do more than £450 worth of work.

I will close my already overlong letter with a fact of interest not included in our report:—

A COLPORTEUR'S TESTIMONY.

A few Wednesdays ago there was present at our weekly prayer-meeting a native Christian, who has been absent from Hankow for more than three years, during which time he has travelled over several provinces as a Bible Society colporteur. It was a great joy to us to hear him recount his varied adventures, which, however, would be too long to record here. One thing which he said struck us very forcibly. It ran pretty much like this:—"I have travelled now for more than three years. It has been a hard time: sometimes beset by dangers of the road, sometimes in peril from the hostility of the people. But, on the whole, I have received much kindness; and wherever I have been I have met with Christians, or with those who are interested in Christianity. From what I have seen, I come back with the most profound faith in our work of book-distribution, and in every other branch of our work. I most heartily thank God for all that He has permitted me to see in my travels."

MUCH TO CHEER.

I could, if I had time, supplement this brief statement with special cases of blessing received through the daily preaching of the missionaries and the reading of tracts, which were related by our Chinese brother, and which cheered our hearts, but space will not permit. The temptation to try to tell all that one knows is very strong, but the feeling must be kept in check. At the same time, it would assuredly be unfair to keep back from those who enable us to do our work the facts of interest which, when they come to our knowledge, not only gladden our hearts and strengthen our faith, but also stimulate our zeal.

I hope that the year will continue as it has begun, and that at its close we may be able, instead of "signs of blessing," to record "showers of blessing;" and to God alone shall be all the glory. We send very kind regards, and best wishes for your great work.

The report gives the circulation of the year as 349,315, of which 95,285 were almanacks. The Book Depôt has been transferred to the Scientific Book Society of Shanghai. The help given by the Religious Tract Society is warmly acknowledged in the report. The total receipts were £206, and £27 were received on the transference of the depôt. The following are extracts from the report:—

CHARACTER OF THE PUBLICATIONS.

In seeking to provide Christian literature suited to meet the requirements

of the vast reading public of China, we are at the outset confronted by a question of great importance. If, on the one hand, the book be written solely with the view of attracting the attention of scholars, it will fail to be intelligible to ordinary readers, while if, on the other hand, it be prepared simply to meet the needs of the latter class, it may be cast aside with contempt by the former, as undeserving of their notice. This difficulty has naturally provoked the inquiry, "Is it not possible to choose a middle course, and produce books which, while they command the respect of educated men, shall yet be intelligible to those who have enjoyed but few educational advantages?" It is gratifying to learn, on the testimony of many of our correspondents, that the tracts sent out by this Society have proved acceptable to both these classes of readers. We are told "Your books are read and understood by persons of moderate ability and scholarship," and also, "some of your publications are greatly in favour with the literati, while all of them command the respect and attention of this class, whose tastes are proverbially so difficult to please."

Were we to seek other proof than this of the usefulness and acceptability of the Society's tracts, it might be found in the fact that during the year our books have been sent into nearly all of the eighteen provinces of China and her dependencies, also to Japan, the Straits Settlements, Hongkong, and even to Australia and the United States.

While the Committee believe that in their present form the publications of the Society are best adapted for *general* circulation, it has been deemed advisable, at the request of many friends, shortly to issue a few of these in the Mandarin dialect as an experiment. It is earnestly desired to meet, as far as possible, the needs of every class of readers, and should it be found that tracts of this latter description are in demand, the list will be speedily enlarged.

During the year the Society has continued with unabated vigour to press on with its ordinary work, and although the record of its labours will be found barren of strange and striking incidents, there are many signs of encouragement which should stimulate us to go forward in this mission of faith, hope, and charity.

SOME FACTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST.

