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Cramahe and Haldimand Female Tract Society reports, 1839

76-1009

TRANSCRIPTION

Note: Spelling anomalies in the original document have been maintained in this transcription.

Report of the Cramahe and Haldimand Female Tract Society

There are at the present many great, and important works carrying on, which are in various ways intended to benefit the human race. In a literal, as well as a spiritual sense, "the valleys are exalted, and the mountains made low, the crooked places are made straight and the rough places plain; streams break forth in the desert, and the thirsty land becomes springs of water." But there is one, infinitely superior to every other, for the benefits it would bestow on the world, even now alienated, and enemies to their God by wicked works, may be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and restored to holiness, to happiness, and everlasting life. In vain may riches flow into a land, and every earthly blessing abound, while sin continues to reign, so long will misery and sorrow accompany it. To subdue this enemy of God, and man, Jesus came, and suffered, and died, and rose again, and left with his people the command that they should "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,["] that through the knowledge of this gospel they may be turned from spiritual "darkness to light, and from idols, to serve the living, and true God;" and this is a work in which every follower of the Lord will esteem it a duty, and a privilege to engage with active exertion, and persevering diligence. In a part of the world the will of God is plainly revealed to his creatures, his glorious character, and perfections are made known, our duty, and obligations, to Him and to each other are plainly described; the way of access is clearly pointed out, and exhortations, warnings, entreaties, and invitations, are multiplied, to the rebellious children of men, that they may "come and take of the waters of life freely." Yes even here, with all these advantages, those who truly feel the value of an immortal soul know that there is still much to be done, in showing to sinners the error of their ways, and leading them to the knowledge and love of the truth and they will gladly employ every method, which has a prospect of promoting so desirable an end. But there is another, and much the largest portion of the world, still sitting in darkness, and the shadow of death, without God, and without hope, and it was to them that our attention was especially [directed] when we formed this Society. Believing that the "heathen were to be given to Jesus, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession," and that his people were to be the instruments, by which it would be effected, we wished

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to occupy some humble part in this glorious, and blessed work. But we dwell in "Christian country can never sufficiently realise from mere description the horrors of idolatry, yet we ought not to consider the salvation of so many millions of immortal souls, as a thing of small importance, but we should frequently contemplate their situation, that we may be more deeply impressed with a sense of our duty towards them, and that what we find to do, we may do speedily. When we meet from time, to time, to offer the devotion of joyful, and grateful hearts to a God of purity, and holiness, should we not feel compassion for those whose minds are so blinded, and whose hearts are so deprived that they offer the worship due to the Supreme Being, to an idol of wood, or stone, to an ox, a serpent, or a monkey; for those who consider the offering of human sacrifices, the burning, and burying alive of widows, the exposure of infants, and of the sick, and aged to perish, as the most sacred rites of their religion, as well as other customs too vile and horrible to be named. In one of the idol temples, which have but recently been abandoned, in the South Sea Islands, the usual number of victim, offered in sacrifice at one time was 400. In the Kingdom of Ashantee 100 persons are offered at each of their great festivals, some of which occur every 21 days. On the death of his mother the King offered 3000 victims, and at the funeral of a great officer 2400. In the British East India dominions, it is computed that 10,000 lives are sacrificed annual in the services of idolatry. Last year, 1800 sick persons were exposed by their relatives, and friends in one of the sacred places on the banks of the Ganges, and perished. In the city of Peking 9000 female infants are destroyed every year. Amongst one tribe in Hindostan no female infant is permitted to survive its birth. It is recorded of one of these people that he preserved a daughter alive for some years but he was so much scorned, and blamed for such an innovation on their savage custom, that at length the father took an axe and cut his child to pieces. Their treatment of females is in every respect most cruel and oppressive. A Hindoo priest who was much offended at the establishment of female schools in Bengal, was reminded by the missionary that they had souls to be saved or lost forever, and yet were so much neglected as not to be allowed even to learn to read, - "they do not know how to go to heaven," he replied, "but they know how to go to hell, and let them go," well may the [related] add Oh, how hard is the heart of man till it is softened by divine grace. In Greenland when a babe loses its mother it is buried alive, and the aged and decrepid are treated in the same manner.

