THE TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE Central China Religions Tract Society
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER,
1901.

HEAD-QUARTERS, HANKOW AND WUCHANG.
DEPOT, MISSION PRESS, HANKOW.

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Officers and Committee for 1902.

President.
REV. GRIFFITH JOHN, D.D., LONDON MISSION.

Secretary and Treasurer.
REV. G. G. WARREN, WESLEYAN MISSION.

Colportage Secretary.
REV. C. G. SPARHAM, LONDON MISSION.

Depot Secretaries.
JOHN ARCHIBALD, ESQ., NATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY.
ALEXANDER MITCHELL, ESQ., NATIONAL BIBLE SOCIETY.

Executive Committee.

REV. JOSEPH S. ADAMS, ... ... American Baptist Union.
REV. C. W. ALLAN,... ... Wesleyan Mission.
REV. W. A. CORNABY, ... ... Wesleyan Mission.
REV. I. DAEHLEN, ... ... Am. Norwegian Mission.
DR. THOS. GILLISON,... ... London Mission.
REV. JAS. JACKSON, ... ... American Church Mission.
REV. L. H. ROOTS, B.A., ... ... American Church Mission.
REV. JOHN SKOLD, ... ... Swedish Mission.
REV. W. H. WATSON, ... ... Wesleyan Mission.

On Furlough—REVS. A. BONSEY and E. F. GEDYE, M.A.
REGULATIONS.

I. Name.—That this Society shall be denominated the "CENTRAL CHINA RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY," and that its headquarters shall be Hankow and Wuchang.

II. Object.—That the object of this Society shall be the circulation of Books and Tracts, prepared on the same principles as those of the Religious Tract Societies of London and America.

III. Membership.—That all Protestant Missionaries and Bible Society Agents, labouring in Central and Western China, and all persons willing to co-operate in furthering the objects of the Society, may, on application through the Secretary, be elected members thereof.

IV. Executive.—That the business of the Society shall be conducted by an Executive Committee of Ten in addition to Officers. This Committee shall be elected by ballot at the Annual Meeting, from members resident at headquarters, and empowered to fill up vacancies. It shall meet when necessary (four to form a quorum) for the examination of tracts and the transaction of general business.

V. Annual Meeting.—That the Annual Meeting of the Society shall be held at Hankow, during the first week in January, to adopt the Report for the year past, and to elect the Officers and Committee for the year entered upon. General Meetings may be held at other times when important business requires it.

VI. Branch Societies.—That the Committee shall be authorised to aid members of the Society in distant parts in the formation of Branch Societies.

VII. Society's Publications.—That all Books and Tracts published by the Society must first be submitted to the Committee for examination, and no Tract or Book shall be adopted which is not approved of by a majority of the Committee.

VIII. Other Publications.—That applications made by members of the Society for assistance towards the publication of books accepted by and specially required in their own Mission, shall be granted, if supported by a majority of the Committee.

IX. Prices.—That the prices at which tracts should be sold are to be fixed by the Committee.

X. Subscriptions.—That the Treasurer shall be authorised to solicit subscriptions on behalf of the funds of the Society.

XI. Report and Catalogue.—That an Annual Report and Catalogue shall be printed, and circulated throughout China.
It must be apparent to the most casual observer that at the present time missionaries find readier access to all classes of Chinese than they have done hitherto. There is a greater willingness to listen to what they have to say than in past days; there is a much greater demand for their books and tracts; and there is a general friendliness towards them on the part of the people, all of which things tend to show that there lies before the Church of God, at this time, the greatest opportunity ever yet presented for the evangelisation of this vast Empire, with its enormous population.

The old China is passing away, and a new era is being ushered in. With the last year of the old century this old-world Empire, which had been too rudely disturbed in her age-long slumbers, made a desperate effort to get back into the dull paths of her self-contained conservatism. It is a curious comment on the events of 1900 that not only are we, in Central China, beginning to feel the usefulness of railways, but, only recently, the Emperor and Dowager-Empress, who fled in fear from the Northern capital on the approach of the Western army, travelling in slow and clumsy carts, returned to their home in state, the last part of the journey being performed swiftly and luxuriously by rail. Schools and colleges for the study of Western science are being established by the Chinese authorities in many places, and many an effete method which is felt to have had its day is being replaced by something more up-to-date. In former years efforts were made to start a steam ferry across the Yangtse, but notwithstanding the fact that the Viceroy showed favour to the enterprise, they were foiled by the powerful opposition of "vested interests." Last year, however, on the first of the 8th moon, a modest beginning was made and the experiment is still being carried on. Everything points to change and progress.

This is no time for the Central China Tract Society to relax its efforts; on the contrary, if advantage is to be taken of this movement for God, and for His Truth, we need to strain every nerve to seize this great opportunity, believing that He, Who has brought about this state of things, purposes, with the co-operation of His faithful
servants, to reveal Himself to the Chinese nation on a scale which we have, hitherto, only dreamed of, but have never seen.

FINANCE.

We began the year with a balance in hand of Tls. 837.27 (say £116 12s.), £100 of which it was resolved to hold in reserve for special work. The grants received amounted to £462 17s. 5d., viz., £350 from the Religious Tract Society, of London, of which £100 was a sum withheld the previous year on account of the Boxer troubles; £102 12s. 11d. from the Upper Canada Tract Society for native colportage; and £10 4s. 6d. from the Tract Society of America. To all those Societies our heartiest thanks are due. As the pressure of need was not felt, no special effort was made to obtain subscriptions, so during 1901 these only amounted to the moderate sum of Tls. 141.85 (say £19 10s.), but our hearty thanks are due to the subscribers who thus remembered us unasked. Tls. 120 was received as indemnity for books destroyed at Tsao-shih, and these items, with the proceeds of sales, Tls. 3,046.53, and a small sum of Bank interest, formed the total income.

