

## CHAPTER XVII.

1854.

### FIRST-FRUITS.

**H**ITHERTO the abundant and patient labours which we have been recording had been rewarded only by hopeful appearances and fair promise, but the missionary was soon to witness greater things than these. On the 18th of January, 1854, Mr. Johnston, shortly after his arrival, wrote: "God has tried the faith and patience of our brethren in denying them the privilege of gathering fruit in this life as yet, and at present we cannot even speak of the blossoms and buddings of the spiritual vintage." Most singularly it happened that at the very time when these words were written events were in progress in a village not twenty miles distant which rendered them no longer true, and which may be said to have opened a new era in the history of the mission. Mr. Burns left Amoy on the 9th January on another preaching tour, taking with him as usual as his companions and assistants two native evangelists, C.-C. and T.-C. The former had been with him before in almost all his evangelistic journeys since he came to Amoy, and was a man in some respects remarkable. He had belonged in the days of his heathen darkness to the class, so numerous in China, of fortune-tellers, and possessed in large measure the fortune-teller's fluency of speech, and readiness of resource. Attracted by the preaching of the gospel at the American Chapel, he had had his heart touched by the simple home question of a missionary, "Are you well? Is your heart at peace?" and sought and found the peace of God. Rejoicing in that pearl of great price himself, it was his delight henceforth to proclaim and commend it to others, and to this end he freely devoted those peculiar gifts which he had formerly employed in the pursuit of unlawful gain. He was quick, buoyant, nimble, fertile in argument, anecdote, and happy illustration, ever prompt for action, and ready with the fit word at the fitting time. The other, a schoolmaster, had been sorely puzzled to understand how the Christian preachers should spend their days telling those gospel stories to the people, without ever asking for money or apparently seeking any earthly reward. He had often enough listened at the corners of the streets to the professional story-tellers of his own country, and well-remembered how adroitly they used to stop at the most thrilling part of the tale, and keep the expectant crowd in suspense until they had been well paid to tell the rest. He resolved in his heart to get to the bottom of the matter. He listened with awakened interest to the Word of Life, found out the great secret, and became, a teller of the good news of grace himself.

The course of the missionary band lay first across the wide estuary which is closed in by Amoy and its companion group of islands, amid scenery which the missionaries describe as remarkably resembling the Frith of Clyde, with “its beautiful variety of hill and island and far reaches of the sea, at one moment lost sight of and again seen stretching far round promontory, creek, and bay”—then, for some eight or ten miles further along the course of a fine winding river. Their first halting-place was at a market-town on its banks of about 3000 inhabitants, called Pechuia (White-water Camp), and the commercial centre of a considerable district, full of agricultural villages, where their course was arrested in a manner to them as unexpected as it was delightful. “Here,” says Mr. Doty of the American Mission, “they intended to begin working, expecting, after a few days at longest, to go forward, making known the gospel message as they might have opportunity, and just where the Master might providentially lead them. But for two months continuously the brethren were shut up to this one place and the nearest villages, in holding forth day and night the Word of Life. Almost at the very first declaration of the truth, some persons were interested, and became earnest inquirers. From that time to the present the work has been gradually gaining in importance. Mr. Burns has rented a small building, the upper floor for his dwelling, while the lower is a preaching place. This is visited by many persons, who come in on market-days from all the surrounding region for purposes of trade. There are twelve such days in each month. Public worship is held on the Sabbath and every evening, and is attended by a goodly number of apparently interested listeners. Of a few, hope is indulged that they have really passed from death unto life. Numbers have renounced their idols. Some have burned and destroyed them. Others have given them to the brethren to be thus dealt with. Two of our native brethren are constantly employed in connection with Mr. Burns.

