

CHAPTER XVIII.

1855–1858.

SHANGHAE, SWATOW, ETC.

INSTEAD of resuming at once his interrupted labours in the province of Fo-kien, Mr. Burns proceeded in the first instance to the north, with the view of attempting if possible to reach the head-quarters of the Taeping rebels, then established at Nanking, and at the very crisis of their singular and mysterious career. The most contradictory rumours had prevailed with regard to the real character and probable result of that movement, and especially as to the relation of its leaders to the Christian faith; and a strong desire existed in many quarters that some of the missionaries then in China should put themselves in communication with them, with the view of at once ascertaining the real state of the case, and taking advantage of any opportunities which might present themselves for furthering the Christian cause. The difficulties in the way of such an undertaking were notoriously very great, and Mr. Burns was evidently not sanguine as to its prosperous accomplishment; but still he deemed it his duty, according to his wont, resolutely to make the attempt, and thus prove whether it were the will of God or no. The expedition proved unsuccessful; but the account he gives of it, written sometime after, is interesting, and may be appropriately here introduced, as continuing in the most authentic form the thread of our narrative:—

“I see from the *Witness* of May 8th, received today, that in a reference made to a letter from Amoy, it is said, ‘Mr. B. preached for some days to crowds of the gay inhabitants of this city (*Soo-chow*), on his return from an attempt to reach the patriot camp at Nanking.’ This statement is incorrect, as I only passed through the suburbs of the city in a boat, and this under the surveillance of mandarin officers, who did not, however, hinder the distribution of books and tracts as we passed along. As, for important reasons, I forbade at the time any account of this attempt to reach Nanking being published at Shanghae, and when writing home I purposely made the most meagre allusion to it, it is no wonder if misstatements more important than the one above quoted should be made by anyone who had occasion to refer to the matter. It occurs to me that now it may not be without use to take this opportunity of giving some details regarding that journey, as it was one on which, though it failed as regards its primary object, I experienced more than usual marks of the Lord’s gracious care and guidance. It was about the beginning of August, 1855, ten days after reaching Shanghae from England, that, in company with a Chinese servant from the neighbourhood of Shang-

hae, and who having gone with a missionary (Mr. Milne) to England, returned with Mr. Douglas and myself in the *Challenger*, I set out in a *woosung* boat to try whether the way were open to reach the insurgent camp. I went in my own dress, and had resolved that unless permitted to proceed without disguise or artifice, I should return, or rather confine my efforts in making known divine truth to those whom we should meet on the way, or who should hinder us from going on to the desired destination. After proceeding rather slowly, I think for three days and a half, up the Yang-tze-Kiang, we were on a Saturday favoured with a prosperous wind, which bore us rapidly on against the stream of the river, and brought us early in the afternoon to *Tan-T'oo*, a town not "far below *Chin-keang-foo*, and situated at one of the openings of the Great Canal into the *Yang-tze-Kiang*. Our getting thus far without impediment was not a little remarkable, for we had already passed two Imperial outposts, and at *Tan-T'oo* our boat was lying in the midst of a mandarin encampment. How was this, you will ask? We were just passing the head of a large island in the river, and running with a fresh breeze towards Pagoda Hill (I suppose from ten to twenty miles below *Chin-keangfoo*), when, at the mouth of a creek on the south side of the river, we met the first trace of the Imperial forces encompassing the insurgents. A number of boats were moored here, and as we approached one of them pushed off to meet us and examine what we were. I felt that now, unless God remarkably favoured us, our journey must at once come to an end, and, hid in the cabin of the boat, I prayed that the Lord would graciously interpose. The boat pushed out to meet us, waving a flag and calling us to wait and give account of ourselves; but the boatmen, no doubt alarmed, told them they had a foreigner on board, and ran on. The guard-boat, whether satisfied or not, saw that it was too late to overtake us, and, no doubt reporting that all was right, returned to their station. Shortly after this, in consequence of a bend in the river at Pagoda Hill, the boat made a tack towards the north bank, and this course I saw would directly bring us to a mandarin encampment with a guard-ship anchored in front of it. I might have told the boatman to make his course short and try to keep clear of further inquiries, but I felt this would have been a subterfuge; and so running straight on, I soon heard the cry of voices inquiring what we were, the boatmen also were calling loudly that I should come out and take the responsibility on myself. I now expected we should be boarded and detained; but coming out I found that there was no small boat near, but only a company of twenty or thirty persons looking on us from the mandarin vessel. I almost involuntarily bowed to them; they graciously returned the salutation; the boat *was put about*, and we were gone again upon our course without remark or hindrance! Our character was now of course established, by having passed successfully these outer guards, and about three P.M. we took up our place at

