

ART. VI.—RECENT BOOKS ON CHINA AND CHINESE MISSIONS.

THE course of events in China has produced a literature almost as extensive and varied as that of the war in South Africa. Much of it has been concerned chiefly with the international and military aspects of the question, and a part of it almost exclusively with the missionary aspect. Mr. Savage-Landor's "China and the Allies"¹ gives attention freely to both. Its author will doubtless be remembered as the hero of some extremely sensational adventures in Thibet, his account of which for a time exercised the astonishment of the world and the critical faculties of the more curious. His new book is also offered to us as a record of personal experiences; but, possibly from some defects in the author's style, it is not easy always to see whether he is giving us an account of what he himself saw, or whether he is merely "boiling down" for our consumption the narratives of other people. The point is of importance to at least one class of readers, because Mr. Savage-Landor has much to say, not always in friendly terms, about missionaries. It would have been at least convenient to have known when he was speaking at first hand, and when he was dealing either with the published statements of other authors or merely with the floating gossip of more or less irresponsible persons. As he is an exceedingly frank critic of other people, a little more care and circumstantiality in this respect would have been extremely welcome.

In their general aspects there is much of interest in these two volumes. Mr. Savage-Landor writes in a very vivid way about the operations which he seems himself to have witnessed, and he enables the reader to understand the difficulties as well as the perplexities of the situation. Although (with one very marked exception) he has little that is absolutely new to tell us, he puts his matter into a very readable form. It is, however, in his treatment of the missionaries that the work seems least reliable. It does not appear that Mr. Savage-Landor has any such acquaintance with China and its people as would enable him to form a fair estimate either of the methods of the missionaries or of the results of their labours. Chinese missions are not a subject to be mastered in a few months, even by a traveller of Mr. Savage-Landor's experience. He is, one cannot help suspecting, an excellent specimen of the traveller who, having picked up some hasty impressions,

¹ "China and the Allies," by A. Henry Savage-Landor. London: W. Heinemann.

mainly from hostile sources, adopts them as his own, without careful inquiry in other quarters. He admits that there are "good missionaries" as well as "bad ones," but his general attitude towards foreign missions is distinctly unsatisfactory. That there should be a variety of opinions on such a subject is natural enough; but we are entitled to ask that there shall be a fair treatment of the facts. The following passage cannot by any stretch of charity be pronounced fair:

"There are in China, as in every other heathen country, good missionaries and bad ones. The bad ones generally seem to escape unhurt. Nor would there be much ground of complaint if the heathens, in their desire to settle disputed points of religion, would limit themselves to killing outright the male portion of those who try to convert them, after the fashion which I have heard advocated on several occasions during the present war by missionaries, who declare that Christianity should be spread through China at the point of the sword. In fact, in a lecture given by a distinguished missionary, he expressed his opinion that every Chinaman should be seized, and should have the choice given him of becoming a Christian or having his head cut off."

This statement is so extraordinary that we are bound to ask for further information. Upon what authority is the accusation made? Of what nationality and of what Church were these missionaries? Who especially was the "distinguished missionary"? When and where was the speech in question made? Upon whose report does Mr. Savage-Landor rely? These are obvious questions. Until a detailed answer is given to them, it is to be feared that no one who knows the mission-field will regard them as reliable, so far, at all events, as their application to Protestant missionaries is concerned. In any case, so sweeping a charge should have been made with more detail.

One other characteristic of these volumes calls for protest. The illustrations are scattered freely over the work, and in places are admirable; but the ghastly and indecent realism of some of them is quite intolerable. The people who can find pleasure in looking at a photograph of a dog tearing at a corpse, of a Boxer leader gazing at the head of a decapitated brother, of a naked eunuch hanging by the neck, of a severed dripping head suspended by its pig-tail, of a murdered family hung up in a row, or of the newly-slain on a battle-field, are, we hope, few in number. The temper which prompts its owner to "snap" and reproduce subjects of this order strikes one as marked by too great a love of sensation to suggest perfect reliability in other respects.

Professor Russell, of the Imperial College, Peking, was with

his wife in the Legations during the siege. Mrs. Russell kept a diary, and this, a short complementary narrative and some official documents, make up the Professor's little book.¹ Unpretentious as it is, the volume conveys a clear idea of the peril of the besieged and the spirit in which they met it. The general calmness of the daily narrative seems to be a mark of British documents of this character. Professor Russell is at one with other observers as to the causes alleged for the outbreak. He notices amongst them the ill-feeling of the heathen against converts to Christianity, a feeling which is occasioned by something more than "the inborn dislike the Chinaman bears to the 'foreign devil.'" Professor Russell says:

"The Roman Catholic Church, and to some extent the Protestant Church, in China is an *imperium in imperio*. The convert looks not to his own official for protection and justice, but to his priest or pastor. In case of a lawsuit, he invokes the powerful aid of the foreigner, and may possibly win it, even though justice may have been on the side of his heathen opponent."

