

# THE GOSPEL TRIBUNE,

## AND CHRISTIAN COMMUNIANIST,

A

### Monthly Interdenominational Journal.

VOLUME III.]

SEPTEMBER, 1856.

[NUMBER 5.

"ONE IS YOUR MASTER, *even* CHRIST: AND ALL YE ARE BRETHEREN."

### Moral and Religious Miscellany.

#### AN INTERESTING LETTER.

*To the Editor of the China Mail.*

17<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 1856.

"SIR,—An interesting trip has recently been made by two American missionaries as far as the city of Tak-hing-chau (Teih-king-chau) about 190 miles west of Canton. The particulars having been fully related to me about two weeks since, I have thought such brief relation of them as my memory would furnish might prove interesting to the readers of your paper, both in China and elsewhere.

"The journey, for so it may be called, was undertaken for the purpose of distributing copies of the Scriptures and religious tracts beyond the circle of ordinary recipients. It was performed in a native boat, such as are used by linguists at Whampoa when on attendance on ships discharging. The two gentlemen were accompanied by a Chinese preacher, and had with them at starting about 11,000 tracts and portions of Scripture. They started on the 16th of April, and passing by Fatshan, which has been frequently visited, they followed a branch of the river running west, until they struck the large stream called the North River. Here it may be well to state, that they discovered as they proceeded the relations of three main rivers of the western part of the province: the Pearl River, rising north-east of Canton, passes west of the city, down by Whampoa, uniting with the Eastern river just above the second bar, and emptying itself at or below the Bogue into the sea. The North River, down which flows the trade that crosses the mountains at the famous Mei-ling Pass, runs southerly until it reaches the departmental city of Sam-shui (San-shwui), where it makes a short turn to the east, and just before reaching the neighborhood of Fat-shán makes a south-easterly course, then southerly again to its mouth at Kong-nam. The great West River, comparable in size and volume to the Ohio, passing through the whole of Kwángsi, continues a westerly course until within a very short distance of the turn of the North River, when it makes also a short turn to the south, and empties into the sea at some point not precisely determined. Between the Pearl and North Rivers are many channels of communication, including the two branches leading to Fat-shán. Between the North and West Rivers, at their two angles, is a broad and deep channel, said to have been originally cut by salt smugglers, to avail themselves of either river to effect their escape. It is by these channels, whether natural or artificial, and not by the course of any one river, that the trade of so vast a region is centred at Canton.

The Banks of the North River, of a firm sand, are in part defined by a table land, on which stand nu-

merous villages in close proximity. Those on either bank, according as the boat neared one side or the other, were visited, and books distributed; the people in all cases being civil and good-natured, though, doubtless, astonished out of measure at the sight of the strangers, one of whom is in stature like unto Saul, the son of Kish. In this manner, though the rain poured down in the most inhospitable manner during much of the trip, a large part of the great distance reached was made on foot, while the boat was painfully propelled against the current by the slow process of tracking. On the 18th, they passed the important city of Sám-shui (Sán-shwui) at what may be called the confluence of the North and West Rivers. It appeared to be a large and busy city, but prudence forbade any stop at a point where the interference of mandarins might bring to an end a trip which was progressing so successfully. After passing the North River, and entering the channel of communication with the West River, they found the current favoring them for a short distance; this was owing to the earlier rise of the North River, which, having less length, was sooner swollen by the prevailing rains. A short run brought them into the noble stream on whose banks stands the ancient provincial capital, Shiu-hing (Sháu-king.) This was passed early on the morning of the 19th, while the day was just breaking. This city is situated on a bend of the river, on the north bank, on a great plain circumscribed by the river, and a line of high hills, which intersect the stream at the terminations of the arc. The eastern or lower point forms a narrow pass, where the lofty and uninhabited hills overhang the river, and form a strange contrast to the plains so thickly populated above and below. The pass is about six miles long and three hundred yards wide, and with a strong current. Just above it was seen a huge field of Indian corn, several miles in length, in which were actually counted 117 men at work,—a field which recalled to the beholders the fertile crops of the new States of America. This article of maize is in much more frequent use than has been supposed, and is raised in large quantities in the province. Passing just beyond the western extremity of the bend of the river, the boat was brought to an anchor, it being the Sabbath, and books had been distributed in the village where they stopped, and the word preached to the crowd, when, in the afternoon, a small *fast-crab* boat came up, and required the immediate return of the adventurous foreigners. This request was declined, and the right to proceed in a peaceable and useful occupation, such as the distribution of good books, was insisted on, and enforced by reference to the edict of toleration issued by Kang-hí, and recognised by Táu-Kwáng. Finding the missionaries firm, the officers, who were of low rank, and who conducted themselves with the greatest courtesy, represented that they could not return to report themselves without those for whom they had been