Tan-T'oo without inquiry made, among the boats of the Imperial soldiers. As the day was Saturday, I resolved to spend the Sabbath at *Tan-T'oo*, and here my companion and myself (he was then considerably interested in the gospel, and is now a professing Christian and assistant-preacher in the hospital of the London Mission at Shanghae) on Saturday afternoon and the whole of Sabbath had a full opportunity of making known the truth and distributing books both among the inhabitants of the town and the mandarin soldiers, who were congregated to the number of some thousands in it. No one seemed to wonder at our visit, or to suspect that we had any design of going among the insurgents. Indeed the people were afraid to allude to the insurgent party at all. The town had been already in their hands and might soon be so again. Our boatmen, who had been prevailed on to come thus far, now obstinately refused to proceed farther. We had often reasoned with them on the subject; but, to cut the matter short, the head-man (there were three boatmen), on our getting moored at *Tan-T'oo* said, somewhat curtly, 'Now, if you want to go to Nanking, you can get out and walk.' No offer of reward would induce them to go a step further. They said it was just possible that we might get to Nanking alive; but that I, and still more they, could not hope to return. Their boat would be lost, &c.; but it was said, 'You will be remunerated.' They replied, 'Of what use will money be when we have lost our lives?' Finding them thus decided, and seeing no other way open consistently with truth and integrity, I arrived unwillingly at the conclusion that, if after the Sabbath was past, circumstances wore the same aspect, this attempt to reach the insurgents must be abandoned. I had asked the boatmen where they would propose to go in case of not proceeding farther towards Nanking. They replied, 'We will return to Shanghae by the Great Canal' (literally, as they call it, 'Transport-provision-River'). This course recommended itself as second best, if the original one must be abandoned; and so, early on Monday morning, finding the way to Nanking closed, we passed through *Tan-T'oo* into the Great Canal on our homeward route. In entering the canal we had to pass a custom-house, but a bow to the officials from our boat, coupled no doubt with the thought that if we had come too far from home, we were at any rate now turning the head homewards—this sufficed to gain us a free entrance. We now went on to the district city of *Tan-yang*, distant about twenty miles. We were examined at the custom-house as we arrived, and such a visit from a foreigner seemed to excite surprise. We were however going, as everyone could see, in the right direction (Shanghae), and had come from an unsuspected quarter, *Tan-T'oo*; thus we were allowed to pass, and a present of books was received with politeness. After passing a little farther along the canal, which skirts I believe the south and east of the city, we *brought to* near the south gate, and from the boats and the population on shore were soon surrounded by a large crowd, eager to

look at the foreigner (an uncommon sight in these parts), and also to get possession of the books we were distributing. At this time I had but an imperfect knowledge of the Shanghae colloquial, and that would but poorly serve here, owing to a difference of dialect. Still I could say a few things which they understood—their anxiety to comprehend no doubt quickening their apprehension. I would have got on to all appearance well in this work, but a drawback arose through the uninvited assistance of a number of *Canton* men—soldiers or followers of military officers from the south. Having some greater acquaintance with foreigners than the natives of the locality, and finding I could converse with them in their own dialect, they were too officious in their friendship to me, as well as harsh and overbearing to the crowds who pressed forward to get books. To avoid the crowd, they almost forced me on board one of their mandarin boats; but I had hardly got on board until the crowd pressed after us down the sloping bank, and by the pressure behind, those next to the water were in danger of getting a plunge. One man went down, and on seeing this I rushed on shore, and with some effort regained a position on the level ground. Perhaps it was on account of this little confusion, that when I got to our boat I found that some people had been there from the mandarin's office requesting that we should remove farther off from the city. The boatmen wished to get quite away; but after moving on to near the east gate, they consented to *bring to* there for the night. The following morning I went on shore with books, and walked along the bank of the canal by the foot of the city wall towards the south gate, where we had been the previous day. Here I was met by a kind of policeman, who asked me what my object was in coming, and said the district magistrate wished to know. Having had little previous acquaintance with Chinese mandarins, and having a good supply of books, I said that if the mandarin wished to make any inquiries about me, I would be happy to go in person with him to his office. He said this would be still better, and so we walked on, in by the gate, through streets and fields, and at last to the office. I did not see the magistrate, but great numbers of people collected, both officials and people from the town, and to them, while in waiting, I had opportunity of giving books and saying a few words in regard to the first principles of divine truth. After some delay, one or two of the magistrate's assistants came out to inspect me, and having asked through the policeman who brought me there, whether I was willing to leave their city, the same policeman conducted me through the city by another route to the east gate, and so back to our boat. It seemed for the moment that the matter was ended, and that we had nothing to do but to go on our way peaceably; but after a short time the original policeman and one or two more came and asked my companion (he had not been with me in the city, I was alone) to go on shore as they wanted to speak to him. He was about to go, when I became