At the united monthly missionary prayer-meeting held in Hankow, in December, the Rev. W. Owen, of Wuchang, in the course of an address made the following statement:—"I find," said he, "that occasionally a doubt exists in the minds of some people as to whether the tens of thousands of books which are annually sent out from this centre actually find their way into the hands of those for whom they are intended. I can only speak from my own limited experience, but I have no reason to believe that my experience is in any way uncommon and peculiar. As you are well aware, I have been in the habit of travelling once or twice a year, for some years past, over that part of this province of Hupeh which is included in the Wuchang prefecture, calling at each of the district cities, and at other places that lay in my road. For my own gratification I

lately made a rough calculation of the amount of work that has been done in that prefecture in the way of tract-distribution. My calculation, as I have informed you, is very crude, but I feel sure that it is within the mark rather than above it. Going back a number of years we find that a large quantity of tracts were sold over this district by missionaries, including the Revs. G. John, J. W. Brewer, T. Bryson, and others. I estimate the sales of those missionaries as at least 15,000 tracts and Gospels, and on my own five journeys over the same ground, when I have been accompanied at times by Mr. J. Archibald, or some other missionary, at least the same number have been disposed of. At the free distribution of tracts and Gospels, which takes place at the triennial examinations in Wuchang, not less than 5,000 copies would fall to the share of the scholars belonging to the prefecture of which we are speaking. Without going any farther with this calculation, we can see that those who live and carry on their work here have been able to put copies of our books directly into the hands of at least 35,000 people. But while some of these books may be at once rejected and flung on one side, many of them will be read by whole families, and, as we have often seen to be the case, will be lent from one to another. How many have actually read our books none can tell, but I think we see enough to show that the ground is being prepared upon which the Spirit of God, in His own good time, may mightily work."

THE WORK NOT IN VAIN.

"Even now we note a wonderful change which has already come over the people. Instead of holding aloof from us, as formerly, they come around us and quietly listen to our message. In the days gone by it was vastly different. Now, as we go along the streets of cities where foreigners are rarely seen, we hear the familiar phrases, 'Worship God,' 'Believe in Jesus,' 'Do not worship idols,' etc. Everywhere we light upon books which were purchased on previous visits; our sheet-tracts and Calendar we frequently see pasted up on the walls, and that occasionally even in the yamens. True we are told by many, 'Take the name Jesus out of your books and we will heartily accept them;' but this and other objections are often answered by friendly heathen standing near. One more instance of the interest which is undoubtedly excited by our books, and I must conclude these remarks. At a small place named Poh Táng I was called into a shop by the master, who produced a New Testament, which he had bought a little while before from my native assistant. He commenced: 'I do not understand this book.' 'What is there,' I replied, 'that you do not understand?' 'Is it true that Jesus was nailed to the cross?' 'Yes, quite true.' 'Who nailed Him there?' 'The Jews.' 'Was He, indeed, the Son of God?' 'Yes, indeed.' 'And did He rise from the dead on the third day, and ascend into heaven after the lapse of forty days?' 'He did.' 'Why did the Jews nail Him to the cross; was He not altogether good?' 'He was altogether without sin, but He died on the cross for your sins and mine, and for the sins of the whole world. Here, however, is a book which

will help you in your difficulty; read this and your New Testament together, and you will not fail to get light.' ”

SOME GOOD FRUIT.

The following is an extract from the annual report of the Wesleyan Lay Mission, by Mr. Miles :—

“ At Hwang-sz-kang we met with a man, who some years ago had purchased a few Christian books from our evangelist, Mr. Fu, whilst attending a theatre. He read them carefully on his return home, was convinced of their truth, and from that time became a worshipper of the true God. From time to time he had seen various Christian books. He repeated the Lord's prayer, and portions of Christian tracts, was fairly well acquainted with the Gospel narrative, and had read some of the epistles. He told of the persecution he had suffered from his father and brother, who were opposed to his becoming a Christian, and praying to the Christian's God. But notwithstanding this he was determined to pray, and for this purpose wended his way to some quiet spot among the hills, and there poured out his soul before God, to whom he looked for the forgiveness of sins. Before leaving he purchased more books, and expressed a desire to obtain a copy of the Old Testament, and to join the Church when three or four others would join with him. He was not very willing, however, to give his name and address, fearing we should visit his home, which is not much to be wondered at when we consider the opposition of his friends.”

AN INQUIRER.

A friend at a distance writes :—“ At a market place, not far from Mien Hien, an elderly man walked 60 li (20 miles) upon a wet day to meet with us, being much concerned about his soul's welfare. This state of anxiety had been brought about by reading a copy of the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine*, and of the *Two Friends*, which books he had purchased at a much earlier date from our assistant Liu. It was a great pleasure and privilege to meet with him, and in some small degree to lead him into a better knowledge of spiritual truth. We found that he was the village schoolmaster, but that since it had become known that he was reading Christian books, he had had to suffer persecution, and all his scholars had been withdrawn. He is, however, seeking to provide for himself in another way.”