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In the island of Sumatra, when a person becomes aged and infirm, he invites his children to eat him. He ascends a tree around which his relations assemble and as they shake the tree, join in a funeral dirge, the import of which is the season is come the fruit is ripe and

it must descend. The victim descends from the tree when those who are nearest, and dearest to him deprive him of life, and devour his remains in a solemn banquet. To suspend themselves on high upon trees considered sacred refusing all sustenance except such as shall keep the pulse of life just beating, to hang aloft upon tender hooks fixed in the back and sides, and voluntarily bear inexpressible agonies; to throw themselves by hundreds under the wheels of immense machines, which carry about their unconscious [], where they are instantly crushed to atoms; now to throw themselves from precipices of tremendous height; now to stand up to the necks in rivers, till rapacious alligators come and devour them; now to bury themselves in snow till frozen to death; to measure with their naked bodies trailed over burning sand the ground lying between one temple and another distant perhaps many leagues; to brave with fixed eyes, day after day the ardour of a meridian sun; these, and many other penances fellow creatures hope to conciliate the Deity, and procure the blessings of immortality. – Who that has known the hopes, and consolations of the gospel of Christ, would not wish, and pray, and strive, that these nations of idolatries, might also be added to the awaking to their duty in this. Several hundred missionaries have left their homes, and country to carry the glad tidings of salvation and the Tract Society has circulated 215 millions of these little works which are found to be more useful and indispensable auxiliaries in this great undertaking. "Great," says Dr. Milne, "are our obligations to the lands for the exercise of its beneficence. Tracts are soon read through and easily carried about with one. They may be circulated more widely than the Sacred Scriptures can. If we calculated either the price or the persons capable of deriving profit from religious books, we shall find that 50 tracts may be given away for the price of one New Testament. A missionary among the heathen can carry a hundred tracts in his hand, and he will even find great satisfaction in leaving an appropriate one at the house where he has been visiting or in putting one into the hand of those with whom he has been conversing, or in rapping one in the highway where it is likely to be picked up by some passing stranger, or in reading and explaining

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one to those inclined to hear. The Tract Society is a most important auxiliary in the work of converting the heathen to Christ, and though in comparison with Missionary and Bible Societies it [holds] in some respects a lower place, in other respects its utility, is more immediate more extensive and more apparent." A plan has lately been proposed which if put in operation, promises to effect the conversion of the world more speedily than any which has yet been devised, that of printing and [] portions of Scripture in the form of tracts. The word is the seed, and even a single verse if sown in the field, which is the world, will be found at the great harvest day to have produced its fruit. It seems evident that some more efficient method than has yet been used must be adopted to supply the world with the glorious

message of salvation. At the present rate of progress when will it be accomplished? Hardly do the present efforts of the Bible Societies of Protestant countries keep pace with the demand of those countries then when will the many millions of Catholics, Mahometans, and Pagans be fed with the bread of life. How if we cannot furnish the whole world with the whole Bible let us give a little of it to as many as we can. In such a way, may Divine truth be speedily and extensively introduced into every country upon earth that has a written language. A few verses telling of Jesus, and him crucified, can be translated and printed in any tongue at a trifling expence. What a pity this, said a converted Hottentot, that you should so long have had this heavenly bread, yet not send one little [bit] not one crumb to poor heathen. If we remember them who are destitute may we not believe that the Lord will remember us, and while we endeavour to spread the knowledge of his name throughout the world that he will pour forth his Spirit, and cause our hearts to rejoice in seeing the prosperity of his work among ourselves, that while the prayers of many a poor heathen ascend in behalf of their Christian benefactors, we may see their effect in the conversion of those around us, whom we have long in vain desired to see brought to the knowledge of the truth. "Prove me now saith the Lord if I will not open to you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Though much has been accomplished, much still remains to do, the missionaries now in the field are but one to a million of souls, though 10 millions of bibles have been printed, 590 millions of people yet remain without the word of God; though so many tracts have been printed they have not been [] to supply half the inhabitants of the world, and when shall it be said that The Kingdom of our Lord has come, that the knowledge of him has filled the earth. The work is his and he condescends to employ his people as the instruments. May the heart of every Christian respond to his call, may prayers arise, and benevolent efforts increase

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till all shall indeed savingly know the Lord from the least, to the greatest. The Treasurer has received from the commencement of the Society £5-2-6, of which £4-17-6 has been expended in the purchase of tracts, and 53,717 pages have been put in circulation yet we have been unable to answer all the requests that have been made for them. We have seen evident proofs of their utility, and feel anxious to occupy more effectually the [wide] that is presented to us in our own country and abroad.

