

CHINA'S SPIRITUAL NEED AND CLAIMS.

"If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death,

"And those that are ready to be slain ;

"If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not ;

"Doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it ?

"And He that keepeth THY soul, doth not He know it ?

"And shall not He render to every man according to his works ?"

(PROV. xxiv., 11, 12.)

IT IS a solemn and most momentous truth that our every act in this present life—and our every omission too—has a direct and important bearing both on our own future welfare, and on that of others. And as believers, it behoves us to do *whatsoever* we do in the name of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. In His name, and with earnest prayer for His blessing, the following pages are written: in His name, and with earnest prayer for His blessing, let them be read. The writer feels deeply that, as a faithful steward he is bound to bring the facts contained in these pages before the hearts and consciences of the LORD'S people. He believes, too, that these facts must produce *some* fruit in the heart of each Christian reader. The legitimate fruit will undoubtedly be—not vain words of empty sympathy, but—effectual fervent prayer, and strenuous self-denying effort for the salvation of the benighted Chinese. And if in any instance they fail to produce this fruit, the writer would urge the consideration of the solemn words at the head of this page,—“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain ; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not ; doth not He that pondereth the heart consider it ? and

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“*Thy Kingdom Come.*”

He that keepeth *thy* soul, doth not He know it? and shall not He render to every man according to his works?”

Very early in the course of His ministry, the LORD JESUS taught His people that they were to be *the light*—not of Jerusalem, not of Judea, nor yet of the Jewish nation, but—*of the world*. And He taught them to pray—not as the heathen, who use vain and unmeaning repetitions; nor yet as the worldly-minded, who ask first and principally (if not solely) for their own private benefit and need: “For,” said He, “*your* FATHER knoweth what things *ye* have need of before *ye* ask Him. After this manner therefore pray *ye*:—

- “ Our FATHER which art in heaven,
- “ Hallowed be *Thy* name;
- “ *Thy* kingdom come;
- “ *Thy* will be done; as in heaven, so in earth.”

And it was only after these petitions, and quite secondary to them, that *any* personal petitions were to be offered. Even the very moderate one, “Give us *this day* our daily bread,” followed them. Is not this order too often reversed in the present day? Do not Christians often really feel, and also act, as though it was incumbent upon them to *begin* with, “Give us *this day* our daily bread;” virtually *concluding* with, “If consistent with this, may *Thy* name be hallowed too?” And is not Matt. vi. 33, “Seek *ye first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be *added* unto you;” practically read, even amongst the professed followers of CHRIST, Seek first all *these things* (food and clothing, health, wealth, and comfort), and *then* the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Instead of honouring Him with the first-fruits of our time and substance, are we not content to offer Him the fragments that remain after our own supposed need is supplied? While we thus refuse to bring the tithes into His storehouse, and to prove the LORD therewith, can we wonder that He does not open the windows of heaven, and pour us out the fulness of blessing that we desire?

We have a striking exemplification of the manner in which we should seek first the kingdom of GOD and His righteousness, in the life and in the death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. And when risen from the dead, ere He ascended on high, He commissioned His people to make known everywhere the glad tidings of salvation—full and free—through faith in His finished work. This duty He enjoined on *us*; enjoined in the most unmistakable form, and to the most definite extent; saying, “Go *YE*, into ALL the world, and preach the gospel to EVERY CREATURE.” Grievously has the Church failed in fulfilling this command. Sad it is to realise that so near to the close of the nineteenth century of the

Antiquity and Civilization.

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Christian era, there are immense tracts of our globe either wholly destitute of, or most inadequately provided with, the means of grace and the knowledge of salvation.

Leaving other fields, however, let us concentrate our attention on the Chinese empire. Let us reflect on its great antiquity, its vast extent, its teeming population; on its spiritual destitution, and overwhelming need. Let us survey the efforts that have been put forth for its good, and contemplate the work which still remains to be done, ere the gospel is preached to "every creature" throughout this empire. And may the view we shall obtain give rise to devout gratitude to God for our own superior privileges, to humiliation before Him for our past want of earnestness in the dissemination of the truth, and to more strenuous efforts in future for China's good.

ANTIQUITY AND CIVILIZATION.