TRACTS FOR COLPORTEURS.

In addition to the grants made to the Central China Society, a grant has again been made for supplying tracts to the colporteurs of the National Bible Society of Scotland, who, starting from Hankow, carried tracts as well as books in various directions. The following report of the use made of the £75 granted last year has been furnished by the Rev. J. W. Wilson, of Hankow, who has at present charge of this work :—

THE AGENCY.

In forwarding a statement showing how your Society's generous grant of £75 has been disbursed, I regret that I cannot do more to-day than give one or two brief particulars of the work accomplished. The National Bible Society of Scotland employs forty-two colporteurs, paid and unpaid, throughout China, and we must frankly admit that a large part of the 170,000 Scriptures issued by this agency last year would not have gone forth, had it not been for the fact that your financial help enables us to make grants of extremely valuable tracts. These last, as you are aware, we purchase from the Central China Tract Society, and the catalogue of this vigorous institution, if somewhat meagre—a fault which is being corrected every year—has at least the merit of specifying nothing but what is excellent, and calculated to promote the interests of the Gospel in China.

HOW THE BIBLE AND THE TRACT GO TOGETHER.

Concerning the dual work of Bible and tract diffusion, it would be difficult to utter a word of exaggerated praise. The fact that all the itinerating missionaries, and many of the settled workers, engage in it, is proof that, as a method of securing the thoughtful attention of the Chinese to the claims of Christianity, it holds a place second to no other. Many letters have reached us from brethren labouring in the interior, which not only reveal their own interest in the work, but also show that their labours, and the labours of the native colporteurs, are hopeful, and sometimes attended with positive blessing. Of course, in China, as elsewhere, we are not always permitted to gather what we have laboriously scattered; but if others are permitted to reap, and others assuredly *will* reap what we have sown, then there is no room for discouragement.

HOW VAST THE FIELD.

The whole future of China is a matter so weighty that we cannot afford to think of anything but the necessity for redoubling our efforts when we gain fresh evidence of the inadequacy of the impression we have as yet produced upon the masses. We have not to mourn over defeat—only over *partial* victory, and to obtain complete success it is only necessary to let the rewards of the past urge us on to more earnest and strenuous exertions. I believe that this spirit animates every one of our workers, and while you will gather from the enclosed figures that during the past year honest work has been done, the future will, I am sure, bear record of increased effort and still larger success. Meanwhile we must appeal to you for a continuation of your friendly aid. Mr. Archibald, the agent of the Society, is at present in Scotland, and I have no doubt he will add strength to this request for the usual grant. We send many thanks for past practical sympathy, and trust that your honoured Society has had a blessed and successful year in all its branches.

An extra grant of £25 has been made this year, so that £100 in all have been devoted to this work.

SOUTH CHINA.

HONG KONG.

HONG KONG RELIGIOUS TRACT COMMITTEE.

The Rev. George H. Bondfield, secretary of this Committee, has sent the following report of its proceedings. No grant has been made this year, the last grant not being yet expended.

In presenting a report for the eight months ending January 14, 1888, I have little beyond bare details to give you. During these eight months we have printed and published Religious Tract Society publications in Chinese to the value of £81. The issues from our depôt have been 1,728 books and commentaries, and 22,123 tracts and sheets. Compared with last year this shows, for the same length of time, an increase of 11,084, or a monthly increase of 1,348.

Upwards of 10,000 tracts were distributed in the district city of Ka-ying-Chow, whilst the triennial literary examinations were being held. This good work was performed by members of the Basel Mission, from whom I asked for reports, but up to date none have come to hand. I have this year thoroughly overhauled the stock of books and tracts in the depôt, and I regret to say, it was found necessary to destroy large numbers of old editions that had been cumbering the shelves for years. The ravages of white ants, book-worms, and the climate, had made them quite worthless.