alarmed, and said to them that if anyone was to be beaten (signing to that effect) it was I and not he, and that if he went I must go also. They said there was no fear of that, and that if I went also it would be better. I got some books and we went ashore outside the east gate. In a small hall we found an assistant magistrate seated in full dress waiting for us. We were called to sit together at his left hand, the place of honour, and he proceeded to ask at my companion about me and our objects in coming. In answer to the inquiry who I was, we put down in writing that I was a disciple of Jesus and a publisher of [His] religion. He saw I was a foreigner, but never thought of asking to what particular country I belonged, and in writing we did not think of making reference to this.¹ He said with Chinese politeness, that as on the way to Shanghae people might give us trouble, an escort would be sent with us! and that they would very soon be ready to set out. I expressed the hope that they would not prevent us from distributing our books. He said that full liberty would be given us to do this. We then returned to our boat, the original policeman and another remaining on board to see that we did not get out of sight. We should have remained here until our escort was ready, but the poor people were so clamorous for books that the ire of the old policeman was aroused, and at last, when all other means failed, he ordered the boatman to move on for about a mile or so from the city. All the way we were followed on the banks by earnest applicants for books, and it was truly amusing to see the policeman at one time chiding and remonstrating with the people for thus following us, and then once or twice when his eye fell on an acquaintance among the applicants, his zeal for his office was forgotten, and he came in to get from us a *large book for his friend!* At last when we had got to a considerable distance from the city, the evening was falling, and as we had neither wine nor opium for the policeman, he thought of going back to the city, got his arms full of books for his friends and left us. Poor man! he had not gone far, we were told, until the people mobbed him and took his books from him. The sight of this poor people, so eager to get our books, but alas! so little able to understand them, was fitted to affect the heart. May the day soon come when the Christian teacher shall have liberty to go and make known to them fully the love of God in the gift of His Son for sinners, and the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin. After the policeman left us we had still many applicants for books; our boatmen moved on, and in their eagerness to gain their object, several from time to time went into the water and swam to our boat (a distance of only a yard or two). But how could you give a book to a man who had to swim with it on shore? the book, one would think, must get wet. But nay, the Chinese are in

¹ I always told I was an Englishman.

many things singular; here was a new expedient. The swimmer got his book, placed it on his brow, made it firm there by his tail tied round his head, and swam to the bank! As it was becoming dark we reached a market-town extending for some distance on both sides of the canal, and here no sooner had we arrived than our coming became known (I know not how), and from that moment onward until our stock of books was more than two-thirds exhausted, we were beset by crowds of applicants, and among them a larger number than usual of respectable people, and even several Buddhist priests. It was well-nigh midnight when our escort—two retainers of the mandarin's office—made up to us here in their boat. They seemed alarmed lest we should have got beyond their reach, and were proportionably glad to find us here quietly waiting them. We were glad also that our book distribution had advanced so rapidly during the short respite allowed us. Our escort were intelligent men, and conversed with us at length in our boat before going to rest in their own. Next day we moved on to the *inferior department* city of *C'hang-chow*, where our escort was changed, those from *Tan-yang* returning home, and two from *C'hang-chow* accompanying us to the next city, viz. the *district* city of *Woo-seih*, like *C'hang-chow* situated on the banks of the Great Canal. Here again our conductors gave place to others, or rather, I think, to *one* only, who the following day accompanied us to the famed city of *Soo-chow*, the allusion to which in the newspaper you have sent me has given occasion for this unusually long narrative. The stage from *Woo-seih* to *Soo-chow* was rather longer than usual, and the afternoon was so advanced when we reached one of the principal city gates, that our escort was just in time to get in before the gate was shut. In the former times of China's peace, and *Soo-chow's* famed grandeur, the gates would not shut so early as now, when the sound of rebellion is heard so near as at *Nanking* and *Chin-keang*. It was in passing through a long suburb on our way to the city gate that we had an opportunity of witnessing, in the many gaily decorated pleasure-boats we passed, evidence at once of the wealth and the moral pollution of this famed city. It was during this transit, too, that in this crowded street of 'Vanity Fair' we distributed the word of life in the form of tracts and copies of the Scripture. Our escort, on this occasion an old man, not so lettered as some of his predecessors, was most diligent in this work, aiding us in it as if for this alone he had been sent. Some came in boats to get books, and some reached out with bamboo basket-hooks from their doors and windows opening to the canal. (These basket-hooks they use for picking up things from the water.) This, alas! was all that we were able to do at *Soo-chow*; others have been able to make a somewhat longer stay, and to do more, and the time is coming fast, we trust, when *Soo-chow*, like Corinth, will receive the gospel, and many of its people exchange their luxuries for

higher and more enduring pleasures, being 'washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'

"Here I might close this narrative, but as the sequel embraces some circumstances possessed of a certain interest, and which I have never till now alluded to in writing, I shall proceed with the remainder as briefly as I can. As I have mentioned above, our escort reached Soo-chow just in time to get into the city before the gates closed. It was perhaps on this account that some delay had taken place in appointing those who were to succeed, and next morning, when the usual hour for starting had passed, no escort appeared. Our boatmen did not think it needful to wait any longer, and moved on leaving them to follow. We felt the rather free to do this as the day was Saturday, and on the previous day we had told our escort that on the following day, the Christian Sabbath, we would not travel, but rest at K'wan-shan, the next city on our way, and the only other we had to pass before reaching Shanghae. Moving on we arrived at *K'wan-shan* early in the afternoon, and spent the remainder of the day, and also the whole of the Sabbath, in preaching and book distribution outside two of the city gates. No escort appeared, we did not regret their absence, and on Monday morning we left for Shanghae, where we arrived on Tuesday with no other event than that on the night previous we had a visit from thieves, who, at the place where we had to bring to, frequently take advantage of the shallowness of the water to pilfer from boats. The head boatman knew our danger, and enjoined on all to sleep wakefully, never proposing however that we should watch in turns. For a while we were wakeful, but then we all slept, and no one awoke until both the boatmen and ourselves had been partly robbed. We had been absent a fortnight from Shanghae, and returned rejoicing in the Lord's mercy throughout our journey, and not least in this that the mandarin officers had (as we supposed) ceased to follow us, and so permitted us to end it peacefully. Soon after, I again set out to another part of the country, ready to forget the matter as one of the things that were 'behind,' but on returning to Shanghae, I was informed by missionary brethren that the Taow-T'ae, the highest civil authority, had been in search of me. He had sent communications to all the foreign consuls complaining of a foreigner who had wandered up in the direction of *Chia-keang*, &c. The communication sent down about me from *Tan-yang* was defective in this, that it gave no hint to what nation I belonged. I was described of course by a Chinese name and surname, and this in itself could to a foreign consul give almost no clue to the party intended; besides, I had been but a few days in Shanghae when I set out, and the English consul neither knew of my being in Shanghae, nor of my having gone on this journey; and to crown all, the escort, trusting I suppose to the papers they carried for my discovery, had failed to conduct me to Shanghae, and knew nothing as to where I lodged. There was no clue to the

real person, and all the consuls answered that they knew of no such person as the one spoken of. Where was he? let the *Taow-T'ae* point him out. After this answer had been given and the matter was over, the British consul learned from one of the missionaries who was the person intended, and I received through the same channel a verbal message to be wary about going to such places in these times of rebellion. Here the matter seemed to end, but it was not yet so. I had again gone into the country, and on my return was surprised to be told by Mr. Wylie of the London Mission Press that a few days before two men had been seeking me, and that they wished my aid in getting out of prison the son of one of them, who with another police-runner had been put in prison at *K'wan-shan* for failing to conduct me to Shanghai. The matter evidently stood thus: The *Taow-T'ae* having failed in his efforts to discover who I was, had given orders for the arrest of the men whose duty it was to come with me to Shanghai, and to know where I could be found. With a view to their release, the father of one of them came to Shanghai, and through a native printer who was acquainted with Mr. Wylie, inquired of him whether he knew anything of the person alluded to. 'Yes,' said Mr. Wylie. 'He stays here when he is in Shanghai, but at present he is in the country.' On learning this from Mr. Wylie, we at once sent for the printer. He was absent from the city at the time, but when he returned he found me out in the boat in which I had then located myself, sometimes being at Shanghai, and sometimes at other places. He said that in order to the release of those in confinement, it was necessary that I should be found, and be conducted, he supposed, as I originally should have been, to the English consul's office. It seemed now as if I must be brought into trouble from which I had thought that I had most mercifully escaped. I felt however that there was no course open but the one suggested, and accordingly, in company with the father of the prisoner and the printer, his friend, I went directly to the office of the *Taow-T'ae*. My companions went in to make known the matter, and soon returned to say that they had been told that this was not the place for a foreigner to come to, and that if I had anything to say I must go to the English consul. In reply to this, I informed them that I had no business at the consul's, as he now knew who I was, and where I was to be found, and that our coming here was no matter of mine, but concerned solely the men in confinement, in order to whose release it was supposed that I must be found and made over to the English consul. I was now on the spot and was ready to go with them, if it was desired, to the consul. They agreed to the justness of this view of the case, and said that the proper parties would go with me as soon as the papers necessary in the case had been got ready. While these were getting ready I had to wait for a long time in a side room, and here among many of the sub-officials I had a good opportunity of distributing Christian books, and speaking of the gospel message. At last, the

delay was so long that I saw it would soon be too late to find the consul in his office, and I returned to my boat, having agreed that next morning they should call for me on the way. I had however reached my boat but a short time, when the printer came with sorrow to tell me that he found my going to the consul's would be of no use; that as usual, what was wanted was money, and that when this was forthcoming, the men would be released, but not sooner!² His friend, the father of one of the men, was now going home to try and make up the sum needed. He made no application to me for aid, and since then I have heard nothing more of the matter. Thus ended my attempt to reach the insurgent camp at Nanking. To me, in how much mercy, but, alas! not without suffering brought upon others on my account. It was a signal mercy in the case that the Sabbath had intervened, and that we had spent it not in journeying but in preaching publicly at *K'wan-shan*. Had it been otherwise, it might have been said with some appearance of truth that we had purposely eluded the mandarin escort, and so brought trouble on them which belonged of right to ourselves."

For the next six months he continued to make his head-quarters at Shanghai, from which as a centre he made frequent and extensive excursions amongst the towns and villages around. Living for the most part in his boat, and following leisurely the course of the canals and rivers which here spread like a net-work over the whole face of the country, he scattered far and near the precious seed over a rich and fertile region, which, with the contiguous plain of Ningpo to the south, may be well described as the very garden of China. Stretching out in an unbroken expanse for twenty or thirty miles from the sea-board to the hills, "one vast rice-field," dotted over with towns and villages, and with dark clumps of mulberry-trees—with the white or brown sails of innumerable river craft everywhere in sight moving over the tranquil land—it is rapturously described by travellers as the very picture of smiling plenty, teeming population, and peaceful industry. It is thus described by Mr. Fortune, as seen by him, in the summer of this same year, from the summit of a wooded hill near the city of Hoo-chow at its western margin: "It was a lovely evening—the 18th of June—the sun was just setting behind the high mountain range to the westward, and although the day had been oppressively warm, the air was now comparatively cool and enjoyable. I was in the midst of most charming scenery, and although only about two miles distant from a crowded and bustling city everything was perfectly quiet and still. Overhead the rooks were seen returning home for the day, and here and there on a solitary bush, or in a grove of trees, the songsters of the woods were singing their last and evening song of praise. Mulberry-trees, with their large rich green leaves, were observed in all di-