“In March, Mr. Burns and two brethren made a tour of some weeks further in the interior, visiting some places to which they had been earnestly invited by persons who had visited them at Pechuia. While they were absent, two other native brethren continued the labours at the first place. At this time it was my privilege to make a short visit there. I found such an awakened interest and spirit of inquiry as I had never before met with among Chinese. It did seem as if the Holy Spirit was at work. The most marked cases are of young men of some education, and endowed with considerable zeal and energy. These are very active in efforts to awaken the attention of others. From the first there have been opposers of the movement, and recently there has been manifested a disposition to annoy and disturb the public worship. There are firm idolaters there, and the spirit of persecution is not wanting.”

Mr. Burns' own statement is to the same effect, though couched, as his manner was, in scrupulously guarded and naked terms, and while giving some additional details, traces briefly the further progress of the work. "It is exactly four months," he writes, May 8th, 1854, "since I first set out this season on a missionary tour; and you are already aware that God so remarkably opened the door in the place to which we first went, that we found it our clear duty to remain at that place as our head-quarters for a longer period than we had intended—visiting the numerous villages and market-towns within our reach, while we carried on regular services at Pechuia, our central station. The work there was so interesting that we felt it could not be abandoned, but as we were anxious to extend our efforts to one or two central positions farther inland, it was necessary that other agents should take our place in order to leave us free to go forward. Accordingly, when, two months ago, I returned from Amoy to Pechuia, an addition was made to the number of native assistants, and leaving two of these to occupy Pechuia, I proceeded on the 9th of March farther inland, in company with the two native Christian companions with whom I had originally set out on the 9th of January from Amoy. The place to which we first went is a market-town, somewhat smaller than Pechuia, named Bay-pay (Horse-flat), and distant from the former place, across the hills, about seven English miles. To this place we had been invited by several persons, and here we remained (well-lodged and free of rent) for eleven days, in the course of which we visited and preached at almost all the villages in the neighbourhood, from thirty to fifty in number. We were almost everywhere favourably received, and our message listened to with attention, although there were no cases, as at Pechuia, of persons coming out and declaring themselves on the side of the gospel. While at Bay-pay, we heard it reported that at Pechuia one family had publicly destroyed their idols and ancestral tablets (the latter the dearest objects of Chinese idolatry), and that another man had closed his shop on the Lord's-day, refusing admittance to a person who wished to trade with him. Both of these reports, so interesting to us, turned out to be true.

"From Bay-pay we proceeded four or five English miles farther on to Poolamkio (South-bank Bridge). Here we were on the sea-coast, I suppose about fifteen miles south of the entrance to Amoy harbour. We were well received here also, and would have gladly remained for a week or two, proceeding still farther south, as we were invited to do, but our books, &c., were becoming few, and our lodging—which would have been very comfortable had we had sole possession of it—being partly occupied by opium-smokers and gamblers, we resolved, after a stay of only four days, on returning to Pechuia."

“On arriving, we found to our delight that the work there had made decided progress in our absence. The two native Christians (members of the American Mission Church at Amoy) whom we had left in charge, seem to have been much aided in teaching the people. The preaching room had been crowded every night to a late hour by from forty to sixty persons, and those who had from the beginning shown an attachment to the truth had evidently advanced in knowledge and earnestness of spirit, and resolved to obey the gospel at the risk of much reproach and opposition. In our absence the station had also had the benefit of a short visit from Mr. Doty of the American Mission. After returning from our inland tour, we continued our meetings at Pechuia with much encouragement, several members of the native church in Amoy having successively come out of their own accord to aid in the work. During the last two or three weeks, however, the aspect of things at Pechuia has been considerably changed; for while those on the side of the gospel seem to go on in a way that fills our hearts with thankfulness, and our mouths with praise, a disposition has been shown on the part of others to interrupt our meetings, which has obliged us at night to hold them upstairs, and more privately. The state of the weather also at this rainy season has prevented us from doing so much as before among adjacent villages.”