Few tracts are distributed or sold in Hong Kong; nearly the whole number issued are sent to inland stations. It is difficult to obtain details or reports from far-away brethren, and few facts of interest come under my personal observation. The increasing demand for your publications is the best possible proof of their value as a missionary agency, and, at the same time, is also a sufficient evidence that the funds you kindly place at our disposal are being rightly used.

There is a fairly good demand for your English publications here, but we sadly need a sale-room nearer the centre of the town. If possible, better arrangements will be made by the end of this year.

The Right Rev. Bishop Burdon has received a grant of publications for use among the soldiers and sailors of the Hong Kong garrison; also some copies of Barth's *Bible Stories*, for use in an Anglo-Chinese school connected with St. Paul's College, and a grant of periodicals for a soldiers' reading-room recently opened.

The Rev. G. Goldsmith, sailors' chaplain, has, on the application of Mrs. Clark, of Brighton, received a grant of books at half price. Miss Raine (L.M.S.) has also received a grant of

tracts for use in the port; Mrs. Edge one of pictures for hospital distribution.

CANTON.

CANTON RELIGIOUS TRACT COMMITTEE.

A grant of £25 has been made in aid of the Canton Religious Tract Committee, who have forwarded the following report of their work through Rev. Thomas W. Pearce. The issues of the year were 56,789 books and tracts. Though mainly used in Canton the publications are in demand at other centres—such as Hong Kong, Amoy, Shanghai, and a few have gone to Swatow and Peking.

A NEW WORK.

A notable addition has been made to the list of books. This new work is a *Commentary* on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians by the Rev. F. J. Masters, late of the English Wesleyan Mission at this port. It is a work of great merit, well adapted to the native mind, and worthy of the author's reputation as a missionary of experience in the field. The Committee anticipate confidently that the book will meet with ready acceptance in the native churches. Of the older publications kept in stock here, some well-known tracts by Milne, Genahr, Chalmers, Faber, and others, are much esteemed, and have proved useful.

NATIVE CHRISTIAN WRITERS.

Three of the best publications printed in Canton are by native authors. This last is a pleasing fact on which we can well afford to lay stress. It is at once a proof that Christianity in South China has borne good fruit, and an earnest of what may be looked for when the literary classes are brought under the power of the Gospel, and native scholars are found to consecrate their energies to the service of the churches. In estimating the advance of Christianity in China by results, we cannot afford to overlook such obvious and striking products of the new religion as native Christian writers. They are in a true sense the "superior men" of the native churches, and the time is not far distant when their work will become an important factor in making Christian truth known to their countrymen.

HOW THE BOOKS SELL.

Wishing to afford the Society all possible information on the subject of its work in the province, the Committee add a few words concerning the conditions under which their operations are now carried on. As compared with former years there has been a falling off in the home sales. Yet (though the assertion may seem like a paradox) the decrease in sales is one of the surest indications of progress. There was a time, not very long ago, when within a few miles of Canton, the country people were not merely

ready, but even eager to buy foreign books. Purchasers were ignorant of what the books taught; they hoped to learn from them the foreigners' secrets for healing diseases or acquiring wealth, or warding off the influence of evil spirits. That day has passed, and the people now know too much about foreign teachers and the religion they teach to buy books in ignorance in the hope of obtaining some immediate material benefit. Colporteurs who would effect as large sales as before must make their way to fresh fields and pastures new at the extreme northern limits of the province, or in the neighbouring province of Kwang Sai. Most missionaries prefer to sell a few books to those who know, rather than many to those who do not know that our publications oppose the prevalent image worship, and insist on the fact of sin and the need which all have of a Saviour. A considerable experience in book selling has taught some of us that the Chinese who buy books with a view to read and learn the truth about the new religion are the persons who derive instruction and benefit from their perusal.

RESULTS.

Further, on the utility of the Society's publications in this part of the mission-field, it has often struck me that the following point deserves attention:—Native Chinese preachers who address heathen audiences insist very properly that their hearers shall, as far as possible, listen to the truth with minds free from prejudice. Appeals to the hearer's sense of justice and fairness are often seen to produce a good effect. Such appeals are well followed up if the persons present are induced to buy and read Christian books. The aptness and cogency of the reasoning in some of our popular tracts is well suited to convince the mind and lead to serious inquiry. If on the first pages is set forth a declaration of things "most surely believed" among the Chinese, and the bearing of these well-known and universally-accepted truths on others new and strange is insisted on in suitable language, the reader's mind is led on from the known to the unknown, the transition being effected in such a way that the attention is aroused and maintained sometimes with good results.