² I suppose the *Taow-T'ae* never heard of the matter.

rections, and the plantations extended all over the low country and up to the foot of the hills. The hills here were low and isolated, and appeared as if they had been thrown out as guards between the vast plain which extends eastward to the sea, and the mountains of the west. For the most part they were covered with natural forests and brushwood, and did not appear to have ever been under cultivation. In some parts their sides were steep — almost perpendicular—while in others their slope was gentle from their base to the summit. Here and there some rugged-looking granite rocks reared their heads above the trees, and were particularly striking.

“Looking to the hills, there all was nature pure and unadorned, just as it had come from the hands of the Creator; but when the eye rested on the cultivated plain, on the rich mulberry plantations, on the clear and beautiful canals studded with white sails, the contrast was equally striking, and told a tale of a teeming population, of wealth and industry.”

Had the traveller stood there two months after, one of the white sails he saw might have been that of the devoted missionary unweariedly pursuing his sacred calling, amid the crowds of other voyagers “running to and fro” along those shining pathways on other errands. But his eye rested not upon the opulent beauty of the land, but upon the homes of its people, over whom his heart yearned, as he saw them wholly given to the cares of the present life, or to vain idolatrous rites which blindly pointed to another. “Remember me,” says he, “from this place, in the midst of a people of a strange tongue, and yet as if at home, to all who love the Lord Jesus and seek the coming of his kingdom and the gathering in of his elect ones in China. O let such pray for us! Ye that make mention of the Lord *keep not* silence, and give Him no rest until He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth.”

The following extracts will give a still more distinct idea of the nature of his labours at this time:—

“*December 13th, 1855.*—I write these lines on board a riverboat, which has been my principal habitation during the past three months, and in which I returned to this place on Monday last, after an absence in the surrounding country of twenty-six days. I was accompanied by a native professing Christian, received into the visible church during the present year, and now employed to circulate the Scriptures in connection with the Million Testament Scheme. We visited several market-towns, the names of which I need hardly trouble you with, remaining one or two days at places of smaller importance, and for a full week at one place, Fung-king (or Maple-tree Creek), where a foreigner had hardly been seen, and where the interest felt in our message was rather greater than usual. Two or three came to our boat to pray with us, and at one time I almost hoped that the anxiety of the people would have detained us for a longer time. We spent a few days also at the city of Tung-keang, about thirty miles from Shanghae, and frequently visited by missionaries, as well as by the foreign community generally; but here we found but little encouragement, and the rabble were even inclined to use us a little unceremoniously. The last place we visited was a market-town, Min-hang, about

halfway between Hun-keang and Shanghae, and here we were prepared to meet with less attention than usual, as the place is often trodden by foreign feet, and there are few among the missionaries, I suppose, who have not been there. However, in this case our fears were disappointed and our hopes much more than exceeded, for during the Saturday and Sabbath which we spent at this place, we had usually large and attentive audiences, and on the Sabbath evening, when it was getting dark, we still continued to preach to an engaged audience, with whom at the close I felt at liberty to join in public prayer to the living and true God in the name of Jesus. It is not generally our custom thus to pray with the people, preaching as we do in the public street, &c., and alas! too frequently to a people not prepared to join in spirit with us.”

Now and then the peculiarity of the circumstances would impart a certain tinge of romance to the scene. That strange sermon, for instance, under cloud of night, in a lone inland village, by the light of lanterns, suggests a picture singularly vivid and striking:—