The expenditure more than kept pace with the income. Month by month, the demand on the Society continued to increase till now, at the end of the year, not only has the ordinary revenue gone in the ordinary working, but also the £100 reserve, and a small balance of Tls. 33.14 besides. Thus we are brought face to face once more with an old familiar problem. Merely to do the same amount of work in the year now entered on as we did in the year just closed will require an income from grants and subscriptions of at least £600, while the outside sum we can count upon without special effort is £400. If the aim be to do no more work than last year we must arrange to find extra funds, and if this is impossible then the question of retrenchment must be faced. But, to add to the seriousness of the situation, the prospects are as we have shown, that a circulation equal only to that of 1901 will by no means meet the demands of 1902. As the returning missionaries settle down in their stations their stocks of books will have to be replenished, while the Chinese have of late developed such an eagerness for books that a stock is cleared out in a month which before the troubles would have been sufficient for a year. A vast increase in the current year’s circulation may, therefore, be safely predicted, and provision for this increase should, if possible, be made. The French have a smart saying, “Never prophesy unless you know.” What we know is that since the accounts were closed, barely a month ago, upwards of 126,000 books and tracts have been issued from the Dépôt.

Further, in connection with the present reform attitude of the Government, the question arises as to whether we ought not once more to repeat our effort of sixteen years ago, and re-open a book shop in the native city, at which, in addition to our religious publications, students could obtain the educational works now so necessary for them, and which they are so eager to obtain. Some members of
our Committee have already been labouring to meet this demand by preparing maps, geographies, and arithmetical books, but it does not meet the case simply to produce these works: some means must be found for placing them within reach of purchasers—that is, we must have a shop in a good situation if this branch is to be developed as it deserves to be.

From all these considerations it will be seen that our friends and supporters will need to come to our help, and our members will have to brace themselves to the task of raising funds; not an extra £200 only, but £400, or even £500. For our encouragement in this matter we may well remember that during the quarter of a century of the Society's existence, although it has often been in sore straits, and every whit as needy as it is to-day, it has never been compelled to abandon a necessary piece of work for want of means.

CIRCULATION.

The increased expenditure would naturally lead us to expect that the circulation of last year was very much larger than usual. Judged by the number of publications issued, the circulation was actually smaller than it has been in several previous years of the Society's history. What, then, is the explanation of the fact that printers' bills were nearly double the usual amount last year? The explanation is to be found in the size of the books sent out. Deducting the "Introductions to Scripture," which are an item not under the control of the Society, and are this time unusually low, the figures stand as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRCULATION IN 1900.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book and Sheet Tracts, ... ... ... ... ... 422,270</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIRCULATION IN 1901.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book and Sheet Tracts, ... ... ... ... ... 764,421</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The actual number of the publications sent out last year was, therefore, considerably short of double that of the previous year. When, however, the number of pages is considered it is seen that double the amount of printed matter was out. In 1900, the pages turned out were 3,935,000; in 1901, the figures were 7,862,000 pages. There is a particular interest in this fact in that it indicates a demand for our larger books. Once upon a time, a friend of ours used to poke fun at our efforts by saying, "Yes, the Hankow folk are great folk for small books." Well, we are not ashamed of the small books: they have done and are doing a great deal of good; but, at the same time, we cannot but regard the increased demand for our larger books as a notable sign of success.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

It has been our pleasing duty, from time to time, to record the hearty thanks of the Society to Pastor Kranz, for generously assisting it to publish the works of his fellow-countryman, the late Dr. Ernst
Faber. The Society is thus enabled to produce several of these useful and admirable works in a form cheap enough to bring them within the reach of a large number of Christian workers and others, by whom they are greatly appreciated. Last year, Pastor Kranz rendered a further service of the same kind by again generously providing the stereo plates for Dr. Faber's "Meditations on the Old Testament." This work is uniform in appearance and style with the same author's "Commentary on St. Luke's Gospel," which was published by the Society in 1900.

Two of Count Tolstoi's well-known books have been put into Chinese dress, and are likely to become popular, especially among the young folk in the Church and in Mission Schools. The first, "Overcome Evil with Good," is by the Rev. C. W. Allan, of the Wesleyan Mission. The second, "Until Seventy Times Seven," is also by a member of the same Mission, the Rev. E. F. Gedye, M.A.

An Anti-opium Sheet Tract in verse, by Dr. H. DuBose, has also been placed on the catalogue.

Dr. T. Gillison, of the London Mission, has prepared a much-needed Illustrated Sheet Tract for use in Hospital work. It is entitled, "Why We Found Mission Hospitals," and is certain to be in great request, as it meets a need which has long been felt.

Owing to the political disturbances in China, the Calendar for 1901 had a very limited sale, but that for the current year has already been required to the extent of more than 232,000 copies.

A "Bible Search-Text" Almanac has been prepared by Mrs. Arnold Foster, and will shortly be ready for sale. A book which is such a capital stimulus to Bible study needs no words to commend it, and as the issue is a small one friends are advised to make speedy application for the number of copies required.

A reprint of Matthew Ricci's well-known work on "Euclid" is being brought out, with specially prepared plates, and is sure to be in demand.

SEED THAT HAS BORNE GOOD FRUIT.

Now and again we hear of instances in which individuals have greatly profited by reading the tracts sent out by the Society, and if friends would only be kind enough to take the trouble to look for such cases, and send them on to us, they would enable us to add greatly to the interest and usefulness of the Report.

