

Committee on the book of Exodus. We had five weeks work on it, and it is now ready for the press. * * * The *Reporter* will tell you how the institution gets on, and the mission generally. We are trying to get up substantial buildings at the Institution. They are going on with a nice School Room, with stone walls. * * *

* * * We have heard from the brethren at Aneiteum. They are still safe, and have teachers located in the principal parts of the island. They have begun to use their printing press a little. There are no immediate fruits of their labours, but the natives are friendly. Tana is again calling for teachers and missionaries—when will that poor people receive the truth in the love of it? Intelligence from Tahiti says, that that mission does not get on well—the moral and spiritual state of the people low. Rarotonga &c., are going on much as usual.

(From the *English Presbyterian Messenger*.)
CHINA.

LETTER FROM THE REV. W. C. BURNS.

Hong-Kong, Oct. 29, 1849.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I had the pleasure of receiving your welcome letter, and from the uncertainty which it throws over the views of the Committee in regard to Amoy as the future headquarters of your Mission in China, I see in this new cause to admire and praise the gracious providence of God, which kept me back when about to go there. I trust that both you at home and we abroad may be directed to do the work committed to us in this land, in the places and in the manner which shall most conduce to the advancement of the cause and glory of our God and Saviour. I feel some hesitation in answering definitely the questions which you put regarding the relative importance of an educational institution, and the best situation for establishing it. Regarding the importance of such means in connexion with the spread of the Gospel in China, I think there can be no doubt; but I fear that if we wish or expect to do here in this way what is done in India, we shall be disappointed. As I have before reminded you, in order to teach Chinese youth our own tongue, and to bring them under a regular course of instruction, we must board as well as teach them; and therefore it follows, that the proper person to take the charge of such an Institution, is one who is himself the head of a family, and who has a special aptitude for giving instruction. You have as yet no such agent in the field; but when you are directed to find such, it will not be difficult to fix on a suitable locality. I can see no objection of great weight to a station (such as Amoy) farther to the north; but still with Hong-Kong and Canton at hand, I am not sure of any reason why we should seek any farther. As to my own movements, I am thankful that you still leave me unfettered. May I not be allowed to abuse to great and valuable a privilege as I feel, this liberty of action to be? Dr. Young, too, I should suppose, must be in a great measure left to feel his way forward as Divine Providence may open up his path. His capacities as a medical man, I trust, will be sanctified to open many doors that otherwise might remain closed against the messenger of the truth. During the past month I have had the privilege of being resident along with Dr. Hirschberg, of the London Society, in the very middle of the Chinese population here, and have had not a few opportunities, both indoors and in going among the people, of making our message in some degree known.

The season, however, is now again becoming cool, and as my former companions in visiting the mainland are at present here, and seem ready or even anxious to go out with me again, I have formed the purpose, if the Lord will, of again entering on this difficult but important sphere of labour. Should my way be prospered, you may not perhaps hear from me for one or two mails to come.—When I say my former companions, I speak incorrectly. One of these is to remain here

with Mr. Hamberg,* who occupies Mr. Gutzlaff's place while he is absent in Europe, and another, whom I think well of goes in his place. The old man who was formerly robbed and beaten, goes again. Our route is uncertain, but we shall probably begin at least in the district opposite to Hong-Kong, which we visited in the beginning of the present year. May the people of God be enabled and disposed to pray much for us, that our bodies, but much more our souls, may be preserved in safety and in health, and that our going forth may not be in vain. I shall add no more at present, but ever am, Yours affectionately,
W. C. BURNS.

To the Editor of the Record.

MY DEAR SIR,—

The following extract from an address by John Durie, Esq., elder, from Bytown, at the last ordinary meeting of the Perth Presbytery, are well worthy of being attentively perused by the readers of the *Record*:—

"The pecuniary difficulties in which many of the congregations belonging to this Presbytery, are at present placed, call for action on the part of this Court in providing, if possible, a remedy.—Otherwise it seems evident that, in several instances where such difficulties exist, the ministers will of necessity be forced, and that ere long, to abandon their charges.

"Coming out from a Church enjoying state support, sufficient to render the pastors, partially at least, independent of aid from the people, and the people, on the other hand, proportionably unconcerned about their maintenance,—and suddenly embracing the Voluntary system, a scheme was surely required, calculated at once to call forth the sympathies of our people, and to impress upon their minds, that on the free-will offerings alone of members and adherents, the ministers were henceforth to be dependent for their temporal support.