Professor Russell fairly adds in a footnote that the Chinese official "is often corrupt, which makes it difficult for the missionary not to interfere"; but that does not extenuate the position claimed by the Roman Catholics. We have heard from Dr. Morrison and others of the great service rendered by the native Christians in the defence of the Legations. Professor Russell says that: "After our relief, when the military men saw the barricades and other defences, they were astonished at their strength and extent, and wondered how we could accomplish so much. All the work was done by native Christians, under the supervision, for the most part, of missionaries. The native Christians by their labour more than repaid us for all the protection they enjoyed." The general impression created by the conduct of the native converts during the siege was excellent, and should not soon be forgotten:

"The missionaries and native Christians worked so hard and unselfishly for the common weal during the siege as to win the admiration and goodwill of even those who were not favourable to Christian missions. After the siege the missionaries found themselves in a very difficult position. Homeless themselves, they had over 2,000 native Christians, both homeless and penniless, to provide for. Food could not be bought. By the consent of the military authorities they took possession of large native compounds which had been deserted

¹ "The Story of the Siege in Peking," by S. M. Russell, M.A., F.R.A.S. London: Elliot Stock.

by their owners, and got food from deserted grain-shops. As far as I know, no missionary was guilty of looting in any ordinary sense of the term."

Professor Russell adds to the diary of the siege some useful extracts from the official *Pekin Gazette*, which reveal the attitude of the Government during the crisis. The official announcements are marked by the hypocrisy and cunning so freely displayed also in other ways, but occasionally reveal the true aims of the authorities with a good deal of candour. Thus, on June 17, when the Legations were already hard beset, it was gravely announced that: "Lately the people and Christians have sought means to stir up enmity, and bad language has arisen on every side. Vagabonds have taken occasion repeatedly to burn and rob." It was thoughtfully added that "all foreign ministers ought to be really protected." On July 2 a decree was issued dealing with the Chinese converts and their position. They were, it was pointed out, subjects owing loyalty to the Throne, and "if they can change their hearts, there is no reason why they should not be allowed to escape from the net." The attitude towards both missionaries and their converts is then defined thus:

"All those among the converts who repent of their former errors and give themselves up to the authorities shall be allowed to reform and their past shall be ignored. The public shall also be notified that in all places where converts reside they shall be allowed to report to the local authorities, and each case will be settled according to general regulations, which will be drawn up later. As hostilities have now broken out between China and foreign nations, the missionaries of every country must be driven away at once to their own countries, so that they may not linger here and make trouble. But it is important that measures be taken to secure their protection on their journey. The high provincial authorities shall make close investigation into the circumstances of all places within their jurisdiction, and speedily take the necessary steps. Let there be no carelessness."

These directions might be interpreted in more ways than one. Indeed, the more the facts are laid bare, the greater seems the responsibility of the Chinese authorities for the ruthless outrages committed.

Dr. Campbell Gibson, of Swatow, has published in volume form some lectures¹ delivered by him on the appointment of

¹ "Mission Problems and Mission Methods in S. China: Lectures on Evangelistic Theology," by J. Campbell Gibson, M.A., D.D. Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier.

the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. He deals, so far as actual work is concerned, with that of the English Presbyterian mission only; but his lectures are a solid contribution to the scientific study of foreign missions. The book is the kind of work which can be put into the hands of a candid inquirer, who can hardly fail to be influenced by its quiet, forcible treatment of the subject.

It is refreshing to meet with an author who deals with the cause of foreign missions with the firmness of Dr. Campbell Gibson. He recognises the "lurking uneasiness" in regard to the work which exists in so many minds at home, but he deals quite decisively with it. What we are putting to the proof is, he reminds us, "not a scheme of a few enthusiasts, nor an optional offshoot of Church work; we are putting to the proof the Gospel itself." That is a fact too little realized at home, for some seem to doubt whether the message of Christ is for all races and all creeds. But, as Dr. Campbell Gibson exclaims: "What kind of grasp of the Gospel have men got who doubt whether it is to-day, under any skies, the power of God unto salvation?"

After considering the principles at the root of missionary enterprise, Dr. Campbell Gibson proceeds to deal with his particular field. Like a wise teacher, he fills in his background, showing us the country, its people, their social life, and their religion. Then he shows us the stages through which a healthy mission passes—the evangelistic stage, the planting of the Church, and the organization of the Church, with the cultivation of the Christian life amongst its people. The outlook from Swatow is, we gather, hopeful enough to warrant the appeal for more workers. Recent sorrows in China are hailed as part of "the struggle between darkness and light which always ends in the dawn." "The hope of China lies in the building up of a pure and strong Christian Church." "Those are to be envied who shall witness during the coming twenty years the great ingathering in China—the greatest triumph of the Church and of the Church's King since the Christian centuries began to run their glorious course!"

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