THE
TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
Central China Religious Tract Society
FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30th DECEMBER,
1899.

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

HANKOW:
PRINTED AT THE N. B. S. S. MISSION PRESS.
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1900.
Officers and Committee for 1900.

President.

Secretary and Treasurer.

Colportage Secretary.

Depot Secretaries.
John Archibald, Esq., National Bible Society.

Executive Committee.
Rev. Joseph S. Adams, ... ... American Baptist Union.
Rev. W. A. Cornaby, ... ... Wesleyan Mission.
Rev. E. F. Gedye, M.A., ... ... Wesleyan Mission.
C. W. Mitchell, Esq., ... ... Wesleyan Mission.
Rev. D. Nelson, ... ... ... Norwegian Mission.
Rev. T. E. North, B.A., ... ... Wesleyan Mission.
Rev. L. H. Roots, B.A., ... ... American Church Mission.
Rev. John Skold, ... ... ... Swedish Mission.
Rev. C. G. Sparham, ... ... London Mission.
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.
REPORT
OF THE
Central China Religious Tract Society,
1899.

CIRCULATION.

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<td><strong>1,470,699</strong></td>
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Last year we were able to report an advance of almost a quarter of a million on the figures of 1897; this year we have fallen back below these figures, and so show a decrease of more than a quarter of a million from the record numbers of twelve months ago.

Happily the main cause of decrease is one that allows us to hope that it is merely a matter affecting our particular Society's returns rather than one involving a serious falling off in the circulation of religious literature in the part of China that we have more especially supplied. For years we have sent large quantities of tracts to the two depôts at Chungking and Chengtu; but during the past year, in answer to a suggestion from the Executive Committee to the Conference of Szchuan Missionaries that gathered at Chungking in January, 1899, the

WEST CHINA RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

was formed. We heartily congratulate our brethren in the West on this step. The growing needs of the thickly populated province of Szchuan fully justify the attempt to save the heavy expenditure on carriage that is involved in the difficult journey up the Yangtze.
We trust that the total sales for the two Societies will be found to be beyond what has ever been reached by our own Society in the years that have gone by.

An examination of the detailed items of the circulation shows that the decrease has been general. In only one publication has there been a substantial increase—the "Introductions" show an advance of over 100,000. These "Introductions" are really a preface to the Scriptures issued by the National Bible Society of Scotland, and therefore serve to indicate a correspondingly increased circulation of the Word of God. That over half a million copies of the whole, or of some portion of the Bible should have been sent out from Hankow is indeed a matter for rejoicing. Would that each "Introduction" might prove to be a means of leading some soul into the Truth.

There is a slight increase in the circulation of the Calendar. This publication is always popular, as it is of better quality and lower price than any that native printers can put on the market. While fulfilling the necessary uses of a "Month Dividing Sheet" (as the literal translation of its Chinese name runs), showing which moon has but 29 days and which 30 days, it is always the vehicle of preaching some Gospel message, and giving some useful information. This year the main article and illustrations are founded on the three parables in the 15th chapter of St. Luke; there is a description of two kinds of windmills, and some useful hints with regard to certain common kinds of infectious diseases.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

In addition to this ordinary Calendar, which is sold largely amongst the non-Christian population, we have this year issued for the first time a Calendar intended specially for church members. It contains a daily text, with the name of the Book from which it is taken, but not the chapter and verse. Mrs. Foster has kindly undertaken to make this an annual publication. The National Bible Society offers a present of a New Testament to every member who can find the correct chapter and verse for each of the 365 days which the coming Chinese year contains.

Mr. Sparham has added five maps to the three already produced. Dr. John has added a preface to a chapter on "Toleration," taken from the Viceroy Chang Chih-tung's work on "Education," and has also given us both a "literary" and "colloquial" edition of a brief work on the "Resurrection of our Lord." This latter is well calculated to do similar service in China to that done by the "Present Day Tract" Series in England. It serves on the one hand as a means of defence to those whose belief in One who rose from the dead is as in the days when Paul was in Athens an object of ridicule, and on the other indicates to the believer various means of convincing those who are without of the reasonableness of religion avowedly based on the fact of the resurrection.
Another work on the same lines, but considerably larger, is now in the hands of the printer. It is on "Messianic Prophecy," by Mrs. Elwin of Shanghai. It consists of brief expositions of the most prominent passages in the Old Testament that foretell the Coming of the Messiah.

In addition to this considerable progress has been made in preparation for the publication of Dr. Faber's *Luke*.

New stereos have been made for over fifty of the Society's publications.

It may interest some of the supporters of the Society to know that boxes of books have been ordered by customers in both Australia and America.

FINANCE.

The various financial statements, which will be found at the close of the Report, show a most favourable contrast with the corresponding statements of last year.