It is surely high time that this ancient and most interesting empire had the gospel fully proclaimed in its purity and soul-saving power. Long enough has it been held in the thralldom of sin and Satan. No other nation has been left for so many centuries to suffer in darkness, and to prove how utterly unable man is to raise himself without Divine revelation, and the regenerating power of the HOLY GHOST. This empire, in its antiquity, stands the sole remaining relic of the hoary ages of the past, and of patriarchal times. For forty centuries it has enjoyed many of the fruits of a certain measure of civilization and of literary attainment. Our own antiquities sink into insignificance in comparison. As early as the reign of Edward the First, fire-arms were invented in China. The art of printing was discovered there in the reign of our Saxon king Athelstan. Paper was first made about A.D. 150; and gunpowder about the commencement of the Christian era. While the inhabitants of our now highly-favoured island were wandering about, painted savages, the Chinese were a settled people, living under the same form of constitutional government as they at present possess. Or to go back to times long antecedent to the history of our own country;—when Daniel foretold the rise and fall of the Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires; when at an earlier period Isaiah foretold the downfall of Babylon; or earlier still, when Jonah threatened the destruction of Nineveh—the Chinese nation was one of the greatest in the world. When Solomon reigned in Jerusalem in all his glory; when David, the sweet singer of Israel, wrote his psalms of matchless beauty; then the Chinese were enjoying many of the benefits of civilization and good government. One of their classical writings—to this day committed to memory by every advanced scholar

in China—was composed by Wun-wang, an emperor who lived a century before David's reign. When Moses, learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, led the people of Israel from the house of bondage to the promised land, Chinese laws and literature were probably not inferior to, while their religious views were far in advance of, those of Egypt; the worship of graven images not having been introduced into China until some centuries after this period. Upwards of 200 years before the call of Abraham, certain astronomical

