

great spiritual awakening, the remembrance of which is still fresh and fragrant in the Church of God. In 1844 he visited Canada, where he spent two years. In April 1847 he was ordained as the pioneer Missionary of the English Presbyterian Church to China. There he laboured, doing mostly the work of a pioneer—laboured with impassioned ardour, till death laid him low on the 4th April, 1868.

Far more precious than volumes on the Evidences of Christianity is a Life like that of William C. Burns,—so full of Heaven and of Christ, so victorious over self, so jubilant in the face of every trial and difficulty, so calm and happy even in the last conflict. His whole life was a life of prayer, and his whole ministry a series of battles fought at the mercy seat. Enlightened, naturally sceptical, thoroughly honest, he had inquired, searched, examined into all the phases of Christianity; he experimentally sounded its depths and soared to its heights, and he gave himself up to it with a sincere heart, with an intelligent and deliberate conviction that its claims were paramount to all other claims. He gave the best proof of his convictions by devoting all the days of his life to the noble and peerless mission of making Christ known to dying men.

While we recommend this Memoir to all our readers, we urge its perusal especially upon students and young ministers. Let us all ask ourselves, and ask each other, why have we not more men of the stamp of William C. Burns?—and let us pray that God may send many such labourers into this part of His Vineyard.

THE MOST SERIOUS PERIL.

That remarkable man, William C. Burns, used to speak in his letters of the *benumbing influence of continual contact with Heathenism*. Missionaries are in danger of losing the keen edge and high tone of practical godliness while dwelling in a land in which all the usual means and incentives of the spiritual life are in so great a measure withdrawn. Hence the unwisdom of locating one solitary missionary on a heathen

Island. We are persuaded that this should not be done except in very peculiar circumstances. Dr. Islay Burns says, "We are apt to regard the Christian Missionary as, by the very act of his consecration to so sublime a calling, at once raised to so sublime a region of faith and fervour far above us, in which all the ordinary perils to the life of the soul are unknown. The idea of a carnal, formal, perfunctory, unspiritual, and common-place missionary seems to us almost a contradiction in terms. We think naturally of those brave athletes of the Cross very much as ordinary Christians in early days thought of the ascetic recluses of the desert, as men by the very nature of their calling pre-eminently devoted in heart to God, and almost as a matter of course and *ipso facto* full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." No mistake can be more grievous. The whole history of missionary life and labour abundantly shows how possible it is to lose the life of faith even while seeking the propagation of the faith; to leave house and home and kindred for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, and yet in a heathen land to breathe little either of the love of Christ or the grace of the Gospel. Most of us have little thought how hard it must be for a missionary to maintain the life of practical godliness in the very air and element of Heathenism, without a Sabbath, without communion with Christians, without a Christian face to look into or a Christian hand to grasp; with an utter disbelief in Christ and all the truths of the Bible, looking out from the eyes of all around him,—with nothing left to feed the inner springs of the soul but his Bible, his closet (if indeed he can command a closet) and his God. The brightest lamp will burn dim if kept too long in an impure and rarified atmosphere. It is only by miracle that the children of Israel can thrive on the pulse and water of Babylon. The palm-tree of the desert "knoweth not when heat cometh," but it is because its roots are watered by hidden springs far underground." What a fearful ordeal it must be for our missionaries to spend month after month and year after year in constant contact with the degraded Heathenism of