We are greatly indebted to the liberal treatment that has been accorded to us by the R.T.S., London. In common with numbers of others, the C.C.R.T.S. was a victim of the postal robberies that occurred somewhere between Hankow and London during the latter months of 1898 and early months of 1899. The printed Report managed to escape safely through to London, and revealed the fact that our apparent silence was not due to an un wonted prosperity that had made us independent of the help that had been so freely given in response to our appeals of other days. The grant that would have come in the second half of 1898 was kindly forwarded to us last year, so that we show this year a receipt of £400 from London as opposed to £200 of the year before. With the Reports last year we issued a special circular to missionaries in China appealing to them for help. The response was a double joy to us. Firstly, we were able at once to put in hand the execution of orders that had been deferred on account of our having been obliged to sell out our complete stock of tracts; then, we were also able to see and know the value that is put upon our work for those who have the best means of truly estimating its worth. There are but few Missions working in China that will not find themselves represented in the subscription list. Although the effort was a special one, we must ask our friends to continue to give us as much support as they can. Let no one think that we are within sight of a situation in which we should be unable to use wisely and well much more money than has ever been entrusted to us in the past.

Friends in the homelands also came to our help, and in the subscription list may be seen sums from anonymous readers of the "Christian," the "Christian World," and the "Joyful News," besides those joined to the names of honoured supporters of our own and of the Missionary Societies most closely connected with us.
Two good examples are set this year that we hope will be more and more widely followed in the future.

1. At Shih-sheo, a C.I.M. station on the Hunan border of Hubei, a collection was taken in the native church. The amount received happens to be the smallest single item in the list of contributions for the year, and so far helps to remind us of what was perhaps the smallest sum that was cast into the treasury on the day when the Lord gave the disciples His method of valuing gifts. We believe that we may well expect that He will be pleased to assign a use to this particular offering that will place it amongst the greater gifts of the year. Is not the time come for the native churches to take a good share in a work so helpful to them and their evangelistic efforts as is that of a Tract Society?

2. There is an unusually long list of comparatively small contributions. The difficulty of forwarding small sums has been got over by willing colleagues, in various centres, who have received these sums and forwarded to us the substantial amounts to which they have reached. We heartily thank those who have thus so kindly undertaken to enable others to fulfil their desire to take a part in our work. Although this is by no means the first instance of such co-operation, the past year exceeds any other year's record in this matter.

SPECIAL FUND.

The Parent Tract Society has just celebrated its centenary year, and one result of this has been a Centenary Fund, from which we have received a special grant of £100. This will enable us to do a useful work on which we have long set our minds. One of the most pressing needs of the rapidly growing churches of Central China is literature that will be helpful for the understanding of the Scriptures. Although there will now be a greater demand for commentaries and such publications than there would have been say ten years ago, still there is not even now likely to be such a sale as would make the cost of the plates needed for printing large books a comparatively small item. With this sum in hand, however, we hope to be able to issue good works at a price that will put them within the reach of preachers and members whose income allows but a small margin for purchasing books. The first work that we have adopted is an excellent "Commentary on the Romans," by the Rev. J. Jackson. The balance sheet shows this sum as a Reserved Fund. It is for such objects as this that we intend to use it.

DR. FABER.

In the death of Dr. Faber the Chinese Church has lost one whose name stands in the very front rank of those who have served her with the pen. Dr. Faber's works are characterized by all that is associated with the best German scholarship: accuracy and fulness of research, painstaking attention to details, and great power of analysis. His style is a delight to Chinese scholars, though in
many of his works too "high" for the less educated readers. While second to none in matters of scholarship, his writings are emphatically those of a practical man. He did not see things as they might have been in theory but as they actually are. Hence their essentially evangelistic ring.

The Society has published the handiest and cheapest of two of his greater works: that on "Civilization" and the "Commentary on St. Mark." As is stated above, the still larger "Commentary on St. Luke" is in the hands of the printer. Extracts from his works are also published in both book and sheet tract form.

INCIDENT.

One of the most recent advances made by the Wesleyan Mission, close to the borders of Honan, is intimately connected with the Society's work. Some sixteen years ago a gentleman happened to be in Hankow, and was attracted by the books offered for sale at one of the L.M.S. chapels. Eleven years after he was again in Hankow and made further purchases. Later he heard of the establishment of the W.M.S. in his native departmental city, and he made a special journey to meet the missionary in charge. The result has been the formation of a body of enquirers who meet together from Sabbath to Sabbath for the study of God's Word.

A colporteur in the employ of the British and Foreign Bible Society, in Honan, says that he was greatly helped when first he heard of Christianity by the study of some of our publications.

In the Colportage Report will be found yet other incidents showing that here and there the books we spread have accomplished their work of making the paths of salvation plain to the wayfaring man.

That our work may be increasingly used in this way is our earnest desire and prayer.
OUR COLPORTEURS IN CENTRAL CHINA.

