

## Missionary and Religious.

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### The Printing-Press in China.

Address by REV. V. C. HART, D.D., at Annual Missionary Conference held in Victoria University.

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WHEN I undertook the task of introducing a printing-press into West China I did not fully understand the difficulties that were in the way of organizing this work in that far-off field. If I had, I am afraid my heart would have been weaker than it was.

It was an easy matter to collect the fifteen hundred dollars to begin the work. After doing this, I purchased a press, some ink, and such things, in Chicago, some type in Shanghai, and with these and another press of Chinese make, I prepared for the trip up the Rapids. I had great difficulty in packing that press into a junk for transportation, but it was accomplished at last, and I started off into a country where no other press had preceded me. No other press had been farther west than Hankow.

After two or three months of hard work in preparing a building, we got the press set up by a Chinaman who understood something of printing. I was very fortunate, indeed, in obtaining his services, for I was assured that no other man in Shanghai was available for this work, which he did until I had trained two young men to take his place.

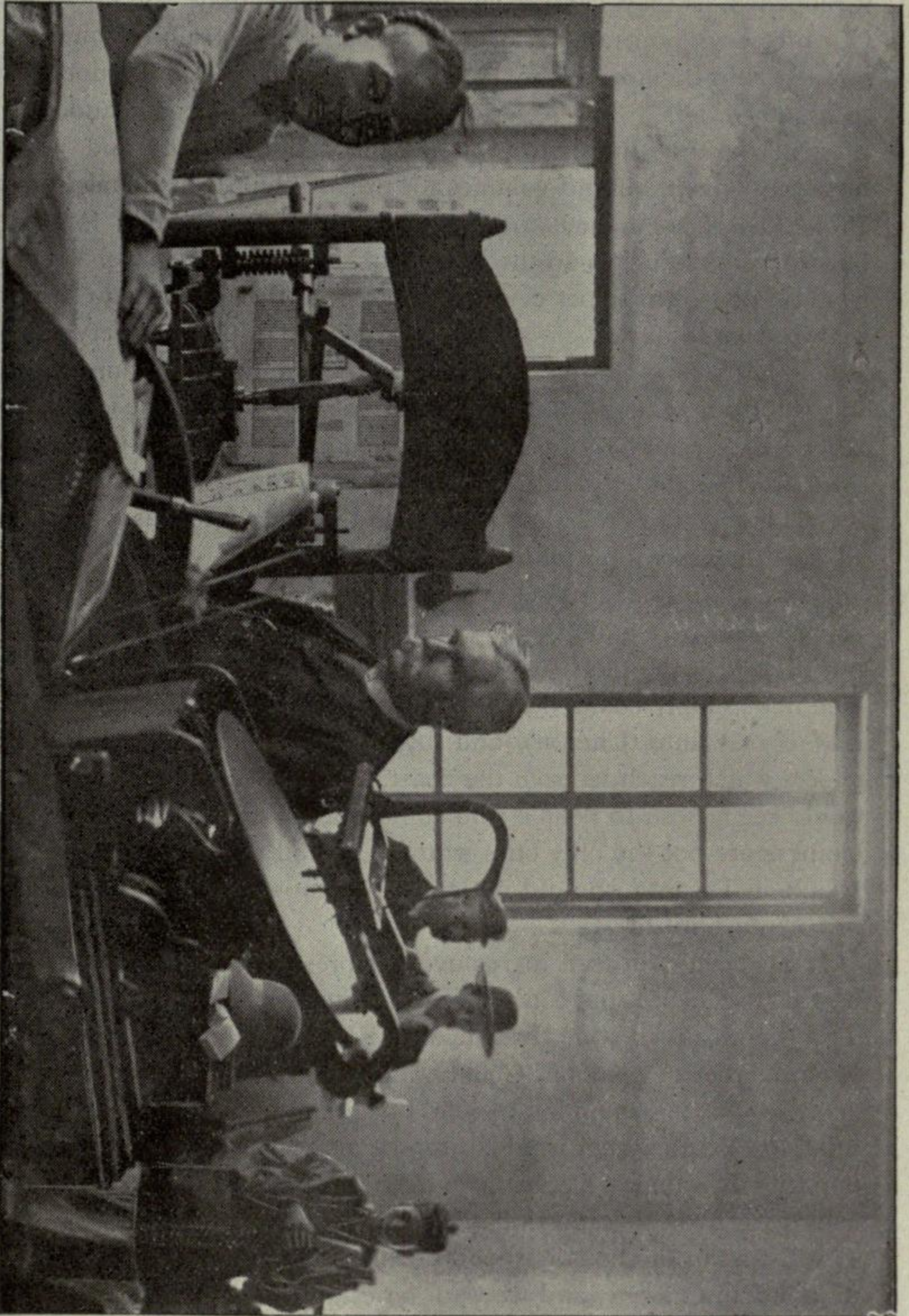
The money for this enterprise was collected, as I did not wish to take any of the general funds of the Church for it. This work had been on my heart for years. I felt the necessity of it to meet the wants of both missionaries and Chinese. It means quite a serious undertaking to bring literature up from Shanghai. Nearly one-third of all the books sent westward have been lost on the way. And we need books. From the time when Morrison and others laid hold on the press to convey their thought to the Chinaman, what a world of good has been done! Literature has been carried west through all the provinces, till it has reached Thibet. The Chinese are a literary people, and it seems to me that when they read and gather and love books, that there can be no better way of influencing them than through the medium of the printed page. From earliest times the Chinese have printed, by means of blocks of wood—a very crude

process, productive of many blots—but it served to give expression to their ideas. Many of the Chinese have large libraries of Buddhist literature. There would be money for us in printing Chinese scientific books right now—more money than in almost anything else—but as yet none of this particular work has been attempted in Chentu.