Some of the most earnest and faithful among the native converts were in this way led to embrace Christianity.

CONCLUSION.

In conclusion, we may affirm that no missionary in this field is likely to undervalue the benefit which his native helpers receive from the Society's publications. A Chinese preacher to the Chinese is not necessarily a minister with a small library. He may have access to much native learning of many ages, and to many sages, thus being on the native side thoroughly furnished. The work they are called to do requires our preachers to be not less versed in their own books, but more skilled in the use of the Scriptures, and more deeply imbued with ideas that are WHOLLY Christian. And the rule among native preachers is, that the more earnest the man the more intent is he in seeking that knowledge and understanding of the Bible, which must after all be his chief and most direct preparation

for his life-work of preaching. That the native preachers have in some degree the needed aids to Christian study is due in a large measure to the work of the Religious Tract Society in China.

As the native church extends and enlarges, becoming more and more a power in the land, she will, we are persuaded, put on her strength and rouse herself to greater energy and more self-denying efforts. Among the signs of her enlargement and activity and progress will be a native Christian literature rich and varied, and equal to the increasing needs of a widening circle of readers. But for some time yet we must continue to work along present lines, thankful for the help granted and the success attained in this day of small things.

SWATOW.

A grant of £50 has been made to the English Presbyterian Mission at Swatow, in answer to the following letter, written on behalf of the mission by the Rev. William Duffus:—

We have not, I think, made any appeal to the Religious Tract Society for aid since 1880. In that year the Committee were good enough to make us a grant of £15 for tracts, and £20 for reprinting our vernacular hymn-book. We now hope that after this interval we may venture again to request your help. And in doing so we wish to distinguish three separate objects:—

1st. The printing of a new edition of our hymn-book. The ground on which we formerly asked help in this matter was that the hymn-book was at that time our only book in the spoken language, and had therefore a most important use both in the edification of the church and in evangelistic work. And though, I am glad to say, it is not now our *only* vernacular book, yet the same thing has to be said of its usefulness as before. I may mention that the edition of 4,000 copies costs over £50.

2nd. *Tracts.* These we purchase from Shanghai, Canton, Hankow, and other places; and although we seldom give away a tract or book, believing that it is far better to sell them, yet we sell in most cases at a reduced price, and in that way our former grant of £15 was exhausted long ago. Our largest sales of tracts are made by colporteurs employed by our Mission in connection with the National Bible Society of Scotland.

3rd. The printing of tracts in Romanised vernacular. This work is done in our own mission press; and I have great confidence in saying that more economical work is not done anywhere. I shall send you some specimens of the work which has already been done.

We trust the Committee of the Religious Tract Society will be able to respond favourably to our application, and that in considering the amount which they can give us, they will kindly take into account the fact that we are not recipients of an annual grant, but that our last application was made so far back as 1880.

May the blessing of God rest on the invaluable work done by your Society in every part of the world.

The grant has since been gratefully acknowledged.

AMOY.

AMOY RELIGIOUS TRACT COMMITTEE.

A grant of £100 has been made to the Amoy Religious Tract Committee. The Rev. Henry Thompson wrote as follows in applying for the grant:—

Enclosed I send the balance sheet for the year ending November 30, 1887. Again we have to thank your Society for giving us such valuable aid in the work of spreading the glad tidings of salvation among the Chinese. The native helpers, both pastors and preachers (as well as colporteurs), take part in the work. Whenever they go out evangelising they prefer to have some tracts with them, which they use as a sort of text-book to aid them in preaching, and then they sell them.

The returns for sales of tracts are small as compared with the expenditure, but this is accounted for by the large number which has been supplied to the London Missionary Society for their new work up the North River for which you allowed a special grant. The books sold are such as have been printed by us in previous years *e.g.*, *The Bible History*, Commentaries, etc., purchased and re-sold to preachers and students.