Even if it were possible to describe the spiritual darkness and apathy of the people among whom our colporteurs labour, the description would scarcely be believed by those who live in a world which is so entirely different to theirs. We, of Western lands, entered at our birth into a glorious heritage of noble thought and teaching, and grew up in the midst of influences which constantly tended to develop and nourish the higher part of our nature. The Chinaman is born to an heritage of gross superstition, of blind idolatry, and hard materialism, and he grows up amid ancient customs and traditions which not only bind him like iron fetters, but also tend to smother any spiritual instincts he may possess. There is a poverty other than mere physical destitution of which it is profoundly true that “one half the world does not know how the other half lives,” and charity, which is the greatest of the Christian graces, is never employed in more God-like work than when seeking to lighten the darkness of benighted souls, to feed those who are spiritually starving, and to bring into the liberty of the Gospel of Christ those who are bound. This is the work which, in varying degree, our colporteurs are doing, and it must be successful, for the books they distribute contain

LIVING SEEDS OF TRUTH.

We gauge the labours of the men by the number of tracts distributed and the number of places visited, not merely because it is very difficult to estimate their value in any other way, but chiefly because it is the work of distribution which we ask our brethren to undertake. By means of these tracts the Gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation,” is being carried by the colporteurs into thousands of Chinese homes where it otherwise would not penetrate, perhaps for many years to come. It is our chief aim to sow the living seed of the Gospel all over these great central provinces of China. But while keeping this main object ever in view, we also scatter widely thousands of books which are well calculated to shatter old superstitions, explode false beliefs, and dissipate ignorant and unreasoning animosity. Thus our colporteurs are not only pioneers of the Gospel, but in a very real sense they also carry the light of true knowledge into many a dark corner of this land.

A GOOD YEAR.

We are glad to record that the year 1899 was the best we have yet had in colportage work. More men were engaged in it; they disposed of more tracts; and they travelled over wider areas than ever before. A striking feature of the year’s work was the number
of journeys that were made *systematically* over the same ground, with good results, both in the sales secured and in the growing friendliness of the people. This was notably the case in the Hwang-kang district, and in the neighbourhood of Sung-pu, which latter place was the scene of martyrdom of two Swedish missionaries in 1891. The longest journey was undertaken by two young men belonging to the Wesleyan Mission, who travelled nearly 1,300 miles by road, and visited, among many other places, three important towns in the province of Hupeh, six in the province of Hunan, and three in the province of Kiangsi. They were 108 days on the road, and sold 2,853 tracts and books, which was, indeed, a capital bit of work.

**CHEAP, YET EFFICIENT.**

Our kind friends of the Upper Canada Religious Tract and Book Society apparently do not realize what a vast amount of work can be accomplished in a land like China with the comparatively small sum of $500 (gold), which is the amount of their annual grant, for in their last published Report they claim to be supporting only five men with this sum. Last year *forty-eight* men were engaged for longer or shorter periods in the work, and fully *two-thirds* of the expense of their labours was met by the Canadian grant, the remaining one-third having to be drawn from the funds of the Central China Tract Society, or, in other words, our Canadian friends maintained *thirty-two* workers. The colporteurs were employed under the superintendence of various Missions as follows:

- Swedish Mission, ... ... ... 1 man
- American Baptist Mission, ... ... 4 men
- Wesleyan Mission, ... ... 10
- London Mission, ... ... 33

Each Mission has hitherto carried on work in its own way, seeking to further the aim of the Society to the best of its ability. The results, however, again prove that, providing the colporteurs are carefully superintended, the least expensive method of distribution is to allow each man to retain the proceeds of his sales as wages, adding a small amount, whenever necessary, to cover travelling expenses. Some of the Wesleyan Mission colporteurs, and all those employed under the London Mission, were maintained in this way. Of the thirty-three men who worked in connection with the London Mission, sixteen were employed simply as colporteurs, while the other seventeen were already in the service of the Mission as country evangelists or chapel-keepers. The usefulness of these regular Mission helpers has been largely increased by giving them tracts to sell, both in the course of their ordinary labours, and in leisure time that would not otherwise be filled up. In many cases these men have been most active in visiting all the villages and towns in the vicinity of their stations, thus doing a most important and most useful work of evangelization. This particular branch of
the work has been very fruitful and satisfactory. Surely the time has come when a great deal more of such work may be done at a minimum cost to the Colportage Fund. Most of the Missions have a number of men in their employ, whose efficiency would be largely increased if they were encouraged to add to their other duties the selling of tracts and Scriptures. Much work would be done by them which is now left undone; much good would certainly result from their efforts; and all the country lying around the various mission stations would be more thoroughly, as well as more widely, worked than has hitherto been possible.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

Never was there a greater disposition to buy Christian books, and to listen to the preaching of the Gospel, than at the present time. Persecution is much more rare than formerly even in Hunan, where, although traces of the old opposition are still to be seen, four men have been journeying regularly up and down the whole length and breadth of the Siang valley, and have had good sales. In several places, where the heathen have been quite friendly, Roman Catholic converts have been exceptionally bitter and hostile.

CIRCULATION.