We began our work with one man to print all our books for fifty million of people—and this man was a foreigner. We went on slowly, and the day we printed our first tract I saw his eyes sparkle with joy. This tract was entitled, “Words Exhorting the World to Good Deeds,” and we sold it for one cash, or one-eighteenth of a cent. For years the Chinese have been printing tracts exhorting the people to turn from their evil ways and serve the gods. Think of the mission of this first tract of ours, which not only exhorted the people to turn from their wickedness, but pointed them to the Saviour of the world, who alone can save them from the power of sin! From this beginning we went on to larger work, such as the printing of the Gospels, a tract for school-boys, etc. The Gospels sell for one-third of a cent, or one and a half cents for the whole New Testament.

After one year, when we had printed one hundred and fifty thousand copies of books, I put on two more men, and they looked to be most unlikely material out of which to make printers. They could read, of course, but they had been somewhat laid aside from literary pursuits, and were of little value among the Chinese. It was amazing how soon these young men became interested in their new duties, and every day of that first year saw them better equipped, mentally, spiritually and every other way, to go on with the work. The next year we put on six or seven more men—so fast were we increasing the publishing of all kinds of books and Scriptures for the American Bible Society, whose publications were being scattered all over the country. We now had sixteen young men in our employ, and in one year we printed three million one hundred thousand pages of literature.

A short time ago our General Secretary said to me that he hoped I would live long enough to make this press work in China self-supporting. So far as paying its own way is concerned, it is that now! From the time when we collected our first money, and paid for our press, this enterprise has been self-supporting entirely! Not only so, but we have made some money. And we can make more! I fully expect that when we have five or six presses at work (we have three now, running from six o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night), we shall not only pay the missionary, but establish a fund for the carrying on of mission work in China. Since the closing of our



THE MISSION PRESS AT KIATING, WEST CHINA.

Revising the first proof-sheets : Dr. Hart in the centre ; Dr. Hare and Rev. Mr. Endicott near the window.

press last year, the Tract Society has expressed its anxiety to have it reopened, as they cannot get as good work done anywhere else. Our presses are operated altogether by hand, and steam or some such power would be most advantageous. Last year we could not begin to fill our orders. The American Bible Society alone demanded one press all the time simply to print Gospels and the Acts, and we ran off seventy-five thousand volumes for them. The British and Foreign Bible Society are anxious to have us print a large edition for them, but we were unable to do the work with the presses we have. It costs from twenty to thirty per cent. less to print these books in Chentu than it does to have them sent in. The price of paper is very reasonable. Labor is cheap. We have adopted the following scale of wages for our printers, and the allowance is a generous one for Chinese labor: First year, \$1.25 per month; second year, \$2.00 per month; third year, \$2.50 per month. The highest amount they will ever get is \$3.25, and they are happy men when they attain to this. And they all feed themselves out of the wages received!

There are no newspapers in Chentu, and even a small bi-monthly paper would be a good thing. It would need a foreigner at its head, but if he were the right sort of man it could be made a great success. The news supply could be furnished by means of telegraph (which now comes into Chentu), and by extracts from daily and weekly papers which reach us from the coast. News even three months old would seem fresh to people who could not get anything fresher. And Chinese are not the only ones who are behind the times. There are people in Toronto who did not appear to know that we had a press in Chentu until to-day!

It has been proposed to remove our press from Kiating, where it now is, to Chentu, the centre of our territory. And this is reasonable. The American and the British and Foreign Bible Societies have a large number of agents in Chentu, and we need the press right there. As it is now, it costs more to send our literature a hundred and twenty miles to Chentu than it would to send even eleven hundred miles in the opposite direction. I repeat, we need our press in Chentu, and I am asking for five thousand dollars to cover all expenses of this removal. It will cost in the neighborhood of thirty-five hundred dollars for suitable buildings alone, and we want an establishment which will appeal to the self-respect of the Chinese, and be a credit to our mission. We must manufacture our own type, and have an apparatus for the making of photogravures. It will be a great help to the people to have pictures in the tracts we are giving them.

Oh, I have great faith in this work of the press—more faith than I have in any other kind of work I ever undertook. By means of it we can spread God's message everywhere. It is reaching far out now, and the time is coming when we shall be printing literature for Thibet, and sending the Word of Life up into those dark provinces, where for so long the Empress has been sowing the seeds of death.

I have been made very happy by hearing that Victoria University is interested in this grandest work for China. Oh, Christian people, help us! Give us not only your money, but your prayers and sympathy. Write to us, and let us feel the support of your interest. Isolated as the missionaries are, we realize very deeply the need of Christian fellowship. We are in constant contact with foreign feelings and tastes and customs, and you can have no idea of what it means to us to be kept in touch with the homeland. We are persistently striving to get nearer and nearer to the Chinese people—to get into their hearts and homes and lives. And did we not realize that we are toiling for God, who will give us all grace, we would sometimes feel that the effort is too great for us. I beseech you, give us your help as we labor in the field.

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#### NOTES.

WE regret that owing to pressure of other duties Mr. J. H. Beer felt obliged to hand in his resignation as President of our College Y.M.C.A. Mr. J. N. Clarry has been unanimously elected to this responsible position and is pushing forward the work.

Mr. A. A. Wall has been elected Vice-President in place of Mr. W. G. Evans, who has not yet returned to College.

Mr. W. J. Mortimore, '02, has been appointed to the mission field of our Church in China and expects to leave about January.

On the advice of the General Mission Board it has been decided that the money raised by the College shall be used in support of the press work in China.