ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

EAST CHINA BRANCH

OF THE

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY OF LONDON

FOR

1891

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AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN MISSION PRESS.
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OFFICE-BEARERS AND COMMITTEE,

1891-92.

Rt. Rev. Bishop Moule, President.

Rev. W. Muirhead, Vice-President and Treasurer.

Alex. Kenmure, Esq., General Secretary.

John Stenhouse, Esq., Recording Secretary.

John Fryer, Esq., LL.D.,


Rev. W. Muirhead,

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Ven. Archdeacon Moule, B.D.,

Rev. H. C. Hodges, M.A.,

Rev. Timothy Richard,

Rev. T. R. Stevenson,

J. P. Donovan, Esq.,

Committee.
ANNUAL REPORT
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Our operations for the past year have been of the usual kind. The Committee has happily been strengthened by the addition of various members, making it more efficient and enabling it to carry on more extensive and satisfactory work.

There has been a considerable amount done both in old and new printing, and a widespread distribution has taken place alike in the neighbourhood and the country. The chapels in different parts form an excellent means of circulating our "silent messengers" from the number and variety of people attending them; while in the streets and country towns, villages and cities, in many places, our books and tracts are in course of wide circulation, and are most helpful in diffusing a knowledge of the Word of Life. We are satisfied that these in numerous instances are carefully read, though, as in hearing the truth, many seem to do it without giving evidence of its having been to purpose. Yet the capacity of multitudes to read at least an easy style composition, and the appreciation they have of the written character, and of what they regard as a good book, warrant the conviction that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Full allowance must be made for the novelty of our teaching, and the conglomerate, stereotyped mass of Chinese sentiment and action in social life, as standing in the way of spiritual impression, and as requiring a long course of Christian work in various forms to overcome, though we cannot but regard the
opportunities at our command for the spread of Christian literature, and the use that is happily made of them, as an immense encouragement in connection with the labours of the Religious Tract Society.

As to the character of our publications, they present a varied aspect, not in their evangelical teaching, but in the form and manner in which the same essential truth is exhibited. Ranging between the elementary and one page tract, and the more elaborate and lengthened disquisition, for the heathen on the one hand, and the Christian on the other, it is our object to adapt the whole to the requirements of the case, to expose error and falsehood, to admit truth and propriety in character and conduct whenever they are to be found, and above all, to proclaim the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, as alone and all sufficient to meet the wants of the human race. Though by far the chief portion of our publications is of local origin, we have drawn supplies to some extent from the central branch of the Society's operations, as it is indebted in like manner to us.

We would specially notice a department taken up by us during the year, namely, the Triennial Examinations for the M. A. degree at different provincial capitals. The Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, formed by the late Dr. Williamson, chiefly on account of such literary examinations, had arranged last autumn to take advantage of them, and we forwarded at the same time several thousand books and tracts to Nanking, Shantung, Peking, Shansi, while a request was made to the Tract Committee at Canton to unite with the above Society in the distribution of suitable tracts at our expense among the students there. The replies that have come to hand assure us that the books were well received, and as they were circulated among the most intelligent, if not always
the most promising class of persons, we can only hope and pray they may be the means of doing good. It is worthy of notice that in virtue of the late Imperial Edict in favor of Christianity, the colporteurs in one part of Shantung reported that a great desire had been expressed by many who had seen the Edict to receive Christian books and to become acquainted with their Divine teaching.

In connection with this we may add that the page tract on the Sacred Scriptures by the Ven. Archdeacon Moule and published at the expense of our Society, is now being circulated in large numbers by the colporteurs of the Bible Society, and is most useful in explaining the name and object of the sacred volume.

We cannot forbear mentioning the work of the Rev. Dr. Faber of the German Evangelical and Protestant Society, in preparing two valuable publications, which are now in course of examination by us. One is Meditations on the Old Testament, which give the historical details of the book and their verification and application to daily life. Another is a Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, which is characterised by the same excellencies that marked his previous volume on Mark, and contains a great many skeleton sermons that cannot fail to be useful to the native preachers. Other works are in course of preparation, which will add greatly to the value of our collection.

Altogether on reviewing the work of the year, we have reason for thankfulness that it has gone on quietly and without opposition in our part of the country. The riots in the Yangtsze valley and elsewhere have not disturbed us, and we observe no special unwillingness either to hear the truth, or receive it on the printed page, beyond the usual pride and antipathy of the literary classes, who think so highly of themselves and of their doctrine, as far superior to all foreign and Christian teach-
ing. At the same time there are abundant indications of a change coming over the spirit of their dream, through the influence brought to bear upon them in various ways, and giving us reason to believe there will be a waking up some day, and that not far distant, when they shall see alike in foreign science and in Christian truth, a revelation of fact and a system of faith infinitely beyond their long cherished ideas and superstitions. May the Spirit of God bless the means His servants are now employing for the enlightenment and conversion of China, the overthrow of error and idolatry, and the establishment of the cause and kingdom of Christ.

During the past year we have published the following works:—1,000 copies of Questions on Christianity; 1,500 copies of Search for Truth; 1,000 copies of Filial Piety; 1,000 copies of Buddhism contrasted with Christianity, 10,000 page tracts on a variety of Christian subjects. The whole amount to 243,500 pages.

Our mode of distribution is by sale for the larger works, while the page tracts are freely given away to the chapel hearers and to others on the roadside. The income is not large, and is chiefly spent in the travelling expenses of our native catechists, who receive no other wages in connection with the work.

Our estimate of the distribution amounts to 60,000 books and tracts, large and small, which, supplemented by the distribution of the Chinese Religious Tract Society in Shanghai, and which is aided in a similar manner, represents the work carried on in this part of the country.

The works chiefly in use by us are as follows:—

野客問難記 Ancestral Worship, Rev. Dr. Medhurst.
耶稣敎畧 Condensed Statement of Christianity, Do.
In addition to these books there is a large variety of English books on hand, published by the Religious Tract Society, which are excellent in character and attractive in form and appearance.
Depôts for the sale of the above books at the following places:—

British and Foreign Bible Society Rooms, Kiakiang Road.
American Mission Press, Peking Road.
London Mission, Shantung Road.
Scientific Book Store, Hankow Road.

It would be gratifying if members of the foreign community desirous of engaging in the work of distributing religious books and tracts among the Chinese, either in their own homes or hongs, or during journeys into the country, were to apply to the depôts mentioned above for copies of these various publications. The cost of the different works is very small, and the help thus afforded in spreading the knowledge of Divine truth, would be of great service.
## EAST CHINA BRANCH OF THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY ACCOUNT.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dr. in Tls. cts.</th>
<th>Cr. in Tls. cts.</th>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>521 49</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**WM. MUIRHEAD,**

*Hon. Treasurer.*