The sales of tracts and books at selling price, i.e., below cost, amounted to Tls. 542.50. Not less than 125,000 of the Society’s publications were thus disposed of, to which must be added 21 Bibles, 1,014 Testaments, and 5,978 Scripture Portions—value about Tls. 114 extra. As this item properly appears in the accounts of the National Bible Society of Scotland we do not include it in ours, but at the same time it largely helped to oil the wheels of our distributing machinery. In all, more than 132,000 tracts and Scriptures were carried by our colporteurs and distributed over a large part of this province of Hupeh, and over parts of the provinces of Hunan and Kiangsi, while one or two of the men found their way into Honan.

THANKS.

We record our most hearty thanks to the Upper Canada Religious Tract Society, and trust that that Society will be as richly blessed in all its other undertakings as it has been in this one. We also desire to thank the National Bible Society of Scotland for its favours, and congratulate it on having been able to put into circulation more than 7000 copies of the Word of God without any expenses beyond the cost of production.

HARDSHIPS.

In a land like China, colportage work involves much personal hardship, even under the best conditions, while often the men are exposed to rough treatment and to much danger. Several of our men when travelling were the victims of robbery, but, without
distinguishing between the colporteurs of one Mission and another, the thieves in every case left the literature behind. One poor fellow had a narrow escape of his life by shipwreck, but in a remarkable way he and his books were eventually rescued by fishermen, who counted themselves to be well rewarded with 400 cash (about tenpence).

Sometimes the men meet with unexpected kindness. Two of them called at a city on the borders of Hunan, named Liu-yang, where is the home of the ex-Governor of Hupeh, H. E. T’an, whose son was one of those who suffered execution as leaders of the Reform party. A secondary wife of H. E. T’an was received into the Church by the Alliance Mission, at the time of her residence in Wuchang. This lady, hearing that colporteurs had arrived in the city, sent for them, provided them with a meal, and made many enquiries respecting her missionary friends in the three central cities of Hupeh. Thus the fear in which our brethren had entered Liu-yang was changed to rejoicing.

"OF WHOM THE WORLD IS NOT WORTHY."

Our friends will be glad to learn something of the character of the men who do the work, and they will certainly be deeply interested in the story of Liu Yuen-ch’ang, who for four years has rendered faithful service as a colporteur in connection with the Wesleyan Mission. Like his great Master, Liu began life as a carpenter, and when about twenty years of age he frequently attended the chapels of the London and Wesleyan Missions in Hankow, which are daily opened for the preaching of the Gospel and the sale of Christian books. After a time he became convicted of sin, but this he sought to hide by constant disputations with the preachers, both English and Chinese. This was in 1891, the year which stands out in our annals as the Year of the Riots, and all Hankow was seething with wild rumours as to the ill deeds of missionaries. But, as ever, the Cross proved to be an attraction as well as a repulsion; and where some could find only ground for abhorrence and refusal, this man found a good reason for cleaving to those who not only suffered for doing well, but bore their sufferings patiently.

At this time Liu had a fixed place of business, where he could maintain his family with comparative ease, but he found it impossible to keep the Sabbath while he continued in it. He, therefore, gave it up and took to a much less certain means of obtaining a livelihood in order that he might do what he believed to be right. His wife bitterly opposed this sacrifice of worldly comfort for such a reason, and left him to return to their native village, which is situated on the banks of the river Yangtse some twenty miles above Hanyang.

On his first visit home after his conversion, a gathering of the elders of his clan was convened, and he was arraigned before them
as a criminal on the charge of believing in the “foreign religion.” He was beaten, had his hands tied behind his back, and was condemned to be thrown into the great river which flows past his door. It was the end of October, and the weather was very chilly and raw, moreover, it was pouring with rain, yet notwithstanding the cold he was stripped of all but two thin garments, led to the river bank, and pushed into the water at a place where it reached his armpits. He was then reminded of a similar scene which had occurred some eight or nine years earlier, when a robber, caught red-handed, was summarily disposed of in that way. “Where is your Jesus now; can He save you?” was the question shouted to him from the bank. “Jesus is here, with me now, and He can save me if He wishes,” was the triumphant answer. After being in the water about a quarter of an hour he was rescued by a relative, who, however, had first of all a struggle with the persecutors before he was able to get into the water himself and help young Liu out.

For some time after this his wife still refused to live with him, and even to this day his brother, who led the opposition, and actually tied his hands behind his back, has kept aloof from him.

Very few who, for the first time, meet the quiet, inoffensive man, who has journeyed thousands of miles doing the work of the Tract Society, would guess the strength of character which lies hidden beneath the meekness that is always shown to every kind of opposition. Among other journeys he made two lengthy ones into Hunan, and on his first journey especially he was again and again called to face angry mobs who clamoured for his life.

Liu Yuen-ch'ang has just been made a preacher in the Wesleyan Mission, and his place will be taken by a Christian native of Hunan, whose trade has been practically ruined by a continuous boycott maintained against him on account of his Christianity.

