

been a frequent visitor. The country can scarce do more than provide for the wants of the people in ordinary years, so thickly are they settled, and the flooding of even a small district means a local famine, in which some die of starvation, some eke out a bare existence, and some drag themselves away to beg in other districts. What a sum total of suffering is represented by the eight hundred reported famines in different parts of the province during the past thousand years.

In striking contrast to the floods are the dust storms, which sometimes last for two or three days, and leave everything covered with a coating of fine earth, a little like the dust storms of the South African veldt of which our soldiers tell.

Beginnings of the Mission.

Its visible beginnings were in the missionary societies of the colleges. In the session of 1885-6 Mr. Smith, now Rev. J. Fraser Smith, M.D., moved a proposition which was adopted by Queen's Missionary Association, that the students and alumni should support a missionary in the foreign field. Next summer Mr. Smith labored in St. Mark's Mission Church, Toronto, and lodged in Knox College. Here he met Mr. Jonathan Goforth, also preparing for foreign work, and other kindred spirits, and at their meeting in October Knox alumni decided to support a foreign missionary.

The F. M. Report presented to the General Assembly in June, 1887, in Winnipeg, contains the following:—

"The remarkable interest in Foreign Mission Work that pervades the Colleges of our Church may be well spoken of as a 'sign of the times.' In Montreal, Queen's and Knox, numbers of students, some of whom have completed their Theological course, are ready to go whithersoever the Church may send them, to publish the glad tidings among those who have never heard the name of Jesus. The Missionary Society of Knox College has actually selected Mr. Jonathan Goforth; and that of Queen's College, Mr. J. Fraser Smith, who are prepared to go to the Foreign Field, in the event of their being accepted as missionaries by the Assembly. The Missionary Societies just named have become responsible for the support of these brethren."

The Assembly accepted with thanks the offer of the Colleges, and appointed Messrs. Goforth and Smith as missionaries, empowered the F. M. Com. to select a field, and directed that "should the Province of Honan, China, be found on full investigation to be suitable, that it be accepted."

Mr. Goforth was ordained by the Toronto Presbytery, 30 Oct., 1887, and Dr. Smith by that of Kingston, 24 Jan., 1888.

They had intended starting early in the

summer of 1888, but tidings came of a flood and famine in Honan, and thinking they might be able to give help, and that it would be a good opening for the Gospel, Mr. and Mrs. Goforth, with some money hastily gathered for the relief of the sufferers, set out in January, sailing from Vancouver, 4 Feb., reaching China in the end of the same month.

They intended going in to Honan, 400 miles distant, at once, but experienced missionaries who knew better than they did the unwisdom, if not the utter impossibility, of going into a hostile province with no knowledge of the people or language, advised very strongly against it, and urged that they should spend at least the first year in acquiring the language, and in work at the older stations, and that in this way they would be furthering the true interests of their mission.

Reluctantly yielding to this advice they settled for a time at Chefoo, one of the treaty ports on the coast, where two or three missions had representatives. Chefoo is about two days north of Shanghai, and is of interest as the place where the treaty between China and Japan was concluded some two years ago. It has also been frequently mentioned in the story of the present war in China.

A few days later, 1 March, their house took fire and they lost considerable both in books and clothing, but they were soon at work again at the language.

In July Dr. and Mrs. Smith left Canada, sailing from Vancouver on the 31st of that month, accompanied by Miss Harriet Sutherland, a trained nurse, and arrived in China, 31 August.

The First Tour of Exploration.

On the 13th of September, 1888, just a fortnight after the arrival of Dr. Smith, Mr. Goforth and he, accompanied by two experienced missionaries of the American board, started on a tour of exploration through North Honan. Of their trip into this "land of promise," Dr. Smith writes:—

"The country is level as a prairie. The people generally live in towns and villages. In the district we explored there are over one hundred walled cities, thirty of which we passed through. Every available foot of ground is under cultivation, and the soil is fertile, yielding abundant crops of wheat, corn, beans, millet, etc. In some districts vast fields of cotton were noticed, and hundreds of people gathering it in. The temples, which are very numerous, are always the best buildings, but in many cases shew signs of ruin and decay.

We have great reason to thank God for His goodness to us the whole journey through. We had expected that a people who have shown such hostility to missionaries would be anything but favorably