

Retrenchment seems to be the order of the day among Missionary Societies. Last month's *CHURCHMAN* called attention to the resolution of the Synod of the Moravian Church to curtail expenses by some thousands of pounds, and now the *Chronicle* of the L.M.S. announces that the directors of that Society have determined, from the beginning of next year, to diminish the outlay by at least £10,000 per annum. Strong measures are contemplated towards the attainment of this end. Arrangements are in progress to hand over the Society's Mission in the province of Si-Chuan in Western China to the Canadian Methodist Mission, and there is likely to be withdrawal from other stations and districts in China as well; in India one or more stations in the South will probably be given up, and the desirability of retiring from some of the work in the North is under consideration; while in Africa yet more drastic measures are impending, including the abandonment of a mission district in Bechuanaland, and the transference of the whole of the Central African Mission to another society. This is terribly sad reading. Times are bad, it is true, and "charities" are often the first to suffer at such seasons. Unhappily, they are rarely the first to profit when good times come.



The Bible at Work.

BY THE REV. W. FISHER, M.A.

BY a volcanic outburst in 1883, what is now known as Krakatoa was covered entirely with molten stone. In a short time vegetation found a foothold. To-day the island is covered, and in parts the vegetation is so dense that no way through can be made except by cutting it. Such is the natural aggression of plant life. At the same time there is not an acre of wheat in the world but means the agriculturist. It comes by labour, not chance. Canadian and American corn-lands are converted prairie lands, and while primeval forests may continue for millenniums, these corn-lands might be prairies again if let alone. Mesopotamia was once excessively fruitful and to-day is generally barren, though it has a wheat-growing capacity sufficient for the whole world—"Which things are an allegory." Without organized propaganda, without the subsidy of contributions, rationalistic and sceptical literature of Western authorship has spread over India and Japan, and largely over China. According to Professor Weinel, Buddhistic principles are spreading in Germany. The Bible is not so. Its way is that of the corn, and not of Krakatoa. Its distribution demands aggression, both to extend and to maintain it. The "annual circulation" in any country preserves the past, for even in England the Bible would die down again but for the yearly replenishment. There is a proposal to spend £100,000,000 on irrigation in Mesopotamia, and rightly. The waste and prairie land of India, China, and Japan—if no other—is well worth conquering.



The coincidence of spiritual effect with the spiritually disposed has a naturalness about it, but one of the striking features of the Bible is the

facility with which it impresses those who hitherto were strangers to it. A colporteur, working in Annam, called late one evening on a notable, and asked for hospitality. To explain his errand he read a few chapters from Genesis, the Psalms, and the Gospels. "This is very beautiful," said the notable; "it was all unknown to me." As he read, a beggar drew near and listened, and the colporteur begged hospitality for him. This was stoutly refused. "Read this," said the colporteur, "'To him that smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; and from him that taketh away thy cloak, withhold not thy coat also.'" He read it slowly, and thought for a minute. "Well, Jesus is right," he said; and beckoned the beggar to come in and sit next to him. The "manifestation of the truth" must have been very direct for such a response to words not seen or known before. The same power of arrest was illustrated in the Andes. A colporteur offered the Bible for sale to some soldiers. They ridiculed him. "I am a *diablo*," said one. "I am a *librepensador*," said another, "and don't want anything about God." "I have a story of a young man as bad as yourself," said the colporteur. He read the story of the Prodigal Son. "Yes," said one of them; "I am the younger, and my running away has brought me down to the devil and the barrack-room. Sell me your book; mark the page you read from, for it pleases me, after all."



The witness from abroad is always welcome; the home-born witness is peculiarly so. After the death of the late Algernon Swinburne, the Rector of Bonchurch was the recipient of many letters. Few were more interesting or more to be cherished than one from which the following is extracted: "My father was a Socialist and an atheist. . . . I am an old woman, seventy-eight, and when I was a little girl we lived at Northampton, a town notorious for its infidelity, and my father and some of his friends used to meet in our house and discuss questions, religious and political, while I, a little girl of ten, used to sit on a stool by the fire and silently listen to the discussions, and in my small mind form my own opinion. Politics I did not understand, but when they abused the Bible, I was all alive, for I went to Sunday-school and learnt lessons from it. But on one occasion they went to such lengths of abuse that I resolved to get down my father's Bible and see for myself what sort of a book it was, for though I went to Sunday-school and learnt lessons from it, they were very simple, and not at all like what my father and his friends talked about. And so, one Monday morning, I put a hassock on a chair, and managed to reach it and get it down. And I read it, and no story-book that was ever written gave me such delight as that old Bible did. I cried over the poor little baby in the bulrushes, and more still over the sorrows of the boy who was let down into the pit, and laughed and wept with joy when each was rescued. No, nothing since has ever given me the pleasure that wonderful old Book did; and I was told it was God's Book, and I believed it, and I have never lost that belief, and always feel intensely sorry for those who do *not* believe the Bible. P.S.—My father did not die an infidel. He had a long illness, and was glad to turn to his long-neglected God."

In a large-hearted and able appeal to the scholars of China, Archdeacon Moule, of Mid-China, refers to the remarkable phenomenon of China's Imperial career, which has seen the rise and fall of so many great Empires. He says: "They at the beginning were more powerful, more prosperous, than China. They are now either extinct, or mere subject provinces of modern Empires. But China abides exalted and independent." He boldly finds one reason for it in the Fifth Commandment. "It is the result of God's ancient promise: 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'" If such an explanation be at all correct, we have not only the fundamental nature of God's law and the universal equity of its operation, but also its marvellous potency. To have contributed in any measure to Chinese continuity is striking evidence of its power. In this connection might be noticed an interesting article in the *Hibbert Journal*, on "Moral Force in War," by Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald Hart, V.C. He emphasizes with pointed illustrations the truth of Napoleon's saying that the moral forces in war are to the physical as three to one. Putting these together, it would appear that there is a "cash value," a real value as national asset in the Scriptures that is too little recognized on all hands, and one that cannot be increased too extensively.



Literary Notes.

"THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY" is the title of vol. vi. of the "Cambridge Modern History." The twelfth volume, due in the spring of next year, which will also complete the work as it was originally planned, is to be entitled "The Latest Age." But there will be, we understand, two supplementary volumes. These two extra volumes will contain a number of valuable maps, many important genealogical besides other tables, as well as a general index to the whole work. Thus next spring will be completed one of the most interesting and valuable histories, in every sense of the word, of recent times. The labour and care which have been bestowed upon the undertaking have indeed been prodigious, and redounds to the credit of the several editors. The Cambridge University Press also announce the fourth volume of that other noteworthy work, the "Cambridge History of English Literature." This new volume will deal with "Poetry and Prose from Sir Thomas North to Michael Drayton." Other volumes to come from the same house are: "The Son of Man," by Dr. Edwin A. Abbott; "The Old Plate of the Cambridge Colleges," by E. Alfred Jones; "The Sculptures of Chartres Cathedral," by Margaret and Ernest Marriage; and George Fox's "Journal." Mr. Norman Penney has edited this work by the founder of the Society of Friends, and it is, for the first time, reprinted from the original manuscript. The Warden of Toynbee Hall, Mr. T. E. Harvey, has contributed an interesting introduction.



The Methodist Publishing House is bringing out a new edition, in six volumes, of Wesley's "Journal." The first volume is due at once, and the