

Mr Burns said he had not come here to-day to attempt to make any speech, which he was not accustomed to do except in the way of explaining the Scriptures, but to give what information he could to those who desired it, and, perhaps the most profitable way of employing the time of the meeting would be that some one should give him a hint of what kind of information they wished from him. He had come to this country at present, not for the purpose of giving information about China—for he felt that it was a higher duty to be seeking to give something of the knowledge of the Divine truth to those among whom he was labouring—but he was obliged to come home with a brother missionary, whose health of body and mind had given way, though he was glad to say that under medical care in London he was recovering. He would be glad now to answer any questions which might be proposed.

Dr Lorimer suggested that the meeting might perhaps be desirous in the first place to learn something about the present condition of the evangelical missions in China.

Mr Burns remarked that he had some delicacy in speaking to this point, because he could only give details about his missionary operations which had come under his own observation, and might omit to describe others equally deserving of attention. With this proviso, he would state what had come specially under his notice. He had himself been at three stations. The first of these was Hong Kong, where, as it was an English settlement, there were several missionary institutions. There were the London Missionary Society's Missions, the American Mission Institution, and, more lately, a mission connected with the Church of England. The operations of the London Missionary Society were carried on both by means of an educational institution in which, he believed, they boarded as well as taught about forty youths, and had also, he thought, a school for girls. They carried on the preaching of the gospel also very constantly among the Chinese, and in that work the foreign labourers were aided by a native who was, perhaps, the best instructed native convert whom they had. The American mission was connected with the American Baptist Church, and was also making good progress. There were likewise in Hong Kong a number of German missionaries who made that place their headquarters, though their labours were chiefly devoted to the mainland opposite. Considerable progress had been made at their stations on the mainland. He believed that at one of these stations fifty adults had been received into the Church, and at another there were about a hundred, young and old, connected with them. Till very lately there was also in Hong Kong a medical missionary, but he had been removed to Amoy, and his place had not yet been filled. In Canton, outside the walls—for foreigners were, till of late, not admitted within the walls—there were a number of missionaries almost entirely connected with the American missions, the only exception was that of a medical missionary connected with the London Missionary Society, who had extensive premises, and had been the means of bringing many under the preaching of the gospel. For some times he would have as many as two or three hundred patients in one day. The chief preacher there was Leang-a-fa, the first convert under Dr. Milne, the second missionary sent to China. This native convert had continued to make a good profession of Christianity for above forty years. The gospel was preached by him with great vigour, though he could not say of it any more than of the preaching of most of the missionaries, that it was preached with much success. He had co-operated with Leang-a-fa in his missionary work for more than a year, and had been greatly delighted with his addresses to the people. Tracts printed and circulated by him were the means of sowing the first seeds of Divine truth in the mind of the man who was at-

tracting so much attention as the leader of the revolution. Copies of these printed tracts, consisting partly of extracts from Scripture, and partly of Scripture essays, were distributed largely at Canton, at one of the literary examinations, which bring young scholars in thousands from great distances. These tracts, before their circulation was stopped by the Chinese authorities, came into the hands of the young man who was at the head of the revolution, and to these must his first acquaintance with Divine truth be traced. This man, in 1846, in consequence of the impression the truth had made on his mind, came down to Canton, hearing that there was a foreigner preaching Christianity, viz., Mr. Roberts, an American Baptist Missionary, with whom he (Mr. Burns) had had much intercourse, and had co-operated in preaching the gospel. Taping-wang remained with Mr. Roberts about two months, and it was from this American missionary that all the knowledge of Christianity derived from direct intercourse with foreigners had been obtained. The missionary work in Canton was one of great difficulty, the population there being particularly hostile to foreigners. However, these difficulties were gradually decreasing, and while, till of late it was found almost impossible to rent houses there suitable for missionary purposes, it had been found much easier latterly. Besides the American missionaries who had occupied that field for a number of years, Dr. Hobson, the medical missionary, there were also more lately at Canton three missionaries connected with the Wesleyan body. He had himself lived for about sixteen months in Canton, co-operating almost daily with the native agents and with Mr. Roberts after his return from America. Mr. Roberts had a great power of collecting the people; they had daily crowded assemblies, and at these meetings he had frequently seen the audience considerably impressed, though during these sixteen months the number of cases of conversion was very small. He co-operated also with Leang-a-fa in connection with the London Missionary Society. Canton was an important place for missionary labour. It would, no doubt, prove one of the most influential places in the empire when the minds of the people were arrested; and the natives of Canton were of that character that when they became decided, much might be hoped from their labours. Leang-a-fa was himself an instance of this. He had also been engaged in visits to the mainland opposite Hong Kong. In these excursions they were often exposed to robbery, and once were robbed of all they had, but that was not owing to any hostility to the missionaries, for the natives themselves when travelling were exposed to the same risks. In many cases they were received very willingly by the people.