The Rev. F. A. Wennborg communicates the following very interesting incident:—It is now nearly three years since Mr. Shih was baptized and became a member of the Church connected with the Swedish Mission in Shasi. At the time of his conversion, Mr. Shih was a contractor, living at Kin-chow-fu. Among his workmen was a man who sometimes used to go out into the streets to collect scraps of lettered paper. One day, as he was out on his collecting round, he found a copy of Dr. Griffith John's "Trimmetrical Classic," but as he himself was but a poor scholar he gave the book to his master, Mr. Shih, who had always been fond of reading. Mr. Shih was
much surprised to find that there was a “Trimetrical Classic” other than the native one, with which he was, of course, familiar, and as he carefully examined the book he came to the conclusion that it must have been written by a foreigner, and not by a Chinaman. He judged that whoever wrote the book must have been an able man, and learning from reading the book itself that other books of a similar nature were to be had he became anxious to possess them. Especially he desired to buy the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the Bible. He first enquired at three of the leading bookshops in Kin-chow-fu if they had these books for sale, but as they had not, he went to Shasi and made enquiries of the book stores there, but with the same result. From the booksellers, however, Mr. Shih learnt that the books he so much wished to buy were to be procured at the Roman Catholic or Protestant Missions. Mr. Shih had a friend whom he knew to be engaged as a teacher of the language in the Protestant Mission, so he called on him, but found him from home. Having received the necessary instructions from the teacher’s wife he went in search of a colporteur, living in the same compound, and found him at home. The colporteur offered Mr. Shih a copy of each of the Gospels and Acts, but he would not look at these as he was determined to get the Testaments and the Bible. So the colporteur fetched a copy each of the Old and New Testaments, but Mr. Shih would not be satisfied without the Bible as well. Although the colporteur laughingly assured the purchaser that having the Old and New Testaments he already possessed the whole Bible, Shih insisted on buying a Bible as well. A brief examination of his purchases convinced him that the colporteur had spoken the truth about the books. He stayed on in Shasi to further study the Truth as he found it in the books he had bought, and eventually became a candidate for baptism. Having been converted to God by the labours of colporteurs, Mr. Shih resolved to devote himself to this important work, and is now a colporteur under the British and Foreign Bible Society, and delights to sell the Scriptures which he loves so well.

Mr. Vennborg, in forwarding this instance of blessing following the work of the Tract Society, emphasizes the importance of referring to the Bible in the tracts themselves. Mr. Shih is now seventy years of age, and his wife is a candidate for baptism.

About twelve years ago a youthful Yam-en-runner, living in the city of Teh-ngan, where the Wesleyan Mission has a station, bought a few small publications of the Society, among which was one by Dr. Griffith John, “On Redemption.” He was very much struck by reading this small book, and conceived a great admiration for one “Jesus,” of whom the book spake. As often as his duties allowed him he stole into the Wesleyan chapel to listen to the preaching of the “doctrine,” and he made up his mind to become a Christian, though at that time he had very dim ideas as to what was involved in the step. He said nothing of his intention while at Teh-ngan, but on his return home he avowed his determination to join the Christian Church. His elder brothers forthwith commenced a bitter persecu-
tion which proved too much for the youth, so he escaped, leaving his young wife and his family, as he thought, for ever. It was necessary for him to find some means of living, and the only thing he could think of was to shave his head and become a Buddhist priest. This he did, and was formally ordained to the priesthood by the nine cauteries on his head. Of course he had to profess himself to be unmarried and without friends. He was ordained to the priesthood in Wuchang, and after having spent a year in the big temple in Hanyang he travelled down the Yangtse, visiting temples on the way. He spent some months in the sacred solitudes of the Lu-shan, and afterwards made his way to a large temple in Ta-t'ung. In all his wanderings his heart had been far from peaceful, and while at Ta-t'ung the memories of what he had learnt of better things came back strongly upon him, until he could get no peace of mind. He had arranged to travel with a party of priests down towards Shanghai, and his companions had actually gone on ahead when he decided not to leave for that journey. A tailor visiting the temple remarked, "How is it you say that the idols are true when at the Gospel Hall they say the idols are false?" The priest eagerly enquired the whereabouts of the Gospel Hall, and after a severe mental conflict he went to the abbot and told him that he had made up his mind to quit the priesthood, as he no longer believed in idols, and he was determined to find out the truth of Christianity for himself.

He then went to the chapel of the Alliance Mission at Ta-t'ung, and bought books which he studied. For six months he stayed on, earning his living by acting as the coolie of the colporteur, and at length he returned home to his wife and brothers. But finding he was still determined to be a Christian they renewed their persecution, and he was wondering what to do next when a message reached him, from the native preacher of one of the London Mission chapels in the Hiau-kan district, asking him to go to the chapel and make himself known, the preacher having heard the story from a relative. The quondam priest went to the chapel, was further instructed, and was at length baptised by Dr. John. He has for some time been a very earnest student in the Theological School of the London Mission in Hankow, and bids fair to be a most useful Christian worker when the time comes for him to go out. His wife has been baptised, much to his joy. He says that but for the reading of those books years ago it is hardly likely that he would ever have become a candidate for an ordination, whose aim and scope is very different from the ordination of which on his head he still bears the nine marks.

CONCLUSION.

Many years ago an old Chinese Christian woman called on her pastor, the missionary of that place. He received her, as usual, with great kindness, and after the customary greetings he enquired more particularly after her welfare and the welfare of her family in the country, whence she had come in the day before to attend the services. "Times are very hard," murmured the old dame, "and the season is a
bad one." "Ah," said the missionary, "It is good to trust in God."
"That is true," replied the old dame, "it is good, indeed, to trust in
God, but it is good to trust in the pastor, too." Of course, no tender-
hearted pastor could be proof against such an argument as that. One
smiles at the artlessness of the transaction, but, after all, was not the
old lady's philosophy very sound? She merely stated, in her ignorant
fashion, a profound truth, that God sends His gifts and blessings to
mankind through appointed channels. We confess to a feeling very
much akin to that of the old, untaught Chinese woman as we look out
upon the work which lies before us during this year of grace 1902.
We know it is good to trust in God, and we do trust Him, but our
eyes are also fixed upon His people, to whom He has committed
the sacred trust of funds. With such a need as that of this Society;
with such an opportunity for widely spreading the knowledge of His
precious love as now lies before it, whoever has the power to become,
even in the smallest degree a channel of God's grace, and closes up
that channel, incurs a tremendous responsibility. Men are everywhere
seeking new enterprises into which they may put their capital; they
ask urgently for new undertakings in which they may employ their
surplus wealth. Here is a field which pays enormously for the
comparatively small amount of money and time and labour put into
it. Surely the facts we here set forth for the encouragement of God's
people will prove irresistible in inducing them to help lavishly a
Society which is able to do such splendid work in "preparing the way
of the Lord and in making straight His path." The Chinese are glad
with a great gladness that their Emperor is back again in his own
palace. What will be their rejoicing when the Lord Jesus Christ
shall occupy His own place, His own throne, His own home, in this
dark and benighted land? It is for us to see to it that by no
selfishness on our part we delay the advent of that glorious day of
triumph.
Our Colporteurers in Central China.

UR last Annual Report closed with the prediction that before long every cent in the Society's treasury would be required to meet the coming strain. Probably many a reader chuckled to himself as he detected in this prediction the usual secretarial ruse to cover the misfortune of a large balance in hand. Yet the prophecy was destined at a very early date to become history, for as far back as last June the special funds available for colportage were already exhausted. But rather than check or curtail a work which they felt to be of great importance, the Executive Committee decided to finance it from the general funds of the Society, in the hope that with the balance in hand referred to above they would be able to make ends meet. It is mainly owing to the heavy expenditure required to maintain this agency that a large credit balance has been converted into a small debit one, and had it not been for the exceptional condition of the Society's exchequer the colportage work would long ago have been stopped for want of funds.

This fact gives rise to a very serious reflection in regard to the future, for it is clear that the resources usually available for colportage will scarcely meet the necessary expenditure for half the year. The present state of things has been brought about partly by the great need which exists for this kind of work, and partly by the great success of that work in the past. The success of the work is well shown by the largely increased circulation of tracts and Scriptures effected by our colporteurers during 1901.

CIRCULATION.

The figures for 1900 reached a total of 104,000. Last year the sum amounted to 259,864 tracts and Scriptures, besides a considerable number of which the returns have not come to hand. The details of the circulation are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheet Tracts</td>
<td>134,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Tracts</td>
<td>64,581</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendars</td>
<td>50,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>3,284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibles</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testaments</td>
<td>993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture Portions</td>
<td>6,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>259,864</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The aim of the colportage department is to secure for the Society's publications a wide distribution. Attention is paid not only to crowded cities, but also to small towns and villages which lie off the beaten track. Tracts have been circulated systematically over an immense field in the two provinces of Hupeh and Hunan, so that it will soon be difficult to find a place in Hupeh which has not been visited.

THANKS.

Again we return our heartfelt thanks to the Upper Canada Religious Tract Society for the valuable support given to this department. We feel sure the subscribers to that Society will be abundantly satisfied with the record of the year's labours.

The National Bible Society of Scotland has again laid us under a deep obligation by supplying Scriptures to our colporteurs, and our warmest thanks are tendered to that Society for the help so kindly bestowed.

DIFFICULTIES.

As a rule, those who devote most time to the superintendence of this department would prefer to say little about the difficulties of their work. But in connection with the present political condition of China it may be well to remark that while there is every reason why colportage work should be prosecuted with the utmost vigour, it is also of the greatest importance that it should be directed with great discretion, and watched over with assiduous care. The colporteur who was formerly distrusted and persecuted is now, not infrequently, welcomed as an honoured guest, and tempted by hopes of pecuniary reward to mix himself up in clan troubles and lawsuits. Over and over again, during the past year, we have heard of such temptations being presented to our men, and it is a matter of thankfulness to God that just as in the midst of persecution so in the time of temptation they have been kept faithful to their vocation. The difficulty at the present time is not to induce men to become nominal Christians and to declare themselves as such, as used to be the case, but to prevent those who would make use of Christianity from doing evil in its name.

A few years ago, the well-known P'eng Lan-sheng, now the active and honoured native pastor of the Hengchow church in Hunan, used to visit the cities of the Siang valley as a colporteur of the Society and sell books on the streets, from house to house, often at the peril of his life. He loves to tell how, on one visit to Changsha, the capital of Hunan, the Lord caused the heavens to rain copiously for two or three days, during which time he went out, and, under cover of a very big umbrella, managed to sell a considerable number of tracts, and that under the very noses of his enemies, without being suspected, while if his presence in the city had become known he would have been arrested and severely dealt with, or he might have been murdered by an angry mob. Now there is a flourishing work in each of the
places which P'eng used to visit so perilously, and he himself superin-
tends five colporteurs of this Society, who travel about and sell their
books quite fearlessly, and find favour with the people.

In all, sixty-one men have been employed for longer or shorter
periods in this work, during 1901, as follows:—

- American Baptist Union, ... ... ... 3
- Swedish Mission, ... ... ... 5
- Wesleyan Mission, ... ... ... 8
- London Mission, ... ... ... 45

Five of the London Mission colporteurs were employed entirely in
Hunan, and that province was also visited by some of the other
men. Upwards of 50,000 books, tracts, and Scriptures were distributed
by them in Hunan, the former anti-foreign and anti-Christian
province.

THE INCREASING COST OF SUCCESS.

The advice to "first count the cost" is endorsed by the Divine
authority of our Lord Himself, and we, into whose hands is committed
this great undertaking of carrying the knowledge of His Truth into
the homes of the Chinese, need to consider whether or not we are
prepared to follow up the growth of the work. That an immense field
is opening up is obvious, that our resources are utterly inadequate
to meet the growing demands is equally obvious, and the question
has to be squarely faced whether by renewed sacrifice and effort we
will endeavour to meet the increased need, or whether we must
retrench. Our staff of colporteurs was never so large, and never more
efficient than at present. The machinery is ready to our hand; are
our friends prepared to provide the fuel to keep it running?

METHODS.

As in past years, some of our men have been employed in itinerating
over special parts of the country, making long and arduous journeys.
Others, again, have kept their little bookstalls on the streets of native
cities, selling to passers-by. A large proportion of the men are engaged
as evangelists in country chapels, and spend part of their time in
systematically visiting the villages and towns in the vicinity of their
stations, where they preach the Gospel and sell tracts, being allowed
to retain the proceeds of their sales to supplement the small salaries
which they receive from their missions. In this way a double
advantage is secured, for not only is the neighbourhood of mission
stations thoroughly evangelized, but the evangelist is given an
occupation for days which would otherwise remain idle, and so is
preserved from that greatest enemy of the native Christian worker,
when left to himself, viz., dry-rot. Such workers, living away by
themselves, are in danger of degenerating and deteriorating in their
spiritual life, while this enterprise acts as a fine tonic and stimulus.
Thus the colportage work has come in as a most valuable auxiliary
to ordinary mission work.
The reports of the colporteurs are often interesting as well as very long. Some have reached us which were more than two yards long, and written pretty closely. Now and again they unintentionally reveal something of the discomfort which the men are called upon to endure in the carrying on of their work. Embedded in a lengthy report of the colporteur Hwang, of the Wesleyan Mission, there is an interesting side-light of this nature. He and a coolie, carrying his baggage, arrived late in the evening at a small inn, in a very small market-place, hoping to find refreshment and rest under its shelter. But the inn-keeper, hearing that they were sellers of Christian books, refused to take them in at any price, and it seemed as if they were doomed to spend the night in the poor lodging afforded by the front doorstep of the inn. It was then quite dark, and the two travellers were utterly spent, but when a small crowd gathered to enjoy the excitement the wearied colporteur began to explain the situation, and, by degrees, warmed to the work of preaching that Gospel for which, at that very time, he was being treated as an outcast. As he proceeded to unfold the wonderful story of the Cross, the inn-keeper was attracted, in spite of himself, to listen, and finally he interrupted by saying, "I have lived more than 60 years in the world, and have never heard such good doctrine as that before. After all, I see that you are not the evil men rumour has made you out to be. Come into the inn and stay the night, as you desire." Not only did the old inn-keeper see after their comfort, but he bought copies of their books, and was deeply interested in all they had to say.