“When I left Pechuia last Monday, it seemed that, including young and old, there might be about twenty persons who have declared themselves on the side of the gospel, but some of these are children, and two or three are women whom we have not seen—mothers who have received the truth from their sons or husbands. Among the number of those who are attached to the gospel are two whole families of six members each. The eldest son in one of these families, a promising youth of twenty, early showed much decision, having, on the birth-day of *‘the god of the furnace,’* taken his god and put it in the fire. The idol having been but in part consumed, his mother discovered among the ashes a part of its head, and father and mother together beat their son severely; but some of the other Pechuia inquirers having gone to comfort the young man, and reason with his parents, their views underwent so sudden and entire a change, that in a day or two afterwards they, with their four sons, brought out all their idols and ancestral tablets and publicly destroyed them in the view of the people. The father I have two or three times met with, and he seems, along with his four sons (an interesting set of boys), to be in a promising state of mind. The other family is that of a respectable cloth-dealer, whose shop is in the same street with our lodging. This family has passed through remarkable trials, which seem to have prepared them for receiving the gospel on its first announcement, they having twice lost all their property by robbers; and on the second of these occasions having had their house burned, to cover the robbers’

retreat—when the whole family were obliged to leap from an upper story, and yet escaped unhurt! They are a very interesting family, and have in one point shown more decision than I have before seen in China, having (while yet only inquirers) shut their shop on the last eight Sabbaths, even although two of these Sabbaths were market-days. The family adjoining our house is literally divided—two against three, and three against two. The elder brother and his wife oppose,—they live by making paper images used in idolatrous processions, for burning to the dead, &c.; the mother, second son, with the youngest, who is a mere boy, are on the side of the gospel. The second son formerly made images with his elder brother, but has now given up his trade, and has begun a general business in one half of the shop which they have in common. It is curious thus to notice that on the Lord's-day the younger brother's side of the shop is closed, while the elder brother's side remains open! This young man, when we were absent farther inland, went down to Amoy with the desire of being admitted into the visible church; and though he has not yet been baptized, the American missionaries, who examined him, were astonished and delighted by the evidence which he gave them of knowledge, repentance, and faith; and would have admitted him a month ago, along with ten others (Amoy people), had it not been that my two native companions, returning the day before to Amoy, urged the expediency of delay.”

“Yesterday we had a good day here. It was one of the market-days (there are twelve such every Chinese month), and the people came in, as usual, in numbers to hear. Most of those interested in the truth were also present. The work of preaching all devolved on myself; and I felt supported more than usually. In the afternoon I went alone to visit a village in the neighbourhood: and in my absence a number of the inquirers, &c., met here for worship of their own accord. When I returned, they were joyfully engaged in singing hymns, studying the Scriptures, &c., and continued so during most of the evening. I have not witnessed the same state of things in China before. It is said among the people that we have some mode of enchanting those who come to us. In no other way can the blind world account for the impression made on some of those who are receiving the truth.”

“So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” There was everywhere the stir and glad excitement of a busy harvest-field. There were all the signs of the coming of the kingdom of God after the true model of apostolic times; the general and wide-spread interest, individual decision and self-sacrifice, the division of families, the separation of brother from brother for Christ's sake and the gospel's, the test of persecution and the fierce opposition of adversaries around the wide and effectual door, the joy of first love, and the spontaneous spread of the sacred influence from village

to village, and from heart to heart. Well might Mr. Burns write, in regard to these encouraging tokens, in words which mean much as coming from him:—"What I see here makes me call to mind former days of the Lord's power in my native land. In *my own* circle of observation I have hardly seen so promising an appearance of the coming of God's kingdom since I came to China. . . . You will see from what I have stated that there is indeed much to encourage prayer and effort in behalf of this benighted people; and that we have also cause for admiring thankfulness to our covenant God and Saviour. In my own experience the Lord's goodness is so great and unceasing, that while friends in Scotland may look upon me as an exile, I feel as much at home here as I would wish to do on this side of the Jordan."