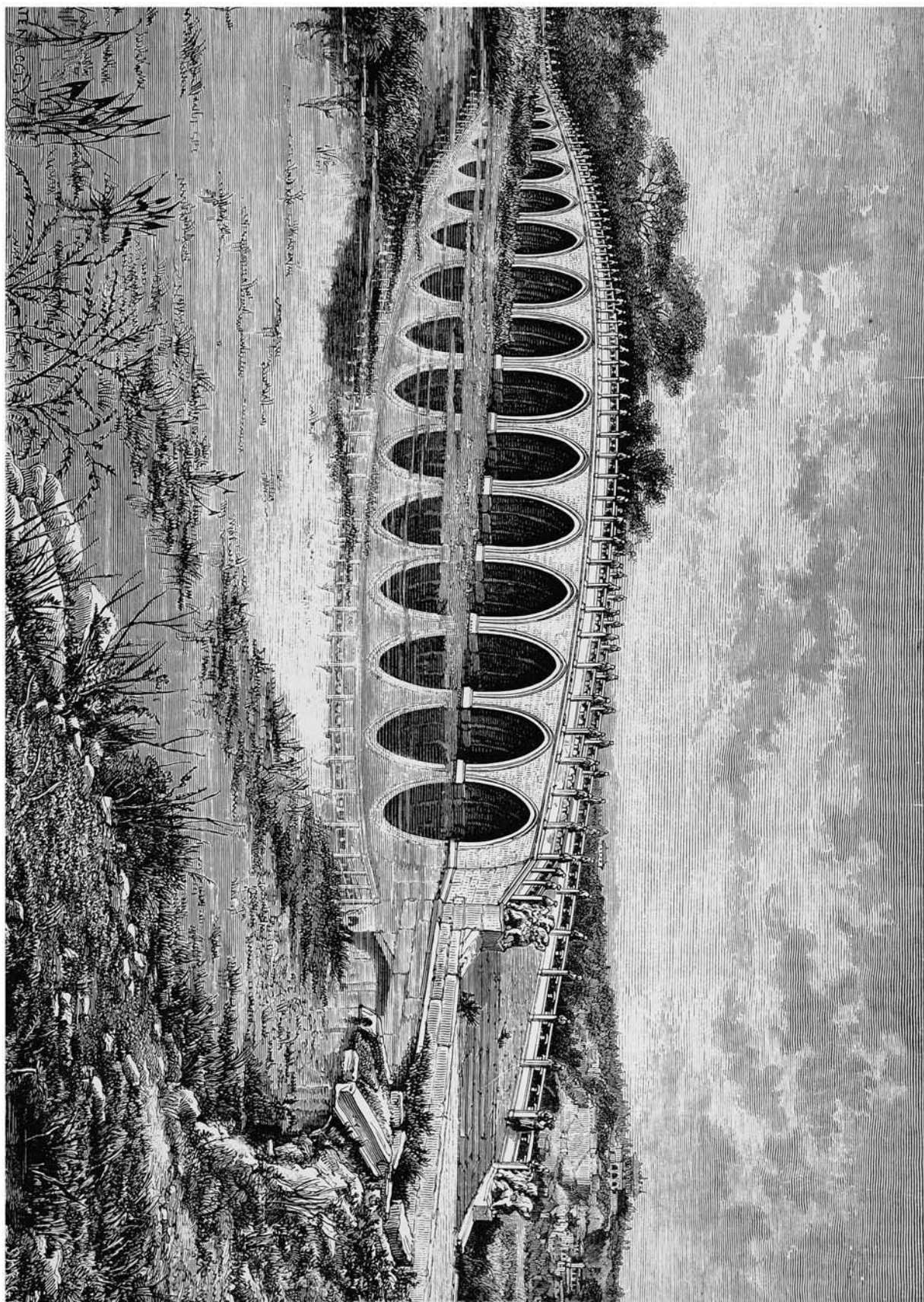


(Terraces for the Growth of Rice.)

CHINESE CIVILIZATION ILLUSTRATED IN AGRICULTURE.

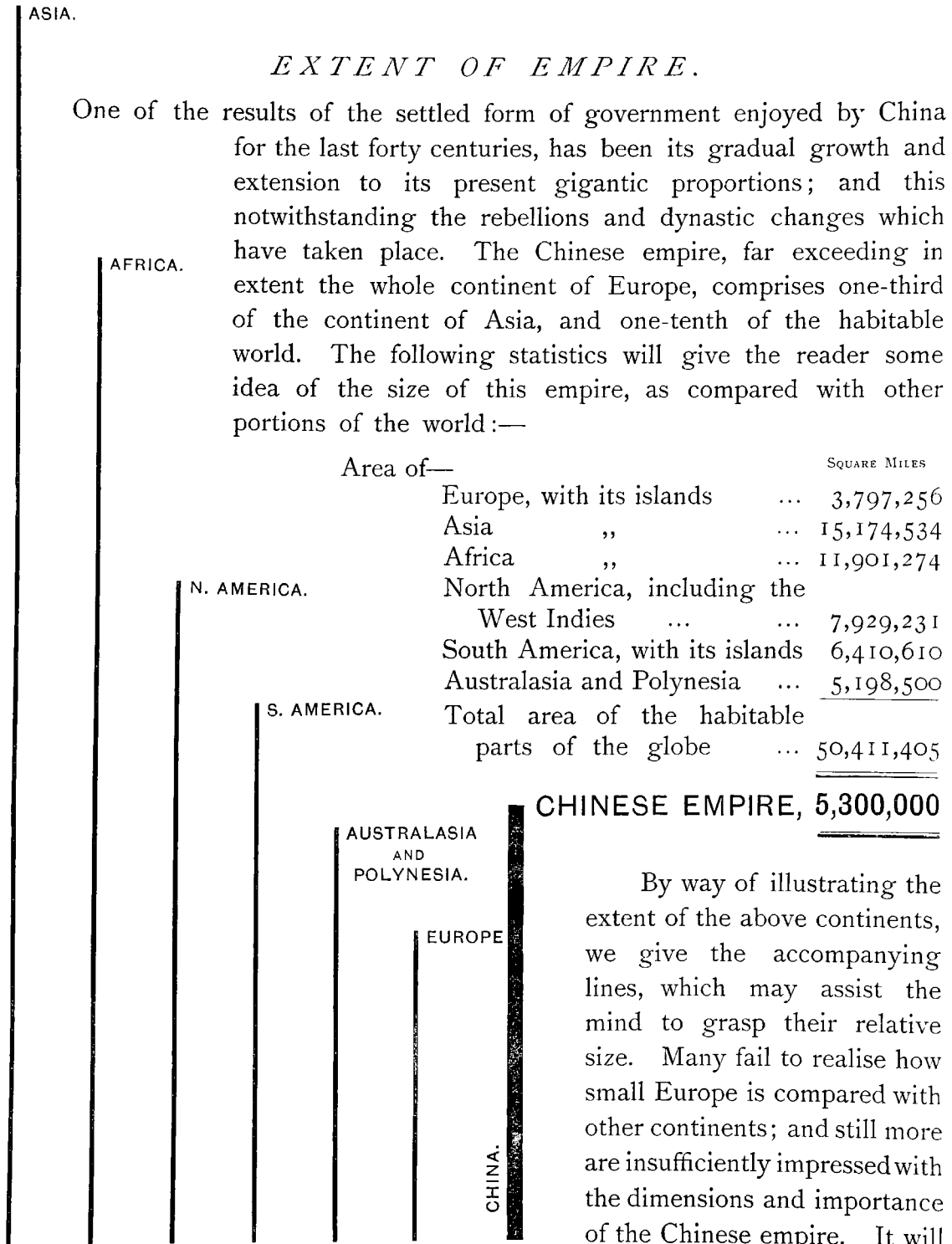
observations were recorded by Chinese historians, which have been verified by astronomers of our own times. And the oldest record of antiquity, still possessed by the Chinese, graven on the rocks of Hung-shan some half-century antecedent to this early period, was intended to perpetuate the memory of engineering works not less remarkable for extent or difficulty than those displayed in the erection of the pyramids of Egypt. Since that time Egypt has risen to the zenith of its glory; has faded and become “the basest of the kingdoms.” Since that time the once famous empires of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome, have waxed—and waned—and passed away; but China still remains, the only monument of ages long bygone. For 4000 years this empire has been preserved by the power of God, and it shall be yet preserved until His word, delivered more than twenty-five centuries ago by the mouth of His servant Isaiah, shall be fulfilled to the last jot and tittle:—“I will make all My mountains a way, and My highways shall