**LEAVES OF HEALING.**

During the autumn of last year a young woodcutter, living in the Ying-shan mountains, who is a bright Christian, was sorely afflicted with a troublesome affection of his eyes. In his distress, and not knowing what to do, he got someone to lead him into the city of Ying-shan, where the evangelist Lo, an ardent tract seller, remembering that the symptoms were similar to some described on the Society’s Calendar, forthwith applied the treatment prescribed, with the happy result that in a few days the patient was enabled to return to his work. If medical missionaries could prepare simple treatises, dealing with such minor ills as afflict large numbers of the Chinese, and get them into circulation through the colporteurs, much suffering might be relieved and much good accomplished.

**A BUDDHIST ASCETIC.**

Among the non-Christian Chinese no people are more earnest in their religious faith than the ascetic sect known as the Vegetarians.
A man named Chang, who was a vegetarian of twenty years standing, was employed in an incense-making establishment in Hankow. He was drawn to attend the daily preaching of the Gospel in the chapels, and became much interested. His interest, however, took no definite shape until one day, as he was leaving the Kia Kiai chapel, he purchased a tract at the bookshop. It proved to be the "Errors of Vegetarianism," which was exactly suited to his own case. He was especially delighted to hear the accent of his native place, and he therefore made himself known to the bookseller, who entered into a long conversation with him, advising him to read the book he had bought, and also to attend the chapel in Hwang-p'i, his native city, on his return. Chang followed these directions, and was gradually led to place his hopes in Jesus Christ, and in time he became an earnest Christian worker. After Chang's baptism, Mr. Sparham had the joy of baptizing successively his brother, two nephews, and a vegetarian friend, all of them the fruits of his earnest labours.

OUR GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

But even though no instances of blessing received through this agency were to come to our notice, we should feel the great importance of maintaining it. The work is undertaken by us from a deep conviction of the need of such work; we seek inspiration amid all the drudgery which necessarily attends the doing of this work, from the thought that we are trying to bring men into contact with God, and that He is Co-worker with us. It takes many bullets to win a battle; it takes enormous issues of the daily papers to create a public opinion; it requires many edicts, proclamations, and blue-books to preserve order and quietness in a nation; and surely this, the greatest task ever set to mankind, requires no less, but a very much greater expenditure of force, for "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

That is a true picture of the work before us in the coming year. We ask special prayer for the colporteurs that they may be kept in the midst of temptations to which they are peculiarly exposed; we ask prayer for the books they distribute, and the Word of God preached in the process of distribution, that they may abound in fruit to His glory; and we ask that many may be willing to come to "the help of the Lord against the mighty," and enable us to do this work on a wider scale than we have yet dared to consider possible. For the success of 1899 we render praise to Him from Whom all blessings flow!
The Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting took place on Friday, January 12th, 1900, at the Rest. The President, the Rev. G. John, D.D., was in the chair.

The first half hour was, as usual, given to a devotional service in connection with the Week of Prayer.

The General Report was read by the Secretary, and the Colportage Report by the Colportage Secretary.

The Rev. S. R. Hodge, M.R.C.S., L.B.C.P., proposed the first resolution, "That the Reports now read be adopted and printed."

Dr. Hodge said that this Annual Meeting was one to which we all looked forward. It really corresponded to what Methodists, in their conferences and synods, called "The conversation on the work of God," and no higher commendation of the meeting could be given by a Methodist than that. The printed Reports of the Society were always most interesting, and formed a real treasure-house for those who, like he himself had recently been when on furlough, were in need of incident and material for varying addresses to home audiences night after night. The information they contained seemed marvellous to non-Christian Chinese. Dr. Hodge had been the medical adviser of the late Hankow Taotai, H. E. Ts'ai; and on one occasion he told Mr. Ts'ai what had been the year's circulation, and the Taotai could scarcely credit that such a work as the Society was doing was possible. It might help us to grasp the large figures that even the decreased circulation of this year showed, to think that it meant something like a book or tract for every man, woman, and child in the three crowded cities of Wuchang, Hanyang, and Hankow. Dr. Hodge pointed out two matters in which he hoped the coming year would show an advance: there was need of some good Christian biography; the absence of several names of senior missionaries from the list of authors was also noteworthy.

The Rev. J. S. Adams seconded the proposal. He referred more especially to the Colportage Report, and showed that the colporteurs, like the Thessalonians (see I. Ep. chap. i. vv. 6-8), were followers, examples, and echoes. And consequently we too see men who "turned unto God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven."

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

The Rev. L. H. Roots moved the second resolution, "That the hearty thanks of the meeting be given to the R.T.S., London, for its liberal grants during the past year; also to the Upper Canada R.T.S. for its colportage grants; and also to all subscribers and supporters."
Mr. Roots recalled to us how that a long period of chronic debt was brought to an end by the fire of 1892, and we were rescued by disaster. The Society last year was reduced to an almost similar state of booklessness, and the threatened disaster of having to close our work at once rescued us. The fact that Tls. 260 had been contributed at the annual meeting, and about Tls. 1000 since, was most encouraging. Our special thanks were due to the great Societies. The political outlook was dark, but come what may we were all agreed that good literature would be more and more needed in the future, and our past history was a help to us to face the future with hope.

The motion was seconded by the Rev. R. T. Booth, M.B., B.Ch. Dr. Booth called attention to the large number of subscribers, and to the extent of China that the localities from which the subscriptions had come indicated as affected by the Society's work. It was most encouraging to young missionaries to note the hopeful attitude of their seniors.

Dr. John, as president, addressed the meeting. He said:—I am not going to make a speech this time. There are, however, two or three points to which I should like to refer.

1. Our attention has been called to a drop in the circulation of last year as compared with that of the previous year. I am sorry that it should have been so; but we need not be surprised or discouraged. This is not the first time we have had a drop. We had one in 1893; but up the circulation went again, till it reached, in 1893, the magnificent total of 1,470,699. And such will be the case again I have no doubt. In no department of Christian work is the progress in one continuous straight line. There are many ups and downs. But take a number of years together, and it will be found that there has been progress, and that the progress has been real and decided. I would remind you that 24 years ago (1876) the circulation was only 9000, and that it took 13 years (1889) to bring it up to the million. It was only the year before last that it touched, or almost touched, the million and a-half for the first time. But the circulation of last year was by no means small. After all a circulation of 1,209,647 is not to be despised. I remember the time when it was the height of our ambition to reach the million. Our feeling then was that if we could only get so far we might rest and be thankful. But our success only fired our ambition; two was substituted for one; and the circulation of 2,000,000 became our goal. But for the suppression of the Reform movement the year 1899 would have carried us a long way towards the point aimed at. The Diffusion Society reports a similar drop, owing probably to the same cause. There is no room for discouragement. No one can read the reports to which we have listened this morning without feeling that a splendid piece of work was done last year by the Central China Religious Tract Society.

2. A reference has been made to the general response of friends
in China and at home to our appeal of last year. Besides sending the appeal to some of my friends, I wrote a letter to the "Christian," embodying the substance of the appeal, and giving a few further details, touching the work in China generally. I have received several letters from missionaries in China and from home friends which have greatly encouraged me. I should like to read extracts from two or three of them as specimens of the kind of letters that have been sent me. You will be glad, I think, to hear them.

The first is from Bristol:—"Mrs. —— was much interested in the letter from Dr. Griffith John in the 'Christian' recently about the distribution of religious tracts and the Scriptures. She also must thank Dr. John for the printed copy of his address. Mrs. —— has much pleasure in enclosing post office order for £6—three to be for the Central China Religious Tract Society, and three for the National Bible Society of Scotland."

The second is from Belfast:—"Dear Sir,—Having read missionary reports of your labours in China, and lately in the 'Christian' of 10th March, of your intention to circulate Christian tracts in China, I have pleasure in contributing £20 for that good purpose."

The third is from Bradford:—"Dear Dr. John,—It was with much pleasure that I was able to send, at the end of March, £5 for the Central China Tract Society. Thank you very much for sending me the report of your address at the annual meeting. It would be a thousand pities if such a valuable work had to be stopped. I shall be much obliged if you will be good enough to send me the Report for 1898 if it be printed."

The fourth is also from Bradford:—"Dear Sir,—You very thoughtfully sent my wife a copy of your speech at the annual meeting of the Central China Tract Society, and I read it with so much interest that I felt I must help. My means are much smaller than they were, and so the amount must be smaller than I like, but I trust the Lord will use it. I think we business men, and even those of us who on most week days, and always on Sundays, try to do a little Christian work at home (in this land I mean) need every influence that will keep our hearts tender and open to good influences. Hard-headed men of business can so easily become hard-hearted also, and therefore not the least of the indirect influences of the missionary worker abroad is to inspire us at home. And so your earnest words help me, and I in return am constrained to help China. China I pray for, and would do more for had I the power. But it is not right to wish for more power; we may pray for more only if we use all that we have. I thank you for the opportunity, and ask God that you may see greater things in China. I have sent £5 to London Missionary Society, London, for Central China Tract Society. My wife has also sent £5."

The fifth letter is from a missionary of many years standing, and who knows well the value of the work carried on by our Society:
"My Dear Dr. John,—I was very much interested in the reading of an article that appeared in the last number of the 'Christian' to hand by you. I am sorry to see that the funds are low in connection with the Tract Society. I cannot help much, but herewith I send you a cheque for ten taels (Tls. 10) towards that signally God-blessed channel of Christian effort. Eternity alone will show the results of the Tract Society. Those that can be tabulated are as nothing compared with the far-reaching and unknown (to us) results."

I might read more; but these extracts will suffice to show that the interest in the work of this Society is deep and widespread. Many are praying for us both in China and in the home-lands; and many are willing to help us to the utmost extent of their ability. We have only to let our wants be known and in the help will come.