"It might almost appear incredible, that up to this period in our history as a Church, we are still without any recognized system for the support of the ministry. The Synod's Sustentation scheme was attempted, but failed. If there was confidence in it as being one adequate, and if its general adaptation was necessary to its success, it is surely to be regretted, that instead of its adoption being enjoined upon all our congregations, as the scheme of the Church, it should have been left for each congregation to dispose of at will. However simple the scheme may have been, in reality it was, we believe, too complicated in appearance, ever to obtain general sanction.

"To the want of a general system, are to be ascribed in a great measure, our present difficulties,—some system by which a fund could be secured, by which, being aided or supported for a time, weaker congregations might eventually strengthen and flourish, which if left entirely to their own resources, must even wither and become extinct.

"And here, in passing, we would recommend the plan pursued by the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. But in the absence of any such provision, it becomes the duty of each Presbytery to adopt such measures, as in present circumstances, may be deemed most suitable. The system prevailing among us of raising revenue from pew rents, is defective, and one which experience has proved to be utterly inadequate. By it, not only are our ministers' stipends small—in some cases barely sufficient for their maintenance—but also rendered exceedingly precarious and uncertain. In large congregations, with extensive church accommodation, a surplus revenue may be secured from pew rents alone, so as to leave room for any defalcation in payment, without affecting the Minister's income; but in small congregations, such as this Presbytery is composed of, the amount derived from this source, often falling short, and

* Sent out from Germany but a Swede.

seldom, if ever, exceeding the amount of stipend, every individual sum remaining unpaid, instances of which are more or less numerous in all congregations, is a deduction from what at best may be insufficient. Supplementing in such cases will be found exceedingly difficult and troublesome. All the arrangements necessary to its being carried out cease with the accomplishment of the object, for the time being, and at every particular emergency require to be renewed. Besides, sudden efforts of this kind become ineffectual by frequent repetition.

But another evil connected with the pew rent system is, that the individual amounts raised by it bear no proportion in general to the means of the parties contributing; there is no recognition of the scriptural injunction to give as the Lord may have prospered. It seems, indeed, to stand as a barrier in the way of liberality. And besides, assuming, as it does, so much the appearance of a mercantile transaction—a bargain between the individual and the temporal committee—the object for which the sum is paid, namely, the maintenance of the Gospel ordinances, is lost sight of, and when the rich man pays his pittance in pew rent, he conceives that, equally with his poor neighbour, he is discharging the claims which the Gospel has upon him.

Moreover, it is neither calculated to encourage nor to foster a Missionary spirit in the Church. By it the young are overlooked: it never reaches them. They grow up, and while their attention may occasionally be called to the claims of missions, it would seem unnecessary to remind them of the claims which their own pastors have upon them.

"The scheme we would now recommend to consideration, is simple in its nature, may be deemed more scriptural in its character, and better adapted in all respects to our circumstances; besides, it has been tested, and is, we believe, in successful operation in some of our own congregations and congregations belonging to other denominations in the Province. It will place the duty of contributing to the support of Gospel ordinances more immediately before the minds of all, young and old, and by having regard to the means of individuals, will tend to a juster and more proportionate division of the stipend, or other funds, which congregations may be expected to raise. With its adoption, the system of letting pews will cease, and free sittings take its place—individuals and families retaining their present pews and sittings, except in as far as private arrangements may lead to a change. Prior to the beginning of each congregational year, an elder, with a member of the temporal committee, will visit the several districts into which the congregation may be divided, and obtain the annual subscription of each member and adherent within the bounds, at the same time placing the true object directly before the minds of all.

The changes taking place in the circumstances of a people will render it necessary to renew the lists yearly. These, when completed, should be placed in the hands of the temporal committee, and, through collectors appointed for that purpose, the amount taken up at stated periods, say quarterly, and placed in the hands of the Treasurer. Female collectors are to be preferred, as they are generally found to be most successful in the work.

"In conclusion, we may remark that it will matter comparatively little what changes we may adopt, unless the support of the Gospel ministry as a duty be more fully recognized and enjoined—a duty solemnly binding upon all. While there may be those who, reared within the pale of the establishment, have yet to learn the duty of contributing more liberally of their means towards this great and good object, it is to be feared that there are, on the other hand, many who, although conscious of its claims, manifest a sinful apathy and indifference about the matter—who can speak, and that truly, of the heavy responsibility resting upon the Pastor in making provision for the spiritual wants of his flock, while they show no cor-