The cases of some of the individual converts who were the first-fruits of this gospel harvest are briefly referred to by Mr. Burns in one of the letters just quoted; but one or two additional particulars may be given from the letters of other missionaries:—

"Of Som-a, the youngest child of the family of the cloth-merchant above referred to, as having all together embraced the gospel, the following interesting incident is related. When the old father was going to Amoy as a candidate for baptism, Som-a asked to be allowed to accompany him for the same purpose. He was told he was too young, and that he might fall back if he made a profession when he was only a little boy. To this he made the touching reply, 'Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in his arms. As I am only a little boy it will be easier for Jesus to carry me.' No further words were needed; Som-a accompanied his father, and was soon afterwards baptized. Mr. Johnston, who relates this story, adds that the mother, He-Se, received all her Christian instruction from the male members of the family, as she dared not attend the public preaching, but her sons repeated to her much of what they heard, and she was the first female baptized in Pechuia.

"Another mother said she, too, wished to be a member of the religion of Jesus, because it had made such a wonderful change in her son. 'It must be a good thing,' she said, 'to be connected with such a person as Jesus.'

A still more interesting case is that of Si-boo, the second son of the divided family mentioned above, who has since gone to labour as an evangelist among his own countrymen at Singapore:—"On Mr. Burns' first visit to Pechuia, he found amongst the foremost and most interesting of his hearers, a youth of about eighteen or twenty, called Si-boo. Of stature rather under the average of his countrymen, with an eye and countenance more open than usual, and a free and confiding manner, he soon attracted the attention of our missionary. His position in life was above the class of common mechanics, and his education rather good for his position. His occupation was to make small paper images for the houses of his idolatrous

countrymen, of every variety of style and workmanship, some plain and cheap, and some of the most elaborate and costly description.

“Had Si-boo been of the spirit of Demetrius, he would have opposed and persecuted Mr. Burns for bringing *his craft* into danger. But instead of that, he manifested a spirit of earnest, truthful inquiry, although that inquiry was one in which all the prepossessions, and prejudices, and passions of mind and heart were against the truth—an inquiry in which all the influence of friends, and all his prospects in life, were cast into the wrong balance. By the grace of God he made that solemn inquiry with such simplicity and sincerity, that it soon led to an entire conviction of the truth of our religion, and that to a decided profession of his faith at all hazards; and these hazards, in such a place as Pechuia, were neither few nor small—far greater than at Amoy, where the presence of a large body of converts, and a considerable English community, and a British flag, might seem to hold out a prospect of both protection and support in time of need, though such protection and temporal aid have never been relied on by even our Amoy converts, still less encouraged.

“One of the first sacrifices to which Si-boo was called was a great one. His trade of idol carver must be given up, and with that his only means of support; and that means both respectable and lucrative to a skilful hand like him. But to his credit he did not hesitate. He at once threw it up and cast himself on the providence of God, and neither asked nor received any assistance from the missionary, but at once set himself to turn his skill as a carver in a new and legitimate direction. He became a carver of beads for bracelets and other ornaments, and was soon able to support himself and assist his mother in this way. One advantage of this new trade was, that it was portable. With a few small knives, and a handful of olive-stones, he could prosecute his work wherever he liked to take his seat, and he frequently took advantage of this to prosecute his Master’s work, while he was diligent in his own. Sometimes he would take his seat in the “Good News Boat,” when away on some evangelistic enterprise; and while we were slowly rowing up some river or creek, or scudding away before a favourable wind to some distant port, Si-boo would be busy at work on his beads; but as soon as we reached our destination, the beads and tools were thrust into his pouch, and with his Bible and a few tracts in his hand, he was off to read or talk to the people, and leave his silent messengers behind him. In this way our church had the benefit of many a useful evangelist, free of all charge on her funds; for Si-boo was far from being the only one who gave hours and often days of gratuitous service. Some of the same occupation as himself employed their time in the same way.

“The love of Bible studies has always characterized the converts in China. Few, if any, were more studious and diligent than Si-boo, and few

more successful than he. Morning, noon, and night, you might hear his clear and cheerful voice, reading aloud some portions of Scripture or Christian classic; or, in the same loud tone, for almost all Chinamen read aloud, and that often at the full pitch of their voice, committing to memory some favourite passage of the Word of God. Even when busy at work, that extra energy which in him led sometimes to an exuberant playfulness, rather opposed to the stricter notions and more staid manner of some of his friends, was generally expended in committing to memory some verse of Scripture or favourite hymn, the latter being generally sung along with, or after the process of committal, so frequently, that many beside himself had the privilege of hearing both hymn and tunes if they were so disposed.