3. I think we ought not to close the meeting without making a special reference to the most signal event of the year, namely, the opening up of Hunan. The year 1899 will always be remembered in connection with the wonderful extension of Christian work in that exclusive and bitterly anti-foreign province. I might, in order to show the changes that have taken place in Hunan, dwell on the wonderful journey made by Mr. Sparham, Mr. Greig, and myself in March and April last; on the opening of Yo-chou as a treaty port, and the settlement of Mr. Greig and Dr. Peake at the city as missionaries of the London Missionary Society; on the journey made recently by Mr. Archibald, and the cordial attitude of the people towards him as compared with their attitude in former days; on the presence of the representatives at Changteh-fu of three missions, and the ease with which they are able to carry on their work; and on the colportage work which Messrs. Alexander, of the Alliance Mission, and Jones, of the American Bible Society, have been able to accomplish within the walls of Changsha, the capital of the province; but these facts are well known to you, and I need not dwell upon them. I will only remind you that the wonderful changes that have taken place in Hunan are to be ascribed in a great measure to the operations of this Society, and that we in a special manner are called upon to give thanks to God for the great things He has done. I look upon the opening of Yo-chou as an event of very great importance in its bearing on missionary work in Hunan. Whether Yo-chou will turn out to be a success, looking at it from a commercial point of view, remains to be seen. No doubt it would have been far more satisfactory in all respects if Siangtan and Changteh could have been made treaty ports. But, that being at present impossible, the next best thing was to open Yo-chou. To have any place thus opened in Hunan must make a great deal of difference to us as missionaries. It has made a good deal of difference to us already. Before very long the whole province will be thrown wide open, and missions established everywhere within its precincts. May God hasten on the day.
The meeting was then adjourned until the afternoon, when various matters of business were transacted, commencing with the re-election of the officers and the election of the Executive Committee.

It was decided to prepare 10,000 packets of books for the coming Triennial Examination at Wuchang; and, if funds and helpers were forthcoming, to add the neighbouring province of Kiangsi to our own, and make a similar distribution at the capital of that city.

It was resolved to ask missionaries, as far as possible, to set apart one Sunday for the preaching of special sermons to native converts on behalf of the Society, and to have collections in aid of our funds. An Annual Native Meeting was also agreed on for the three central cities; for this year the meeting was fixed to be held in the L.M.S. Chapel, Hankow, some week day in May.

The meeting hoped that special subscriptions would be forthcoming for colportage work (which is capable of indefinite expansion), and also for the special expenses in connection with the distribution at the Examinations.
SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Dr and Mrs Gillison, Hankow, ... ... — Tls. 25 00
Rev. G. John, D.D., Hankow, ... ... — 80 00
Miss Lister, ... ... ... — 15 00
H. M. P., ... ... ... — 50 00
Mr J. Archibald, Hankow, ... ... — 10 00
Rev. A. L. Huntley, Hanyang, ... ... $7 00 4 97
Rev. T. E. and Mrs North, Wuchang, ... — 10 00
Rev. G. G. and Mrs Warren, Hankow, ... — 20 00
Rev. J. S. and Mrs Adams, Hanyang, ... 10 00 7 10
Rev. A. D. and Mrs Cousins, Wuchang, ... — 15 00
Rev. T. Protheroe, Teh-nga, ... ... ... 5 00 3 58
H. R., ... ... ... ... ... ... 5 00 3 58
Dr M'All, Hankow, ... ... ... — 5 00
Miss Crowll, Hanyang, ... ... ... 5 00 3 58
Mrs Thorne, Yünnan, ... ... ... 10 00 7 14
Miss Anderson, Hankow, ... ... ... 5 00 3 55
A Friend, per Dr John, £25, ... ... ... — 177 12
Mr Griffith John, New York, $5 (gold), ... — 7 15
Rev. C. Robertson, ... ... ... ... — 10 00
Rev. G. A. Huntley, M.D., Hanyang, ... — 10 00
Miss Dr Botner, Hankow, ... ... ... 10 00 7 10
Rev. L. Kristensen, Wuchang, ... ... ... 10 00 7 10
The late Miss Brown, Sheo-yang, ... ... 14 00 9 66
Mr W. S. Johnstone, Sheo-yang, ... ... — 3 00
Mr M'Nair, Sheo-yang, ... ... ... — 3 00
Miss Wallace, P'ing-yang, ... ... ... — 3 00
Miss Hoskyn, P'ing-yang, ... ... ... — 2 00
Miss Searell, Hsiao-i, ... ... ... — 2 00
Mr Shindler, Tientsin, ... ... ... — 1 00
Mr W. Millar Wilson, M.B., C.M., P'ing-yang, ... 5 00 3 57
Mr G. W. Stokes, T'ai-yuan, ... ... ... 8 00 2 12
Mr A. R. Saunders, P'ing-yao, ... ... ... 2 00 1 43
Mr G. Ritchie, Hong-tong, ... ... ... 2 00 1 48
Mr Marshall Broomhall, B.A., Hong-tong, ... ... 2 00 1 43
Mr Duncan Kay, Küh-üh, ... ... ... 2 00 1 48
Mr W. G. Peat, Sih-heo, ... ... ... 2 00 1 43
Mr D. Barrett, Kai-li-hsin, ... ... ... 2 00 1 48
Mr W. T. Beynon, T'ai-yuen, ... ... ... 2 00 1 48
Miss Stevens, Hoh-cheo, ... ... ... 1 00 0 71
Miss Clarke, Hoh-cheo, ... ... ... 1 00 0 71
Miss A. A. Hoskyn, P'ing-yang, ... ... ... 1 00 0 71
Miss E. Higgs, P'ing-yang, ... ... ... 1 00 0 71

