

CHINA.

Dr. Williams, of Canton, a Missionary in connection with the American Board, who has resided for many years in China, who was connected as interpreter with the embassies which negotiated the American treaties with China and Japan, who has published a Chinese Dictionary and a book upon China, entitled the "Middle Kingdom," both of high authority, and who is, therefore, probably fully as competent as any man living to give a good account of China and Japan, was invited by our religious societies to speak at the recent Anniversary Meetings. He kindly complied with the invitation, and at several meetings gave more or less of his inexhaustible stock of facts concerning the East, some of which we have already reported; but he had more time, and gave a more systematic lecture on this great subject on the Friday evening which was devoted to Foreign Missions. Of this lecture we promised to give a brief report, which we now append.—

Dr. Williams said that it was unfortunate for a correct knowledge of China, that all that was popularly read about it was written by men who, like Bayard Taylor, had only resided a short time on the coast. Those who had lived long in that country, and who had journeyed in the interior, wrote very little for the simple reason that the longer they lived in China they felt the less they knew about it. About 2,300 years ago, a great king arose in China, who united 57 small kingdoms and destroyed all literature except the books of Confucius. Other dynasties followed, some of the emperors being truly great men. One of them had established a system of examinations in literary merit, which took place all over the country. In Canton there was a house with 11,000 cells. Each cell was large enough for a bed, a seat and a table. At the Annual Examination for degrees, from all parts of the Province, of which Canton was the Capital, those cells were occupied by the candidates. Generally there were about 9,000; but sometimes all the cells were full. The candidate, when he entered, was carefully searched, to ascertain that he had no book, manuscript, or other help with him. He was then furnished with writing materials. His food and three topics were brought to him each day, on all of which he had to write essays without help. After three days spent in this way, the nine essays of each student—in all some 70,000 or 80,000 essays, were submitted to the judges, whose examination must necessarily be only a partial one, and whose decisions were therefore, probably, sometimes based on other considerations than comparative merit. On the 9th day of the 8th month a great bell was rung, and a man proclaimed in a public place in Canton the names of the seventy-two successful candidates, being the number that obtain a degree each year in that province, and from those who obtain it all officials are appointed. There is a previous examination in each locality, at which all who attain a given standard may pass. This is the first degree, all who obtain which may compete for the second. There is also a more advanced examination at Peking for a third degree, out of which the high officers of government are chosen. Any official in China must therefore, be a well informed and clever man. The examinations were all upon the books of Confucius, and thus the sentiments of that ancient sage were thoroughly engrained into the minds of the people, and more especially of their rulers and leaders. This prestige of learning gives governors and public officers much weight.

In China there is no standing army, no feudal nobility, no priesthood to shackle men's minds. This had saved the Chinese from the destruction