“It was this diligent study and Christian consistency of character, during these years of his profession of the faith, and that intelligent acquaintance with the system of divine truth, which marked out Si-boo for the interesting mission on which he has been since sent, while his native energy and independence would both incline and enable him to undertake a work of enterprise and difficulty.”

It will have been noticed that the religious movement we are now describing was not confined to Pechuia, but extended more or less over the whole district, with its scattered villages, of which it forms the centre. At Bay-pay especially, the work, if less striking in its manifestations at the outset, was in the end even more steady and progressive. It became speedily the seat of a fervent and prosperous church, which has continued to this day to grow in numbers, in zeal, and in fruitfulness. Tried in a more than usual degree by the blasts of persecution, it has nobly stood the test, and proved itself to be one of those trees of God’s planting, “which shaking fastens more.” It was constituted into a regular Christian community almost as early as its elder sister at Pechuia, and numbered in 1865 on its communion roll more than twice as many members. It was in reference to this favoured field of labour that one of the missionaries afterwards wrote, in returning from the delightful work of instructing inquirers and examining candidates for baptism:—“After winding about among the hills, and on emerging from a narrow rocky path, the whole rich plain in which Pechuia stands burst at once upon our view. About two months before, in returning, the labourers were just beginning to let in the irrigating waters and to break up the hardened soil; but now it was all covered with the verdure of the growing rice—a beautiful emblem of the spiritual harvest which the Lord was so rapidly gathering by our hands.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Letter of Rev. Carstairs Douglas.

Meanwhile at Amoy also the spiritual work of the missionaries grew sensibly in interest and fruitfulness. It seemed as if the mother church there had been moved to jealousy by the fervour and love of her own daughters in the faith. The earnest attention of hearers at all the chapels deepened, and inquirers multiplied. The arrival of one and another too from distant stations, who had travelled all the way in search of the priceless pearl, must have chided the tardy steps of those who had heard the divine call before them, but were halting between two opinions:

“We have great reason,” writes Mr. Doty, “for thankful praise to the God of grace for the tokens of his favour that we are enjoying in our work here. Knowing there were some persons waiting an opportunity to offer themselves as applicants for church-membership, sometime in January we appointed a special meeting for the purpose. We were both surprised and cheered to find about thirty persons of both sexes, and of ages varying from twenty years up to near seventy, convened. Though among this number were many whom we cannot regard as proper subjects for church-membership, yet most have manifested, and still do continue to manifest, an interest in their soul’s salvation.

“We found that there was a spirit of inquiry and awakening, quite unknown to us as to its extent, among those who had been statedly hearing the word. From the time of that first meeting for conference and examination, we have felt it to be our duty to continue to hold similar services, and so to meet with those who wish instruction, or desire to be received to church-fellowship. A part of the time we have held the meeting once in two weeks, generally once a week, though in some instances twice. In these meetings we are usually engaged from three to four hours, during which time we may converse with or examine, as the case may be, three or four individuals in the most searching manner, both as to their experimental knowledge of the Holy Spirit’s work in the heart, and their acquaintance with Christian doctrine. This brings us into the closest personal contact with their minds, and enables us to give instruction, to correct misconceptions of truth, guide the inquiring, encourage, warn, and exhort, so as to meet the difficulties of each individual, and the profit of all. Of those applying, after several examinations, ten were admitted to baptism on the last Sabbath of last month, March 26. Two of these are women, one aged sixty-eight years, the other forty-seven; while of the males, their ages range from twenty to sixty-four years. Our meetings continue to be attended with unabated solemnity and interest, and by increasing numbers. Among those recently baptized, as well as among those asking to be numbered among God’s professing people, there are several cases manifesting more clearly the work of the Spirit with power than anything we have heretofore seen among the Chinese. Our brethren of the London Society’s Mission are sharing largely

in this blessed visitation. They have recently received seventeen, nine of whom were women, to church-fellowship, and numbers more are asking for the same privilege.”