Seventh Report of the Crahame and Haldimand Female Tract Society

It is not, in the opinion of your Committee, needful to detain you on the present occasion with any lengthened remarks. The object for which we have thus associated, to place divine truth before the minds of our fellow sinners, that it may, through the blessing of the Almighty,

sought by fervent prayer, be the means of turning them from [sin] [and] of showing to their [immortal] [spirits] the glorious plan of [Redemption], that in their salvation the Redeemer may see of the travail of his soul and be glorified, the motives which should excite us to activity and Diligence, are all too familiar to your mind, to require from us any thing more than the mention, and no doubt present themselves more forcibly than any word of ours could do. To relate and describe what had been done by others, would be exceedingly pleasing and animating had we time, and ability, to [tell] what we have ourselves done will not require much. Indeed we were fearful that we should have nothing on which to found a Report but as our accounts show that a little has been done, it is our duty to lay the statement of that before you. Your Treasurer has received since the last meeting [], and 6032 pages of Tracts have been circulated, with great benefit, we have reason to think, to those who have perused them. But we very much wish we could obtain a more extended cooperation from our fellow Christians.

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The amount of our subscription is very small, one shilling a year, which would appear to be in the power of almost every one, yet that small sum can put into circulation 24 tracts or 300 pages, which may each be the means of conveying the light of life to an immortal soul. As we mentioned in a former report the Tract Society can by a late plan almost supply the place of the Bible Society sending the Scriptures to the heathen at an exceedingly less expense, [and] in a much shorter time. As we have before remarked on a similar occasion, it is always pleasant to a generous mind to be doing good; as Christians it is peculiarly gratifying not only for the sake of pleasing ourselves, but that we may evince our gratitude to our God, and Saviour who has told us that it is also pleasing to Him that we should be so employed. What can be more delightful than the hope, not merely the hope nor merely the expectation, but the certainty, that this world will yet become the Kingdom of Christ, that the time will arrive (but all will unite in the praise, and love, and service of God (when the melancholy spectacle of an immortal soul passing its earthly existence in the state of careless insensibility to its eternal interests, and sinking into the grave hopeless, and unpardoned, will be witnessed no more). Who would not wish that time to arrive even today, and [] might it not? The Lord has made all things ready and has given it in charge to His people to go forward to the work in His strength looking to Him for the accomplishment of His word. Will not every one who has experimentally felt the goodness of the Lord feel this to be the great object of His life, the absorbing desire of his soul. Let us try to realise how we should feel, were we to see all around us, those for whom we see them turning at once to the Lord and uniting with His people in devotion and love to Him, not one remaining, to be a solitary trophy of the power of Satan, and then could we hear from every quarter of the world, that they had all seen

the salvation of God, how all bowed to Jesus and acknowledged Him their Lord and Saviour, what would we not give to witness such things indeed. Are then the people of the Lord believing, giving

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praying and enquiring of Him in such a manner as that He can do it for them. In bringing to pass this happy state of things the Tract Society holds at present the first place. It does not supersede the living Missionary but it is making all Christians, Missionaries. There are none too great, and none too humble to be useful in this way. Great learning and talents are not required, but a heart full of love to God and man and a simple resolution to try to convert sinners from the errors of their ways, and the conversion of hundreds every month is crowning these humble labours, with the promise of yet greater things to come. We know that within the limits of this Society, many have been faithfully warned and instructed who might otherwise never have been personally addressed on the concerns of their souls, some have been awakened, and converted, and many have been quickened and strengthened in the faith. May this day of small things yet [become] great, and may the Lord prosper and render us more useful in his service is our trust our united and fervent prayer.

May 6th 1839. We regret to have to say that we have little or nothing to record of the proceedings of our Society during the past year. A small sum has been received from 2 or 3 warm friends of the cause but more of the time for want of means we have been obliged to let many opportunities of usefulness pass unimproved. Since it is so we can only express our regret, and turn to contemplate what has been done by others. Perhaps the view may quicken us and animate us afresh in our endeavours to do good.