As regards the printing of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, Part II., I may say that it is being printed in Romanised colloquial. When in England, I collected about £20 in money and paper towards printing a small edition of that work. When ready the whole of the proceeds of sales will be placed to the credit of your Society. We trust that you will be able to grant us £100 this year, as we hope, in addition to doing the usual work, to print a revised edition of the first part of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, for which there is a good demand.

The statement sent with the above letter shows that 34,000 tracts, books, etc., were published in addition to others purchased from Canton. In the above publications were included 4,500 hymn-books and 6,000 calendars. The amount received from sales of tracts was \$40.90, from sales of books \$32.65.

PRIMER FOR THE BLIND.

The following letter has been received from the Rev. William Campbell, in acknowledgment of the grant made (as stated in the last report) in aid of the work:—

I beg to acknowledge having received from the Rev. D. Smith, of Grimsby,

the sum of £10, which the Religious Tract Society, through you, generously granted towards the cost of preparing an embossed primer for the use of the Chinese blind in the Amoy region of the Fukien Province. Having just returned for a brief furlough, I am hopeful that a few necessary modifications will soon be made preparatory to pushing forward with an embossed edition of the New Testament.

In the Island of Formosa alone we have not fewer than 5,000 blind persons, and the definite aim I have had before me during the past three years of inquiry and experimenting is to have at least one blind Scripture reader stationed in each of the cities and towns along the western side of the island. Of course, the books that will be printed can be used over the entire Amoy region, amongst a people numbering not less than twelve millions. After experimenting with the Braille and with Moon's systems, I decided on using a plain Roman block letter, the chief reason which led to this being the fact that in Formosa alone we have about six hundred Christians who are already able to read books printed in Romanised colloquial. What we need, therefore, is simply to prepare books, and teachers of the blind are to hand in every direction—a thing we could not have secured had an arbitrary system like Braille's been adopted. We owe you many thanks for your assistance in this good work.

“THE HEART BOOK.”¹

(From the *Danish Missionary Journal*.)

Many of our readers are doubtless acquainted with a little book which, for at least twenty years, has had a wide circulation, and of which the colporteurs of our Home Mission at one time used to sell great numbers. It is called the *Heart Book*, and its contents consist of a series of roughly executed pictures of the human heart. Each of these hearts is filled with symbolical figures, which represent virtues and vices. Thus, for example, faith is represented by a cross, sinful desire by a goat, and so on. These figures are represented in different positions, at one time entering victoriously into the heart, at another, on the point of leaving it. Thus the book presents a series of representations of the heart of man, from its ruin to its perfection. This book has exercised a considerable influence amongst us, indeed we have examples of men brought to the brink of despair, and then to rest in grace, by the help of these pictures.

¹ The *Heart Book* here mentioned has been published in more than one mission-field abroad by the help of the Society.

It is interesting to learn that the same book plays a similar part in the "Middle Kingdom." Missionary Macgowan speaks of it, writing from a station in the neighbourhood of Amoy, a place inhabited by fishermen and sailors:—

My stay among these Christians was a very happy one, they were so warm-hearted and so devout. It was pleasant to mark how modest the young seamen, and yet how full of confidence when one came to converse with them. There was a similar heartiness among the older men. There was one who especially pleased me. He was the very model of an old sailor; Christ to him was a real living personality. His face literally beamed with joy when he spoke of Him, and how he had come to the faith. He could not read, but he always carried about with him a book called the *Heart Book*; he carried it on a string fastened to a button of his coat, so that he could get hold of it whenever he wished. The pictures in the book represented the heart, both in its unconverted and converted state. First it showed it full of devils and unclean animals. As the Holy Spirit works in the heart, all these hateful creatures disappear, till in the last picture Christ is represented as its sole ruler. I had not been many minutes in his company before he drew out from his bosom his well-worn book. He then turned over the leaves with his great brown hand, pointed to the first picture, and said, "This is the exact picture of what I was before Christ found me." Then he stood and gazed solemnly at the picture, as though he was in thought living the past over again. Suddenly a smile passed over his countenance; he again hastily turned over the leaves till he came to the last page. He pointed to this with great gladness, and called out, "This is what my heart is now." "This book," he continued, "has been very useful to me in speaking to the heathen. You know I cannot read, and I felt, therefore, in great difficulty when I was amongst people who could; but, with the help of this book, I can stand up with any one, whoever he may be. When any one opposes me, I pull out my book, show him the first picture, and say, 'There you have an exact picture of your heart.' He cannot say another word, for he feels that it is true; and then I show him how he can be changed, just as I myself was changed."