Mr. Lorimer again asked if Mr. Burns could state what was generally the state of mind of the Chinese in a religious sense. Were they in earnest, even according to their own superstition, or were they rather in a state of indifference and scepticism in regard to it?

Mr. Burns—The Chinese strike every one as remarkably wanting in anything like seriousness, and I think it probable that this is just as it was a thousand years ago. Sometimes, in speaking of the most serious things—telling, for instance, of some fearful calamity—they will do it with a smile on their face. They were a singular people in that respect, though it might be found, after all, that it arose from no want of humane feelings. But what struck one in regard to their religious superstition was the childishness of the of the service itself in which they engaged, and the light way in which it was gone about. It was not accompanied by that species of fanaticism common with the Buddhists in India. There were occasional exceptions to this rule—as, for instance, when they ran through burning charcoal, as some of them occasionally did, but even then they were pretty cautious not to hurt them-

selves much. Again, it was said sometimes of certain persons that they were possessed by the spirit of some particular idol. Some of these persons were really under some kind of frenzy, and cut themselves with knives when in that state. Others were just in frenzy in proportion to the amount of money they got for the work, and seemed to measure the extent of injury they should inflict upon themselves by what they got for it. These exhibitions were one way in which the fear of the idol was maintained among the people—for their worship was altogether a worship of fear, given for the purpose of avoiding the displeasure of certain beings whom they feared might injure them.

Dr. Brown inquired how converts to Christianity were treated by the heathen Chinese?

Mr. Burns had known instances of persons becoming Christians who did not experience any special opposition. In such cases that was attributable greatly to indifference, they looked upon converts to Christianity very much as if they were entering upon some particular trade, and in that view of the matter thought there was no harm in these persons looking after their temporal advantage. In Amoy, where a number of people were congregated together for the sake of trade, and where families were not much connected together, they generally took no more notice of conversions to Christianity than people in Glasgow took of the doings of their neighbours. Indeed, he did not think generally that the fact of becoming a Christian was regarded by the Chinese as a bad thing. But where the population were more closely associated together, and where the community belonged mostly to one sect or clan the opposition was greater. In Pechua, for example, where the gospel this year was taking remarkable hold, there was decided opposition. Every one who had a house or shop was expected to give so much for every idolatrous service, and the people would threaten to cast them out of the place if they did not conform to the hereditary custom. He himself, as a householder in Pechua, was insisted upon to give his part, which, of course, he refused to do. Threats and every species of coercion were employed to compel a convert in that place to pay his share towards the support of the idolatrous temple, but he was providentially delivered from the penalty of expulsion with which he was threatened. During last year some of these converts showed a degree of steadfastness in their adherence to the gospel which he had never seen before.

The Chairman asked what were the prospects of usefulness for the missionaries which this country was at present sending out, and in what way the circulation of the Scriptures could be brought about? Further, he would like that Mr. Burns would give some details of his own proceedings as a missionary.

Mr. Burns reminded the meeting that there were five large cities in China opened up by treaty to foreigners, viz., Canton, Amoy, Foo-chow, Ningpo, and Shanghai. These were very large places, and the number of missionaries there might be greatly multiplied, and yet each of them have plenty to do. Canton was supposed to have about a million of inhabitants, and though ten missionaries were there at present, "what were they among so many?" In Amoy, when the whole of the missionaries were present, there would be eight or nine to a population of 150,000. At these stations, then, there was room and need for an addition to the missionary band, but it was difficult to give an answer in regard to the other openings. Being himself disencumbered as a missionary, he had found it possible to go along with native agents to places in the neighbourhood of Hong Kong and Amoy; but yet he could not say that there were in the mission such openings that one might calculate upon being received among the people, and allowed to rent a house for residence among them. If missionaries were prepared to set out upon the work, leaving it to God to open up their way: