

A hymn having been sung,
The REV. OWEN CLARK offered up prayer.

The CHAIRMAN said, he thought the present meeting, and those which were to follow it, formed a beautiful sequel to the solemn observances of the Fast day, and he earnestly hoped that God would follow them with His choicest blessings. Among the many institutions whose meetings were about to be held, the Chinese Evangelisation Society had a peculiar claim upon the Christian public. China occupied about a third of the habitable globe; yet till within a few years little or nothing had been done towards spreading the Gospel in that empire. The present remarkable movement going on in China gave the Society an interest and importance which it might otherwise not possess. Formerly Missionaries were precluded from entering the empire; but at present the door was opened, and the Christians of England were imperatively called upon to enter the field and promulgate the Gospel of Christ to the millions of Chinese who, but for their exertions, might remain in a state of darkness and degradation. The Society was thoroughly unsectarian in its character, and the agency it employed was the best calculated to achieve the results at which it aimed. The medical element, which the Society had recognised and acted upon was in the highest degree useful, and was indeed similar to that which the Lord himself adopted when he was on earth. Considering the importance of the Society's work, its income, instead of being only £2,000, ought to be at least £20,000, every shilling of which would be required to carry out the plans which the institution has in view. The great want, however, (as was the case with all other Societies) was that of Missionary agents, to go into the dark corners of the earth. This want could only be met by Christians "praying the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers unto his harvest." But for the remissness of Christians in this respect he believed there would be an abundance of labourers for the work; and this fact, he hoped, would stimulate them to be more and more earnest in their appeals to the Throne of Grace for the Divine blessing on their operations in foreign lands. (Applause.)

Mr. BIRN, the Secretary, then read the annual Report. It commenced with an acknowledgement of gratitude to God for the success of the past year. Since the last annual meeting, it is stated that three new Missionaries had been engaged, two of whom had already left England for the scene of their intended labours, and the third (Mr. Parker) would sail in a few days for Siam. In addition to European agents, six *colporteurs*, selected by Mr. Lobscheid, were employed in distributing the Scriptures and tracts; and in many places they had been kindly received. The Society had also assisted the Rev. I. J. Roberts to prosecute his labours. He had received an invitation from the rebel Chief to preach the Gospel to his soldiers; but, after two attempts to reach the camp, he was obliged to desist. In his last report, he stated that he had distributed 6,920 copies of the Scriptures and religious tracts. Before the end of the year, the Society hoped to be able to print the entire Scriptures in Chinese (Gutzlaff's version). Instructions to that effect had been sent out to China; and, in the mean time, 10,000 copies of the Psalms were to be printed. The funds received during the past year exhibited a remarkable increase, amounting to £1,796 9s. 7d., or upwards of £1,000 more than the amount received in the previous year. The expenditure amounted to £1,727 6s. 1½d.; and the balance in hand, to £333 6s. 1½d.

The Hon. and Rev. BAPTIST NOEL moved:—

"That as the Society is evangelical and unsectarian in its basis, and as both harmony and unanimity have hitherto prevailed on the board of management, and no practical difficulty has been experienced from the combination of various denominations in carrying out its plans; this meeting cordially recommends the Society to the confidence of the friends of Missions."

The events, he said, now passing in China were calling the attention of all persons to that country. Not long ago, it was inaccessible to Protestant effort, and many prayers were put up that its despotic rulers would permit Christians to land upon its shores and endeavour to evangelise its people. But they dreaded intercourse with Europeans, and did all they could to exclude them. Attempts were then made to establish Missions for the benefit of Chinese emigrants, of whom there were about 700,000 in neighbouring countries. The London Missionary Society began the work, and had Missionaries at Singapore, along the coast of Malacca, and at Java, where they had access to the Chinese who, through poverty or other circumstances, had left their own country.

Thus, the language was learned, a dictionary compiled, and the translation of the Scriptures effected. Meanwhile, political events were transpiring which very much changed the aspect of the country. Englishmen, for the sake of amassing great wealth, forced upon the people the abominable opium trade, by which means they poisoned, demoralised, and murdered the people by tens of thousands. After the drug had been prohibited by law, it would in all probability not have been cultivated, unless the trade had been forced upon the Chinese by Englishmen. He knew no trade more detestable than that, except the trade which other Europeans calling themselves Christians had carried on along the coast of Africa, where they bought men and women, flesh and muscle, and mind, and sold in return guns and implements of warfare to take more slaves. Yet out of that very trade beneficial results were produced. The Chinese Government could not defend their costs from smuggling, and they lighted on the notable expedient of making the innocent suffer for the guilty; they seized British merchants, and the representative of Her Majesty, put them in prison and declared, that if they did not take care that all the opium was given up, they should be starved to death. The English representative was obliged to guarantee the delivering up of the opium, and a million and a half of money was paid to the opium traders in order to comply with the contract. Our Government, justly considering this breach of the law of nations as a *casus belli*, demanded from China the repayment of the money; and the war which ensued in consequence of that demand led to the opening of five consular cities, and the cession of an important island to the British Crown. The Government, however, culpably omitted to stipulate, as they might have done, for the protection of Missionaries in China—that liberty being subsequently obtained by a French Ambassador, a Roman Catholic, and an American representative. The result was, that little churches were formed at Hong-Kong, Shanghai, Amoy, Canton, and Macao, and it was hoped, that some of the Christians thus assembled would find their way into the interior of the country, and carry the Gospel with them. (Hear.) By this time Gutzlaff had completed his translation of the Scriptures. At this very period (Englishmen and Americans being entirely ignorant of the matter) there arose in the province of Quang-si, the most remote province, 2,000 miles from Peking, a Chief who stirred up the mountaineers to insurrection against the Tartar Government. The insurgents gathered force; they were everywhere iconoclasts, breaking down all images wherever they went. The result of the insurrection was pretty well known, and there seemed but little doubt of Peking falling into the hands of the new Chief. But, whatever might be the result of the coming struggle, which he believed would be the decisive one, all the Empire south of the Yellow River (larger than France, England, and Germany) was lost to the Tartar dynasty for ever. There was nothing, then, to hinder British Christians from acting at once on China. The insurgents recognized the Bible as a divine book, worshipped one God called themselves followers of Jesus Christ, and were exceedingly moral in their conduct.