GRANTS TO MISSIONARIES.

In eleven instances missionaries of the China Inland Mission have received grants of books at reduced rates on proceeding to China; six others have received grants on proceeding there from the East London Institute. Missionaries at Amoy, Foochow, and Pakhoi have received similar grants. Mr. Davidson, of Hanchung, has received a grant of pictures at half price, as also has Miss Taylor, of Sauchau.

The grants to China have amounted to £820.

KOREA.

THE Committee have nothing to report with regard to work in Korea, having received no communication from that country during the year. The following extract from *The Chinese Record* will show that there, as elsewhere, the Roman Catholics are active, and that they are not neglecting the work of the press. The extract is from a letter of the Rev. Mr. Underwood, of the Presbyterian Mission :—

“ I have learned from several sources of the doings of the Romanists here, and think that you should know how the matter stands. They are making decided steps to win the country to their faith, and we will have to be wide awake if we hope to win it to the true faith. They have, as you well know, a large following of the natives in Korea, and from those that we have seen, they have some noble converts. These men are all trained to work in some way or other for the cause, and thus they have a host of workers. For the training of these men they have now in Korea, as far as I can learn, ten, if not more, French priests—all but two of whom are well versed in Korean, and they have just added to their Korean Romanist literature several tons of tracts, all of which are neat specimens of work, and go far ahead of any other Korean printing that has yet been done by foreigners. They have already bought a large tract of land on the main street of Seoul, near the centre of the city, on which they expect in a few years to begin the erection of a cathedral. For the purpose of raising up a native ministry, they have from fifteen to twenty Koreans studying for holy orders in their theological seminary at Nagasaki. These facts speak for themselves, and need no comment. They show plainly that the Romish Church is trying to gain Korea, and I fear that if the Protestants do not do their duty we will have a Romish instead of a heathen people to convert.”

JAPAN.

THE grants to Japan have been continued on the same scale as last year. The sum of £200 has been granted in aid of the publication work of the Corresponding Committee at Tokio; £100 towards the salary of the agent of the Scottish Bible Society, who ably superintends the work of the depôt at Yokohama; and £18 towards the rent of the depôt.

Mr. J. A. Thomson, the agent above referred to, wrote last summer :—

Our work here is going on very well, and is becoming more and more

interesting. That the Bible and Tract Societies are the two greatest factors in the evangelisation of this country is a fact that ought to be dwelt more upon at home than it is.

In March the Rev. C. S. Eby sent the report, from which the following is taken :—

In presenting the report of our operations last year, we first of all give thanks to God that opportunities for the best efforts of the Christian Church, in every branch of holy enterprise, multiply apace as the country becomes more accessible by the multiplying of various agencies for the spread of Christianity and the accumulation of interest in, and sympathy for, Christian teaching.

It is being more and more keenly felt by the nation that old moral standards and moral sanctions are outgrown, and that a better ethical education and moral tone must be obtained from other sources. Hence a very general looking towards Christianity to supply the lack. One of the primary agencies to meet this demand is the dissemination of Christian literature, such as the Tract Society seeks to furnish.

The total number of books and tracts sold or donated during the year amounted to 105,267. In addition to this, 132,800 Scripture text cards and sheets have been sold. The catalogue value of the above amounts to £424. The sales of foreign books were 959 volumes, amounting to £40, making a total of £464 sterling.

A considerable movement is now going on in Japan to substitute the Roman alphabet for the cumbersome and difficult Chinese and Japanese characters. The Bible Societies are doing a good work in this direction by circulating the New Testament and Psalms in Roman letters.

A grant of books has been made for the library of an institute at Kobe in connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Rev. W. Weston, of the Church Missionary Society, and Miss Swift, proceeding as a teacher to Japan, have received grants; and so also has the Rev. A. B. Hutchinson for the Sailors' Institute at Nagasaki.

The total amount granted to Japan has been £340.
