

OBITUARY NOTICE.

THE REV. DR. MEDHURST.

It has pleased the Great Disposer of human events to visit the London Missionary Society with a severe and sudden loss, in which the whole evangelical Church of Europe and America will deeply sympathize. Ours is the melancholy task of announcing the decease of the Rev. Dr. W. H. Medhurst, who expired on Saturday 24th January at half-past eight o'clock P.M., only two days after landing in his native country. This distinguished missionary departed this life at his lodgings, 17, Cambridge Street, Pimlico. He arrived in London on Thursday, in a state of extreme exhaustion; and he was obliged immediately to betake himself to bed, from which he never rose. Dr. Risdon Bennett saw him on Friday afternoon, and again on Saturday; but medical skill was unavailing. He became insensible on Saturday morning, and continued in that state until the hour of his death; but he appeared to be quite free from suffering, and his last moments were perfectly tranquil. His age was sixty-one.

Dr. Medhurst was first appointed to China in 1816, and had consequently spent forty years in that important portion of the missionary field. Trained under the eye of the illustrious Morrison, he was the Elisha on whose shoulders the mantle of that Elijah fell; and well was he worthy to enter into the labours of so great a prophet. After residing at Malacca and Penang for several years, he settled at Batavia; where he collected a congregation and built a chapel, in which he formed a church on a basis as catholic as the constitution of the Society which sent him out, and including every variety of Protestant profession that the colony presented. When, in after years, he entered China proper, it was with the same determination to merge national and denominational predilections in the higher objects of the missionary enterprise, where the united efforts of different denominations would be all too weak to grapple with the prejudices and superstitions of almost countless ages. In 1835, he was called upon to undertake a journey along the south-east coast of China, with a view to ascertain how far the country might be opened to the reception of the Gospel. Many of our readers will remember the striking accounts which he gave, during a subsequent tour through England, of the results of his observations and inquiries. After John Williams, no returned missionary, perhaps, has excited so wide and deep an interest as Dr. Medhurst; as no modern narrative of missionary adventure, that of the martyr of Erromanga expected, has been more eagerly and extensively read than that which the eminent evangelist, whose loss we now deplore, gave to the world, under the title of "China: its State and Prospects, with special reference to the Spread of the Gospel." It comprehends a succinct, yet most interesting account of that marvellous country and people, their antiquity, manners, literature, and religion; and it also contains some notices of the more ancient, as well as a fuller account of the more recent, labours of Protestant missionaries; and, while affording ample proof of the writer's title to the confidence of the great Society as its leading representative in China, it has become a text-book for all who take an active part in the evangelisation of her teeming millions.

The preface in which Dr. Medhurst needlessly bespoke the indulgence of criticism towards an admirable standard work, though composed amidst busy public engagements and in snatches of leisure, bears date May 1, 1838. In the summer of that year, he returned to the scene of his labours. Once more he revisited his native shores to acquaint us with the wonderful story of the eventful interval, when it pleased Almighty God thus suddenly to terminate so valuable a life. Though inscrutably denied the expected sound of his voice, we are not ignorant of what he and his associates have accomplished. We know that they have prepared the way for the complete conquest of China to Christ, whenever the set time shall come, by the translation and printing of the Scriptures in a version approved by native as well as foreign scholars. Over that prospect recent and pending events at Canton have hung a heavy cloud, made yet more obscure, solemn, and mysterious to the view of the friend to missions, by the removal of this eminent individual ere he could open his lips to communicate those stores of information as to missionary labours, intestine disturbances, and external war, which would have been as important, at this crisis, to the Queen's advisers as to the Directors of the London Missionary Society, and worthy of equal reliance on the part of both.—*Patriot (London)*.