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WHITE MARBLE BRIDGE NEAR PEKIN.

be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far, and, lo, these from the north, and from the west, and these from the land of Sinim (China).”

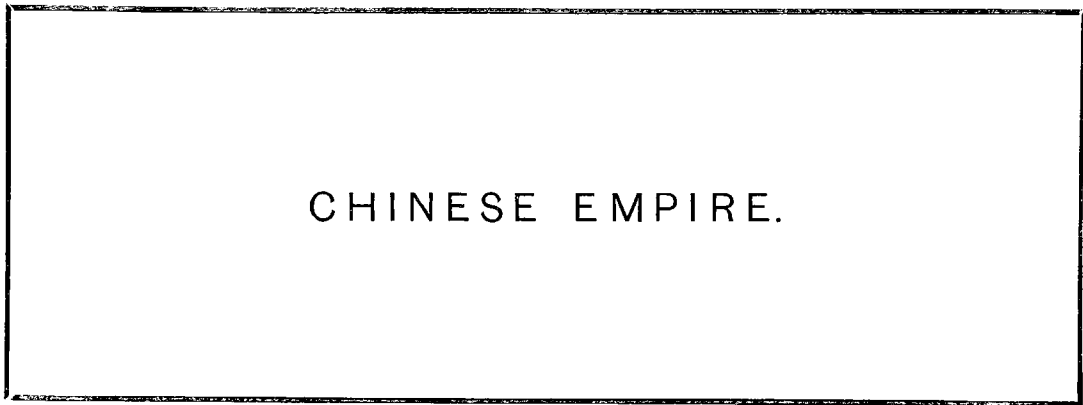


be seen from this diagram, that to benefit China means to benefit a much

By way of illustrating the extent of the above continents, we give the accompanying lines, which may assist the mind to grasp their relative size. Many fail to realise how small Europe is compared with other continents; and still more are insufficiently impressed with the dimensions and importance of the Chinese empire. It will

larger territory than Europe. Australia, vast as it is, together with Tasmania, New Zealand, and all the archipelagoes of the South Sea Islands, put together do not equal the Chinese empire in extent. Some, again, as they look at the lines representing North and South America will, perhaps, be surprised to see the extent of China in comparison. *What* must be the spiritual need and claims of a country like this?