It is a significant fact that the books most in request by the evangelist-colporteurs, besides the Holy Scriptures, are the "Catechism of Christian Doctrine," by Dr. Griffith John, and the "Easy Catechism," specially prepared by Mrs. Gillison and Mrs. Jones for teaching women. During the past five years more than 60,000 copies of Dr. John's Catechism have been issued from the Depot of the Society, of which a very large proportion were required for colportage, while 18,000 copies of the "Easy Catechism" have also been distributed in a similar way, although the book has only been in existence for less than three years. These books are largely used as text-books in the preparation of candidates for church membership, and that so many have been required is a noteworthy sign of the increasing numbers of enquirers, who are being led into an intelligent knowledge of the main outlines of Christian truth, and thus represents work which is definitely and constantly bearing fruit. It is a great blessing that the Society is able to publish two works which present so clearly, forcibly, and comprehensively the chief doctrines of our faith, and it is a still greater blessing that it has at its command a body of workers whose aim is to place those works in the hands of the very persons to whom they will be most useful, and whose needs they were designed to meet. By the sale of these and other Christian books, including the Scriptures, our evangelist-colporteurs are doing a splendid work in helping to build up an intelligent and well-instructed Church in Central China. In this field there is abundant scope for further
development, and we hope to see an extensive Christian literature gradually finding its way into the hands of the native Christians and enquirers through this means. The experience of missionaries is that many who when they first become Christians are illiterate soon learn to read, in order to study the Scriptures and other helpful Christian books for themselves. This spirit should be encouraged and fostered in every way possible, and there is no better way than by enabling our colporteurs to offer suitable books for sale.

Recently a man was baptised who was first attracted towards Christianity by a book which he received from a friend many years ago. His reading of that book resulted in his giving up idolatry, but he got no further in the way of truth until, some time ago, a colporteur happened to pass his home, and from him he procured more books. He learned, too, that a Christian place of worship had been established at a distance from the village where he lived, which he could manage to attend by leaving home on Saturday and returning on Monday. This he continued to do for many months, and gradually came into the full light of the Gospel.

A young man entered a chapel in a distant town while preaching was going on, but could not understand the meaning of all he heard from the lips of the native evangelist. He, however, obtained a copy of the "Great Themes of the Gospel," the little tract by Dr. Griffith John, which has been the means of blessing to so many, and in reading it was brought to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of mankind. He is now a church member, and a bright and promising Christian. His old father was, at first, bitterly opposed to Christianity, but he consented, somewhat contemptuously, to read the two booklets, "The Five-fold Tablet," by the Rev. S. N. Chu, and "On Idolatry," by the Rev. T. Bramfitt, and was so fully convinced by reading them that idols are false that he forthwith removed all the household gods, and is now registered as a candidate for baptism. A special interest attaches to the booklet by Mr. (Pastor) Chu. He was the first Protestant Christian convert in Central China. He began his Christian life as a member of the church connected with the London Mission, Hankow, and was afterwards transferred to the Wesleyan Mission, which he served for many years, first as evangelist, and then as honoured pastor of the Wesleyan Church, in Wuchang. Not long before his death, he wrote the little tract on the Five-fold Tablet, which is in great request, and is well calculated to dispel the superstitious notions which lead the Chinese to worship that tablet.

A year or two ago, a man came to Hankow on business, and, out of curiosity, entered one of the street chapels where preaching was going on. He was not greatly impressed by the preaching, but a few kindly words from the old native preacher led him to expend a small sum in the purchase of tracts at the door. The reading of these tracts convinced him of the truth of Christianity, and hearing of the existence of a Christian chapel in his county town he made a long journey thither to find out more of this new religion. For months he
made a weekly pilgrimage to the place of worship, and has now been received into the Church by holy baptism.

Lately, an old Buddhist priest, in an interview with a missionary, informed him that at heart he was a Christian, and the conversation revealed the fact that he had been reading most of the larger tracts sent out by this Society.

Nothing will ever take the place of the "living voice," as the foremost agency in spreading the knowledge of the Gospel, and in persuading men to accept it for themselves, but scarcely less powerful an agency is to be found in the Christian literature scattered abroad throughout the Empire in enlightening the Chinese and directing their attention to the One Gracious Saviour. More men, and more books, are needed to meet the demand. Upon the work of the past, God has manifestly set His seal, and has shown, by the blessing vouchsafed to the colporteurs, His approval of this effort. We commend it, therefore, with great confidence, to all those who are able to assist it, and assure them that any gift, however small, will be useful in extending it.
The Annual Meeting.

The 26th Annual Meeting of the Society was held in "The Rest," Hankow, on Friday, January 24th, the Rev. Griffith John, D.D., president, in the chair. Owing to the inclement weather the number of members present was smaller than usual, but all the various missions were well represented, and the proceedings throughout were of the heartiest character.