It was amid exhilarating influences and prospects like these that Mr. Burns made a brief visit to this country during the summer and autumn of 1854. The occasion of his journey was a sad one. His valued colleague Dr. Young, had at the close of the previous year suffered a heavy affliction in the unexpected removal of an endeared partner, whose life had seemed alike invaluable to himself and to the cause for which he laboured; and though he seemed at first to rally from the blow, it soon appeared that he had received both in mind and body so severe a shock as to render a return to his native land for a season indispensable. It was necessary that someone should accompany him on the voyage, and it was decided after brief conference that Mr. Burns should undertake that duty. How tenderly he watched over his friend during what was to both a singularly trying journey, and how lovingly he cared for those dear to him after his early and sudden removal, it is not for me to tell; but it will be remembered in his behalf in the great day. Dr. Young died at Musselburgh on the 11th of February, 1855, having laboured only for four years in the work to which he had devoted himself; but having accomplished much in little time. He will be ever remembered with honour, as one of the first pioneers and patient sowers in a field of toil, of which he was only beginning to reap the fruit when his Master summoned him away. Many in Scotland will remember the Chinese Christian nurse who accompanied him to Edinburgh in charge of his child, and who was one of the first-fruits of his faithful labours in China. She had been baptized the previous year along with her own son and fifteen others at Amoy. “She was, we believe, the first converted Chinese woman that had been in Scotland. She could not escape observation as she sat in the church-pew, with deep thought on her countenance, poring over the Chinese hymn-book, bound in black, which she held in her dark bony hand. A red rose, after the fashion of her country, set in evergreen leaves, on the knot of her jet hair, tightly combed back, relieved the brown face almost grim with gravity. Her black peering eyes watched the preacher. The unknown tongue did not weary her. She was in the house of God and among the friends of Jesus, and longed all the week long for the Lord’s-day. When greeted by any friend at the close of the service, her face could hardly be recognized as the same. Her sparkling eye, and a look of laughter irradiated it all over. When asked if she did not weary in this country, she said to the missionary, ‘Here where I can speak so little to man, I speak the more to God.’ At leaving Edinburgh she said she had been happy there, but she knew it was because she loved the Saviour she had received so much kindness.

“Those who remained after the crowded meeting in St. Luke’s Church, can never forget the animated dialogue carried on in Chinese between Mr. Burns and Boo-a, to whom it was very trying to appear in the great assembly, but for the willingness she felt to profess her faith in Christ before her Scottish brethren, one of whom had first carried the gospel to her family in China. Her son had already been baptized; but when her daughters were mentioned she pointed to her brow, where the water of baptism had been sprinkled, and sorrowfully shook her head. The Sabbath before her departure she sat down at the Lord’s table, by her own earnest desire, and much enjoyed the ordinance. There the disciples of Jesus from the east and the west, the north and the south, can meet and understand the common language of its sacred symbols, feeding through them on the one Saviour, even while the barrier of varied tongues prevents other intercourse.”<sup>2</sup>

In the meanwhile Mr. Burns was actively engaged in endeavouring to extend and deepen the interest in the Chinese cause, which had already begun to be felt in Scotland, and which had shortly before led to the formation of an auxiliary society in aid of the English mission. He sought especially to engage the interest of those congregations amongst whom he had chiefly laboured in former years, and who would thus most readily respond to his calls both by active efforts and by prayers. Those who then renewed their acquaintance with him were struck with the change which so short an interval of years had made upon him. The effects of a tropical climate, combined with almost incessant and exhausting labours, had sensibly told upon the vigour of a frame, which the rigours of a Canadian winter had already partially broken. The fresh, sanguine, youthful, and even boyish look, which his early hearers remembered so well, had given place to an aspect of ripe and almost fading manhood, which seemed to tell of the lapse not of six but of twenty years. His countenance was sallow, his brow furrowed, his head tinged with grey, and his eye if still bright was bright with a milder brightness. His spirit too had become riper and more mellow. Time and experience had wrought in him a gracious sweetness and human kindness of temper, which in the young Boanerges were less conspicuous. He was more genial, more loving, more freely communicative and companionable, less restrained and austere, than in former days. There was less fire perhaps, but even more fervour; less of the Baptist—more of the Christ. It seemed as if the exalted tone of Christian devotedness which he ever sustained were now less with him a matter of effort and struggle, and more of a holy habit in which grace had become as a second nature. Comparative exile too from the household of faith, amid heathen scenes and heathen faces, made his heart warm towards his Christian brethren, and pour