It may further impress the mind if we take some smaller and more familiar standards of comparison: the area of the Chinese empire exceeds 44 times that of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, 104 times that of



Area, 5,300,000 square miles.



GREAT
BRITAIN AND
IRELAND.

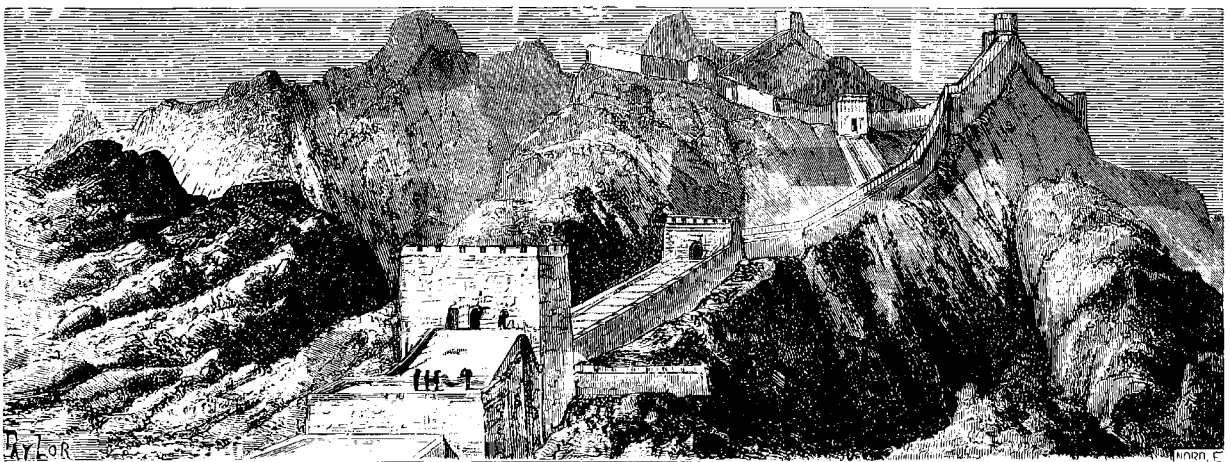
Area, 120,000 square miles.



SCOTLAND.

Area, 30,000 square miles.

England alone, and 176 times that of Scotland. Could the empire of China be changed from its present form to that of a long strip of land a mile in breadth, a person walking 30 miles a day would require more than 483 years to walk from one end of it to the other. Of its area, Chinese Tartary and Thibet contain rather more than three-fifths, the remaining two-fifths being contained in China Proper.



THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA.



A STREET IN HAN-KOW.

POPULATION.

Another result of the constitutional government of China has been the steady increase and spread of its population. The Chinese have not been divided into tribes and clans, whose chief employment has been to wage war against, and to exterminate, one another. Principally occupied in the peaceful engagements of agriculture and commerce, or seeking celebrity by literary attainments, the increase of the people has had fewer checks than in most nations. As to the number of inhabitants at present contained in the whole empire, we are unable to speak with certainty. About the year 1850,

Population of China.

Dr. Gutzlaff stated the population of Chinese Tartary and Thibet to be as follows:—

	ESTIMATE OF 1850.	ESTIMATE OF 1884.
Manchuria	8 millions	8 millions
Mongolia	15 ,,	5 ,,
Sungaria	2 ,,	2 ,,
Thibet	8 ,,	8 ,,
Total dependencies ...	<u>33 millions</u>	<u>23 millions</u>

We do not know the data from which Dr. Gutzlaff derived his statistics. Since then Russia has absorbed no small part of Manchuria, but so many Chinese have emigrated into what remains, that the population may still be eight millions. The statement about the population of Mongolia was certainly too large. It is, perhaps, impossible to arrive at accuracy with regard to some of these regions, as it would be no easy matter to make a correct census of migratory Tartar hordes inhabiting the vast steppes of Central and Northern Asia. But, surely, *we* should follow them in spirit; our hearts should be moved with Christ-like compassion, when we think of them “scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd;” and our whole souls should cry to the great LORD of the harvest to send forth labourers to seek these lost ones, that they may be saved.