The preceding Reports were read, and their adoption was moved by the Rev. L. B. Ridgely, B.A., American Church Mission, Wuchang. He said that although he did not for a moment believe that the power of the pulpit was waning, yet, compared with the press, its influence was contracted. For every hundred people who could be reached by preaching, a thousand could be easily reached by the press. Its power for evil could be seen in the mischief wrought by the atheistical books circulating in India and Japan; but, on the other hand, the many instances of conversion through tract and Bible work proved that it was equally powerful for good. Personally, he could remember the effect the reading of the "Pilgrim's Progress," and similar books, had on himself as a lad. Their influence remained with him to this day. He could almost venture to say that, in the course of his life, he had got more good from books than he had from sermons. He had noticed the same thing in the case of others. Once, while engaged in mission work amongst the Rocky Mountains, he fell in with a sin-hardened old woman in whom he was deeply interested. He did not know what to say to her, but he asked her to read a little book, and three weeks after, on his return to that place, he found her a glad and earnest Christian. In China it is just the same. The people who read are influenced by the books, and since these go to places where preachers may never go no one could calculate the amount of good which was being accomplished. We had now reached the dawn of a brighter day for China, and he looked on these thousands of tracts which were being circulated as the darting forth of the arrows of light which precede the day.

The Rev. J. Sköld, Swedish Mission, Wuchang, in seconding the adoption of the Reports, said that he wished to speak of the necessity for, and the usefulness of, the Society's work. More books, and better books, were now wanted more than ever. Books were required for the mandarins. He had just been to the city of Huangcheo, and when there he had sent a Testament to the district magistrate. Immediately his secretaries sent round to enquire if he had any other books, and on their heels there came messengers from the prefect on the same errand.
Books were required for the people—small books. He was very fond of the small books, and could testify that they had been a great blessing to himself. When he began to study Chinese, he was told that the "Sacred Edict" and the Classics were the books for him, but he soon found he wanted something better, so he started with the Society's Catechism and followed on with the other tracts. All that was worthy in the Classics could be found in the tracts. To study them was an education, and he would advise missionary students of the language to follow his plan. In preaching, the titles of the tracts made splendid texts. He would hold up one, say "The True Way of Seeking Happiness," and it would hold the attention of the people all the while he spoke, and then they would all be anxious to buy it. The people do read and understand. When last at Sungpu, a man who was turning over his stock of tracts said, "They are all about the same Jesus as before." This man had obtained a book from him on a previous visit, and had thoroughly mastered it. Lately, his mission had been anxious to begin work in Kingcheo, which used to be a very hostile city, and not at all safe for foreigners to visit. The natives said that if they went there they would be killed, but all the same they went, when one of the heads of the gentry came and offered to get them a house, or do anything else for them he could. This man had been reading the Society's books, and so it came about that their mission was now established in that city.

The resolution that the Reports be adopted and the accounts passed was then put and carried unanimously.

In moving the appointment of the officers and committee, the Rev. Chas. Robertson, London Mission, Wuchang, said that the resolution he begged leave to propose divided itself into two parts—a vote of thanks to the committee for its services in the past, and the re-appointment of officers and committee for this year. It was a good thing that the committee did not do its work for the sake of votes of thanks, otherwise its payment that morning would be of the most microscopic order. But the rank and file of missionaries did feel grateful to those who wrote books for them, and more especially to those gentlemen who made it their business to see that they wrote good ones, and so he thought it fit and proper that once in a while they should tell them so.

It was true of all Christian work that it could not be estimated, but surely this was most true of the work of a Tract Society. They had heard that morning of some whose first interest in the Gospel had been awakened through the reading of a tract, and of other instances they were all aware; but how many more must there be of whom they would never hear? It was more than possible that there were many in China, who truly believed in Jesus, who either did not wish to identify themselves with the foreigner or had no opportunity of doing so, who had been led to believe in Christ through the reading of some of the Society's publications. Then the preacher did not know just how much his audience had been prepared for his message through the tracts they had read. One of their preachers had told
him how his first interest in the Gospel had been awakened through reading the Christian Trimetrical Classic, and how he had used the form of prayer published in this book long before he had ever been to a chapel. Last year, while he (the speaker) had been preaching in one of the country villages, he had expressed to the preacher who accompanied him his fear that the people would not understand his poor Chinese spoken in a dialect so different from that of the village. His reply was they would understand all he said, for Dr. John's Catechism is to be found in nearly every house in the village. The best way to appreciate what had been done was to ask for its continuance, and so he would ask them to appoint, with one or two additions, the committee which had served them so well in the past.

The motion was seconded by Mr. T. J. Hollander, China Inland Mission, Hankow, and carried unanimously.

The Rev. Arnold Foster, B.A., London Mission, Wuchang, in proposing that the thanks of the meeting be given to the various Societies from whom grants had been received, and to all subscribers, said that there were two sides to the resolution he wished to put. There was the gratitude which the members of the Society owed to those friends who had helped them, but there was also the gratitude which those friends owed to the Society for accomplishing so grand a work on their behalf with their means. They were not only to be thanked but also congratulated, and he had much pleasure in doing both. He had often wondered how the printing press was not discovered sooner. The ancients could write and could stamp letters on coins and the like, but they never found out how to print. Perhaps all the discoveries in connection with printing had not been made yet. There was one thing which the Society should always keep before it, namely, to find out how the press in China could be used to the best advantage. It was sometimes said that it would be an improvement to leave the word "religious" out of the Society's title, and to give up its use in their books; but he begged to differ. Merely to communicate knowledge, merely to educate the Chinese, unless that education brought them to the knowledge of the Author of all Good, would result in failure of the worst kind. He was glad the word "religious" was stamped on every book, as the only work which produced the best results was the religious work. He believed the Society was still in its infancy. Never before had he found it so easy to sell tracts as now. The increased demand for the larger books was also most encouraging. He trusted the means of the Society would keep pace with its needs, and that the friends whom they heartily thanked would still bear them in mind.

The motion was seconded by the Rev. Dr. S. R. Hodge, Wesleyan Mission, Hankow, and passed.