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<sup>2</sup> *China and the Missions at Amoy, with Notice of the Opium Trade.* By George F. Barbour, Esq. Edinburgh, 1855.

itself forth in fuller loving converse, as one that felt more than ever at home. “His intercourse with us in private,” writes his esteemed brother-in-law, the Rev. Thomas Bain of Cupar Angus, “was of a much more genial and social character, while at the same time equally hallowed and Christ-like. He took great interest in the children, taking down all their names that he might remember them individually in prayer.” His preaching too was considerably altered. The fiery intensity and somewhat spasmodic energy of former days had given place to a more full and equable flow of spiritual instruction and fervent appeal; while the frequent allusion and illustrative anecdote from the scenes of his distant field of labour, perpetually reminded the hearer that the evangelist had become the missionary. In every other way too we were reminded of this. While his bodily presence was in Scotland, it was evident that his heart and more than half his thoughts were still in China. He talked of Chinese scenes, sung Chinese hymns, recited far into the night Chinese chapters and psalms, and abounded in details of Chinese customs, traits, and ways of life, such as he too seldom indulged in in his letters. Nor was he forgotten by those whom he thus so continually remembered. Of this he received a peculiarly touching proof in a letter addressed to him as their spiritual father by the infant church at Pechuia, which in the *naïve* simplicity and freshness of its fervent and loving words breathes the very spirit of apostolic times, and which well deserves a permanent record in connection with his life and labours. The benignant look of strange delight with which, one morning in the Free Church manse at Kilsyth, he pored over this precious scroll, and deciphered and explained to us its mystic hieroglyphic lines, is to me a picture never to be forgotten. It was to the following effect:—

“Given to be inspected by Mr. Burns and all the disciples.

“We, who have received the grace of Jesus Christ, send a letter to pastor Wm. Burns, (*lit.* shepherd-teacher *Pin-ui-lim*). We wish that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ may give to all the holy disciples in the Church grace and peace. Now we wish you to know that you are to pray to God for us; for you came to our market-town, and unfolded the gracious command of God, causing us to obtain the grace of God. Now, as we have a number of things to say, we must send this communication. We wish you deeply to thank God for us, that in the intercalary seventh month and thirteenth day, pastor Johnston (*lit.* shepherd-teacher *Jin-sin*) established a free school here; there are twelve attending it. Formerly, in the third month, a man, whose name is *Chun-sim*, belonging to the village of *Chieng-choan* (pure fount village), heard you preaching in the village of *Hui-tsau* (pottery village). Many thanks to the Holy Spirit who opened his blinded heart, so that in the seventh month he sent a communication to the church at Amoy, praying the brethren to go to the village. They went and spoke for several days, and all the villagers with delighted heart listened. Also in the town of *Chioh-bey*, the Holy Spirit is powerfully working (*lit.* influencing, moving); the people