Carried forward, ... ... ... — Tls. 474 17
Brought forward, ... ...  Tls. 474 17

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<td>Frau von Singen</td>
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<td>Readers of the &quot;Christian,&quot; £5</td>
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<td>Rev. J. J. Coulthard, Shanghai, S'hai Tls. 10,</td>
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<td>Mrs West, Bristol, per Rev. C. G. Sparham, £3</td>
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Brought forward, ..., ... ... Tls. 941 97
Mrs Gordon, Belfast, per Rev. C. G. S., £20, ... 141 18
W. Holland, Esq., H.B.M. Consul, Ichang, ... $5 00 3 56
Miss C. G. Fraser, Ichang, ... 4 00 2 84
Mr T. G. Hollander, Ichang, ... 5 00 3 56
Rev. K. W. Engdahl, Ichang, ... 8 00 2 13
C. G. Goodhart, Esq., Ichang, ... 10 00 7 12
H. A. Farrel, Esq., Ichang, ... 5 00 3 56
Four Friends, per Rev. T. Kearney, Ichang, ... 18 00 12 80
Rev. H. Robertson, ... 5 00 3 57
H. Miller, Esq., Hankow, ... 5 00 3 58
Mr Sama, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 4 00
Mr H. Seyfarth, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 3 50
Rev. N. Arnetveldt, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 4 00
Miss Haaland, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 4 00
Mr A. Hertzberg, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 4 00
Mr J. A. O. Gottelberg, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 5 00
Mr D. W. Crofts, Lao-ho-k'ou, ... ... 2 50
C.I.M. Missionaries, Honan, S'hai Tls. 38, ... 36 72
Native Church at Shih-sheo, Hupeh, 609 cash, ... 51
Readers of the "Christian World," 10s, ... 3 62
C.I.M. Missionaries, Honan, ... ... 9 00
Mr H. S. Conway, Shai-ki-tien, S'hai Tls. 10, ... 9 66
C. J. and M. D., ... ... ... 10 00 7 30
Rev. L. H. Roots, Hankow, ... ... ... 5 00
Swedish Friends, per Rev. J. Sköld, ... ... 50 89
Tls. 1,275 57

GRANTS.

A. ORDINARY.
R.T.S., London, £100 for '98, Second Grant, ... Tls. 705 88
R.T.S., London, £200 for '99, First Grant, ... 1,411 76
R.T.S., London, £100 for '99, Second Grant, ... 724 58
Tls. 2,842 17

B. COLPORTAGE.
Upper Canada R.T.S., $250 (gold), ... ... Tls. 359 56
" " " $250 " ... ... 365 80
Tls. 724 86

C. SPECIAL.
R.T.S. Centenary Fund, £100, ... ... Tls. 724 53
### General Balance Sheet, 1899.

**INCOME.**

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<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>To Subscriptions</td>
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<td>&quot; Grants—Ordinary Grants from R.T.S.,</td>
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<td>&quot; Do. —Special Grant from R.T.S.,</td>
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<td>&quot; Do. —Colportage Grant from Upper Canada,</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot; Depot Sales,</td>
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<td>&quot; Colportage Books from Depot Stock,</td>
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<td>&quot; Colportage Balance, 1898,</td>
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<td><strong>EXPENDITURE.</strong></td>
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<td>By Debit Balance,</td>
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<td>&quot; Do. —Native Press,</td>
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<td>&quot; Freights, Duties, etc.,</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot; Depot Sundries,</td>
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<td>&quot; Depot Rent,</td>
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<td>&quot; Editor's Assistant,</td>
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<td>&quot; Colportage Grant,</td>
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<td>&quot; Reserve Fund,</td>
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<td>&quot; Balance,</td>
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**Jan. 12, 1900.**—Audited and found correct.

(Signed) J. ARCHIBALD.

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### Colportage Balance Sheet, 1899.

**INCOME.**

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<td>To Stock from 1898</td>
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<td>&quot; Grant from Upper Canada R.T.S.,</td>
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<td>&quot; Book Sales,</td>
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<td>&quot; Grant from General Funds to cover deficiency,</td>
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<td>By Balance due General Fund, 1898,</td>
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<td>&quot; Colporteurs’ Wages,</td>
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<td>&quot; Travelling Expenses, Carriage of Books, and Sundries,</td>
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<td>&quot; Purchase of Tracts—Depot,</td>
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<td>&quot; Do. —W.M.S.,</td>
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**Jan. 11, 1900.**—Audited and found correct.

(Signed) J. ARCHIBALD.