This most interesting meeting was brought to a close by the president, Dr. John, who said:—It is seldom that I have listened with greater interest to Reports read at the Annual Meetings of the Central China Religious Tract Society than to the two Reports.
which have been read to us this morning. They are a record of work faithfully done, and a work of great importance. In listening to the Colportage Report, I could not but feel thankful for the noble work accomplished by our native colporteurs. I was glad to notice that the Report does not contain a single word of complaint against those hardworking men. They have much to try their courage and patience, and they are exposed to many temptations. Their task is a laborious one, and their pay is small. They seem, however, to be doing their work so well that we have nothing but praise to bestow upon them. As to the value of their work, I shall have something to say about that before I close my remarks.

As I look back on the past year, my heart is filled with deepest gratitude to God for the mercies and the lovingkindnesses which crowned it. The causes for thankfulness are many. Allow me to mention two or three.

Attention has been called to the restoration of peace. The Peace Protocol was signed by the Plenipotentiaries of the Powers and China on the 7th of September, and the Court returned to its capital on the 7th of this month, only four months after. How many among us expected this time last year to see peace and order restored to the Empire within so short a period? Those of us that took a somewhat hopeful view of the situation were looked upon as visionary and over-sanguine. To-day, however, we rejoice in the fact that the optimistic have proved themselves to be the true seers, and that their forecast has turned out to be true. We have nothing to fear from the return of the Emperor and Empress-Dowager to Peking, but everything to hope. It is my conviction that peace will follow, and reform also. If the Empress-Dowager goes in for reform, all the difficulties will vanish; for she is profoundly respected by the officials, both high and low, and her influence over all, both officials and people, is very great.

I would call attention to the Decrees on reform in education, issued last year, as a cause for great thankfulness. The first was issued in August, commanding the abolition of the Wen Chang (the Eight-legged Essay), in favour of essays on modern matters and Western subjects. The second was issued on September 13th, commanding all existing colleges in the Empire to be turned into schools and colleges of Western learning. According to this Decree, every county is to have a primary school, every prefecture (of from five to ten counties) is to have a secondary school, and every provincial capital is to have an advanced school or college, and all for the study of Western as well as Chinese education. Thus, in course of time, schools conducted on Western methods will cover the land, if this Decree is acted on. The third was issued on September 17th, commanding the Viceroy and Governors to send young men of ability and promise abroad, to study Western science and art, so that they may return to China, and place the fruit of their knowledge at the service of the Empire.

These are remarkable Edicts, and there can be no doubt that they were issued in good faith. The Wen Chang, famous chiefly for its
artificial and jejune style of composition, is gone, and with it is gone one of the greatest obstacles to educational reform in China. Schools on the new plan are being established, and their multiplication on a large scale is a mere question of time, and not a very long time. We are on the eve of a great educational reform in China, which is going to tell mightily on the future weal of the Empire.

In this movement I see two good signs: First, China is no longer satisfied with her own condition. The great obstacle to all progress in the past has been China's deadly satisfaction with her own condition. Educationally, politically, socially, and religiously it has been so. This has been the root-evil, and no reform was possible whilst this root remained. Let me give you an illustration of what I mean. When Viceroy Yeh, on his way from Canton to Calcutta, was asked why he took so little interest in learning the news from various parts of the world, he replied: "Why should a man, who has the thirteen Classics in his stomach, care to learn what is going on in the world? He has already in his possession all the knowledge that is worth knowing." There you have the China of the past. Fifty years ago, it would have been difficult to find a man amongst the officials or scholars who would not have given the same answer to that question. No reform was possible while this deadly satisfaction remained. But a change is coming over China in this respect. The China of the present is not satisfied with her condition, and this is, to my mind, a main ground of hope as we are thinking of the China of the future. The second sign is, that China is now making an honest effort to bring herself into correspondence with her new environment. The life of an organism depends on correspondence with its environment, and so does the life of a nation. If China succeeds in thus adapting herself, she may live; if not, she must die. She will be sliced up between the Powers, and the Empire, as an Empire, will perish. Most earnestly do I pray that China may succeed, and that her people may yet occupy an influential position among the nations of the earth.

Let us, as missionaries, welcome this great movement, and do what we can to turn it to good account. Let us also be up and doing ourselves. Let the missions see to it that their schools and colleges are properly manned and worked. The mission schools ought to occupy a place of greater efficiency than the Government schools. The teaching in them ought to be better teaching than that in the Government schools, and the men they turn out ought to be better men. They must also be distinctively Christian schools. The teaching in the Government schools will have for its moral and spiritual basis the Confucian Classics. The teaching in the mission schools must have the Bible. On this point there must be no uncertainty, and no compromise. This, to my mind, is a matter of vital importance. Weakness here would vitiate our entire educational work, and tell most injuriously on every department of the missionary enterprise.

I should like to speak for a minute or two on the wonderful change which has taken place in the attitude of the officials and people
towards the missionaries and their work. I will not speak of Hupeh, for most of you know, as well as I do, how matters stand here. Let me speak of Hunan. The change there is simply marvellous. In May last, I stated, for the first time, that Hunan was open. I have just paid another visit to the province, and now I declare the fact again, and I do so with double emphasis. It is open to the evangelist, open to the colporteur, open to the educationalist, open to the Christian physician. It is open to men, it is open to women. There are ladies residing at Yochou, Changteh, Siangtan, and even Changsha. In a month or two there will be a lady at Hengchou, a city distant from Hankow 460 English miles. Daily preaching is carried on at Yochou, Changteh, Changsha, Siangtan, Hengshan, Hengchou, and many other cities. On this journey Mrs. Greig went on shore at all the cities we called at, attended all the services held by us at these cities, took long walks along the banks of the Siang, and visited the most famous temple at Hengchou. Everywhere she appeared in the foreign dress, and nowhere was she molested or even insulted. She is the first foreign lady that has ever visited Hengchou, and yet we felt that she was as safe there as she would have been at Hankow. At Hengchou valuable presents were made to us, consisting of complimentary umbrellas, scrolls, tablets, and such things; but they were presented not by the converts only, but by the gentry and people also. All this would have been impossible three years ago. God has done great things for us, and for Hunan, whereof we are glad.

Then think of the missionary work in Hunan. There are from twenty to thirty missionaries living and working in the province at present. At Yochou there are four, Changsha six, Siangtan five. The rest are at Changteh and other places in the Yuen Valley. Others are coming, and within a year or two, the present number will, in all probability, be more than doubled.