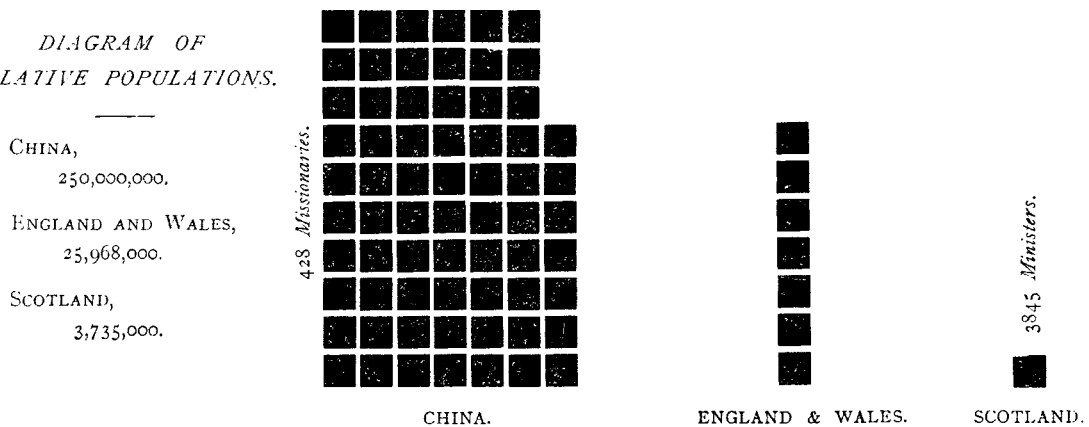
As to China Proper we have fuller information. Without going over much that has been written on the subject, we may mention that in the first edition of this book we accepted the then generally assumed population of China at 400 millions. While this estimate was, perhaps, not very excessive thirty years ago, the rebellions, famines, and pestilences, which have since devastated in turn every province of the empire, have made previous estimates utterly unreliable. Moreover, the well-known effect of excessive opium-smoking (which latterly has attained to alarming proportions) on the number and vitality of the smoker's offspring, cannot be overlooked in estimating the present population of China. We do not wish to overstate the case, and to attempt to make China's need appear greater than it really is; and therefore, for our present purpose, accepting a recent, well-supported estimate of 250 millions as the basis of our calculations, assume China Proper to have 227 millions of people. If any object to this as too low, then our argument becomes all the stronger; if accepted as approximately correct, the need will still be seen to be one of overwhelming magnitude. Those specially interested in the question of the population of China, are referred for fuller information to the papers on the subject in the Appendix.

Compared with England.

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We proceed, then, on the assumption that the present population of the empire is 250 millions. How immense is this number! what mind can grasp it? We speak lightly of millions, and with very little realisation of what the vast numbers mean. If a railway train could go twelve hours without stopping to relieve the driver or to take in water, and were to travel during the twelve hours at the uniform rate of thirty miles an hour, it would make 360 miles a day. Seven years and a half of such travel, without a single day's intermission, would not accomplish *one* million miles; and had a train commenced to travel at this rate on the first day of the Christian era, and continued every day since without intermission, each day completing its quota of 360 miles, it would not yet have nearly accomplished 250 millions of miles.

DIAGRAM OF
 RELATIVE POPULATIONS.



So inconceivably great a number is 250 millions, and yet this is the number of souls in China. Two hundred and fifty millions! Ten times the population of densely peopled England; or nearly sixty-seven times that of Scotland. Were the subjects of the court of Peking marshalled in single file, allowing one yard between man and man, they would encircle the globe more than seven times at its equator. Were they to march past the spectator at the rate of thirty miles a day, they would move on and on, day after day, week after week, month after month; and over seventeen years and a quarter would elapse before the last individual passed by. Of this vast multitude, it is estimated that 22,000 are communicants in connection with Protestant missions in China. What portion of the seventeen years would it take for them to pass by? Little more than half a day would suffice! Two days and a half would permit all the attendants on Christian worship in China to pass by, while seventeen years would be required by the heathen. Mournful and impressive fact—such is the proportion of those who are journeying heavenward to those