generally (*lit.* man, man) desire to hear the gospel. The brethren and missionaries have gone together several times; and now, in the village of Ka-lang, there are two men, *Ch'eng-soan* and *Sui-mui*, who are joining heart with the brethren in prayer. Teacher! we, in this place, with united heart, pray, and bitterly (*i.e.* earnestly) beg of God to give you a level plain (*i.e.* prosperous journey) to go home, and beg of God again to give you a level plain (good journey) quickly to come. Teacher! you know that our faith is thin (*i.e.* weak) and in danger. Many thanks to our Lord and God, who defends us as the apple of the eye. Teacher! from the time that we parted with you in the seventh month, we have been meditating on our Lord Jesus' love to sinners, in giving up His life for them; also thinking of your benevolence and good conduct, your faith in the Lord, and compassion for us. We have heard the gospel but a few months; our faith is not yet firm (*lit.* hard, solid). Teacher! you know that we are like sheep that have lost their shepherd, or an infant that has lost its milk. Many thanks to the Holy Spirit, our Lord, morning and evening (*i.e.* continually), comforts our hearts, [and gives us] peace. And in the seventh month, the twenty-fourth day, the brethren with united heart prayed, and shedding tears, *bitterly begged* of God again to send a number of pastors, quickly to come, again to teach the gospel. We wish that God our Father may grant this prayer, which is exactly that which the heart desires, (*i.e.* Amen.)”

Then follow nine names, being those of all the members of the church at Pechuia at the date when the letter was written. It was learned afterwards that they had subsequently addressed a similar appeal to the American missionaries, every sentence of which, Mr. Talmage writes, was prayed over. “They would write a sentence, and then pray, and then write another sentence, and then pray again.” Well might an ardent friend of the cause exclaim in reference to this deeply affecting incident:—“Never did a more touching appeal come from a heathen land for ambassadors of Christ! China is thus in truth stretching out her hands to God!”

While the native Christian disciples thus spoke for themselves, the most cheering tidings also reached him from other quarters of their steadfastness and joy, as well as of the extension of the sacred influence throughout the district around. In a letter which reached Mr. Burns while still in Scotland, Mr. Doty writes:—

“The little church at Pechuia continues to dwell in love, and to become more and more established in the truth. There is still much of the same spirit of prayer and hungering after the word. . . . But what shall I tell you of the Lord's visitation of mercy at Chioh-bey? Again, truly, are we as those that dream. The general features of the work are very similar to what you witnessed at Pechuia. The instrumentality has been native brethren almost entirely. Attention was first awakened in one or two by I-ju and Tick-jam, who went to Chioh-bey together, the former with the opium pills. This was two or three months ago. This was followed up by repeated visits of other brethren from Pechuia and Amoy. Shortly the desire to hear the Word was so intense, that there would be scarcely any stop day or night; the brethren

in turns going, and breaking down from much speaking in the course of three or four days, and coming back to us almost voiceless. An establishment has been rented in extent nearly equal to that at Pechuia. Here daily and almost hourly the Word is preached, the Scriptures studied, and prayer and praise offered. There are some fifteen persons who seem to have been spiritually wrought upon, several of whom give pleasing evidence of regeneration. Among these is one of the persons rescued and saved from the water and death, at the slaughter on retaking Amoy. He was healed on board the hospital junk, and is the same person, I conjecture, who told you or Dr. Young that, 'as he was about to be executed, he prayed to Jesus.' He says he has been praying ever since, especially that Jesus would establish a church at Chioh-bey, that he might enjoy the means of grace. There are several persons interested in villages around who come to town to spend the Sabbath. Judging from the visit of last week, I do not see but necessity is laid upon us to arrange for their being received into the visible church. Still, what are we to do becomes a serious question. We are already taxed beyond time and strength, and cannot give adequate pastoral care to the flocks already gathered; shall we add another? But I won't close despondingly, knowing, as I do, that Jesus knows and will care for His own. He will provide. Praise Him, and pray for greater blessings still."

Such good news as these from the far country of his adoption must have been to the missionary "as cold water to a thirsty soul," and would make him eagerly long to return to the work from which he had been so abruptly called away. He sailed again for China in the ship *Challenger* on the 9th March, along with the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, a distinguished alumnus of Glasgow University and of the New College, Edinburgh, who had devoted himself to the Chinese cause, and who was ordained by the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow on the 21st of February, 1855.