In South Hunan, the London Missionary Society has been working almost alone up to the present time. But it is a marvellous work in every respect. We are carrying on work in two prefectures, two sub-prefectures, and more than ten counties. We touch Kiangsi on the East, Kwangsi on the West, and Kwangtung on the South. Including branch stations, we have more than thirty stations where believers meet for worship. Scattered over this immense area, we have 300 baptised Christians, and no fewer than 5,000 adherents. The whole region seems ripe for the Gospel. Properly manned with missionaries, South Hunan ought to have tens of thousands of Christian converts within the next ten years.

Now there is a fact of great importance in connection with the work in South Hunan, namely, that this great movement is to be ascribed to evangelistic effort, and evangelistic effort on the part of native preachers and colporteurs. The foreign missionary has had very little to do with it, besides guiding the native workers, and strengthening their hands. The work itself has, so far, been the work of native agents, and the success, under God, is to be ascribed to their earnestness and indomitable courage. The colporteur has had a great
deal to do with it. The Scriptures, and the tracts of this Society, have been widely scattered over Hunan, and especially South Hunan. Our books are well known there, and are doing splendid work. Mr. P’eng Lan-seng began as a colporteur, and he is still an enthusiastic believer in colportage work. There is quite a staff of colporteurs working in connection with him now, and he speaks very highly of most of the workers, and the value of their work. We as a mission owe much to the colportage work, and I would avail myself of this opportunity to thank both the National Bible Society of Scotland, and the Central China Religious Tract Society, for the magnificent services which they have rendered to the cause of Christ in Hunan, and especially in South Hunan.

I have said that the foreign missionary has had very little to do with the work in South Hunan. Such has been the case hitherto. The time has come, however, when the foreign missionary is absolutely needed—needed to teach, guide, watch, control; and it is my most earnest prayer that a band of able, true-hearted, spiritually-minded men may be raised up and sent forth to do this work. For this work we want the very best men the churches can give us. We want cultured men, brotherly men, Christ-like men. To my mind it is the noblest, as well as the hardest, work to which a missionary can devote his energies. It is a great thing to write an immortal book; but it is a greater thing to build up an immortal church. It is our aim, in Hunan, to build up a church that shall never die, and I am convinced that if we can succeed in doing this, we shall confer upon Hunan the greatest boon possible to Christian effort. Let the evangelists among the missionaries, whether in Hunan or elsewhere, magnify their calling, and devote themselves to it with passionate ardour. Let them do this, and God will bless them, and China shall be blessed through them.

A word in conclusion. We are just entering on a New Year, and we are doing so with prospects full of brightness and promise. Our prospects have never been brighter. China is open as never before. The officials are more friendly than ever; the people are more accessible than ever. We are in the midst of a wonderful movement towards Christianity. There are glorious possibilities before us; there are opportunities such as we have never known before. But these new times bring with them new problems, new responsibilities, new difficulties, new dangers. May God give us the wisdom, the courage, and the grace we all need for these times. May He help us to rise to our opportunities. Let us shrink from no task, let us fear no foe. Let us cling to our work, and push it forward with all the energy we can command. “Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” That is God’s voice to us this morning. Let us obey it in the spirit of implicit trust and renewed consecration.
Subscription List, 1901.

Capt. Winnington Ingram, $10, ... ... ... Tls. 7.10
Rev. B. H. Alexander, Changsha (1st sub.), $10, ... 7.10
Dr. Thos. Gillison, Hankow, ... ... ... 10.00
Rev. J. K. Hill, Hankow, $25, ... ... ... 17.70
Rev. B. H. Alexander, Changsha (2nd sub.), $10, ... 7.15
Rev. J. T. Coulthard, Wuhu, Shanghai Tls. 10,... ... 9.66
Mrs. Coleman, per Dr. John, £5,... ... ... 36.92
Mrs. Terrell, per Dr. John, 10s., ... ... ... 3.56
Mrs. Craven, per Dr. John, £5, ... ... ... 35.56
Rev. J. R. Bruce, Changteh, $5, ... ... ... 3.55
Rev. L. B. Ridgely, Wuchang, $5, ... ... ... 3.55

Total: Tls. 141.85

List of Grants, 1901.

Feby. 27—From R.T.S., London, £100, @ 2s. 10\(\frac{1}{2}\)d, ... Tls. 700.73
" 27—From Canadian R.T.S., £51 5s. 6d., @ 2s.
10\(\frac{1}{2}\)d, ... ... ... ... ... 359.30
June 18—From R.T.S., London, £150, @ 2s. 9\(\frac{1}{2}\)d, ... 1,070.63
Oct. 3—From R.T.S., London, £100, @ 2s. 8\(\frac{1}{2}\)d, ... 730.03
" 7—From American R.T.S., £10 4s. 6d., @ 2s. 8\(\frac{1}{2}\)d, ... 75.21
Nov. 15—From Canadian R.T.S., £51 7s. 5d., @ 2s. 8d., ... 385.28

Total: Tls. 3,321.18
## General Balance Sheet, 1901

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<td><strong>INCOME.</strong></td>
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### Jan. 1—Dec. 31.

- To Balance brought forward, ... ... Tls. 837.27
- Grants as per List, £462 17s. 5d., ... 3,321.18
- Subscriptions as per List, ... ... 141.85
- Depôt Sales—General, Tls. 2,027.61
  - Per Colporteurs, 1,018.92
    - Total, 3,046.53
- Tsaosz Indemnity, per L.M.S., ... 120.00
- Bank Interest, ... ... 49.82
- Balance due Treasurer, ... ... 33.14

| Tls. 7,549.79 |

### Dec. 31.

- By Printing—Mission Press, ... ... Tls. 5,311.23
- Native Printer, ... ... 433.51
- Freights and Duties Paid, ... ... 184.46
- Depôt Wages and Expenses, ... ... 106.54
- Rent, ... ... 43.20
- Insurance, ... ... 9.00
- Editor's Assistant, 18 months, ... 75.93
- Native Colporteurs—Cash, Tls. 367.00
- Books, 1,018.92

| 1,885.92 |

| Tls. 7,549.79 |

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**HANKOW, 15th January, 1902.—Audited and found correct.**

L. H. Roots.