“When it was dark we halted for the night at Chung-too-keon (or Passage-for-all-Bridge), where there are but a few houses, and where we little thought of finding a congregation. However, we had hardly halted before we were arrested by the sound of a multitude of voices as of a crowd dispersing, and were informed that there had been a stage-play going on of an unusually immoral kind, and that the people had now dispersed, so that it was too late to reach them. However, we went ashore, and although the mass of these poor heathens were gone, we still found as many as we could address with effect, lingering about the gambling and eating house. The people had their lanterns and we had ours, and, amid the darkness thus broken, we addressed a multitude of precious souls, assisted graciously by our God to speak with more than usual earnestness and liberty of speech; the people also, as if panic-struck by being overtaken by such a message in such circumstances, listened with a fixed and serious interest. I called on them to join with us in prayer to the true God, in the name of the Saviour of sinners, that he would deliver them from their sins, and save them from the punishment which sin was preparing for them. At the beginning of the address to God’s throne there was some noise of voices, but towards the close all was breathless stillness. My companion and I were encouraged by thus meeting, as if by God’s special guidance, with opportunities of declaring his truth and calling fellow-sinners to repentance. . . .

“*Twenty-five miles from Shanghae, January 26th, 1856.*—MY DEAR MOTHER,—Taking advantage of a rainy day which confines me to my boat, I pen a few lines, in addition to a letter to Dundee containing a few particulars which I need not repeat. It is now forty-one days since I left Shanghae on this last occasion. An excellent young English missionary, Mr. Taylor, of the Chinese Evangelization Society, has been my companion during these weeks—he in his boat, and I in mine,—and we have experienced much mercy, and on some occasions considerable assistance in our work. . . . I must once more tell the story I have had to tell already more than once, how four weeks ago, on the 29th of December, I put on the Chinese dress, which I am now wearing. Mr. Taylor had made this change a few months before, and I found that he was in consequence so much less incommoded in preaching, &c., by the crowd, that I concluded that it was my duty to follow his example. We were at that time more than double the distance from Shanghae that we now are at, and would have been still at as great a dis-

tance, had we not met at one place with a band of lawless people, who demanded money and threatened to break our boats if their demands were refused. The boatmen were very much alarmed, and insisted on returning to some place nearer home. These people had previously broken in violently a part of Mr. Taylor's boat because their unreasonable demand for books was not complied with. We have a large, very large field of labour in this region, though it might be difficult in the meantime for one to establish himself in any particular place. The people listen with attention, but we need the power from on high to convince and convert. Is there any spirit of prayer on our behalf among God's people in Kilsyth? or is there any effort to seek this spirit? How great the need is, and how great the arguments and motives for prayer in this case! The harvest is here indeed great, and the labourers are few and imperfectly fitted without much grace for such a work. And yet grace can make a few and feeble instruments the means of accomplishing great things—things greater than we can even conceive."

But a field already occupied by so many missionaries, and so "often trodden by foreign feet," could scarcely be an altogether congenial sphere of operations to one who felt himself especially called to the work of an evangelistic pioneer. Accordingly, within less than two months from the date of the lines just quoted, he was again on his way to another and distant part of the country. A Christian friend, Captain Bowers, of the merchant ship the *Geelong*, had spoken in high terms of Swatow, a rising commercial mart at the eastern extremity of the Canton province, and the chief port of the department of Tie-chew, as an advantageous centre for missionary operations; and being himself about to sail thither, offered him a free passage should he be disposed to go and reconnoitre the ground. An invitation coming to him in this unsought and apparently providential way, and reaching him too at a time when no special attachment bound him to any other sphere, and when he was as it were waiting for a summons to some new service from the Master, came to him with all the force of a divine call; and he resolved, after brief but prayerful consideration, to close with it. It is probable also that he was on other grounds not indisposed to turn his face once more towards the Canton district, where seven years before he had begun his evangelistic labours in China, and which he had been compelled reluctantly to leave, without having made such full proof of his ministry as he had hoped and desired. He sailed from Shanghae early in March, and reached Swatow about the middle of that month. His next date is from that place, March 31, 1856:—

"*Swatow, March 31st, 1856.*—When I last wrote to you I was on the point of leaving Shanghae for this place in company with Mr. Taylor of the Chinese Evangelization Society. We left on the 6th of March, and, after a favourable passage of six days, arrived here on the 12th. We were very averse to the thought of being located even temporarily on the island (Double Island), on which some of our countrymen have, by compact with the local magistrates, taken up their headquarters, but were anxious, if possible, to find a location in the Chinese town of Swatow, which is on a promontory of the mainland, five English miles further up, at the mouth of the river Han. We were

apprehensive lest we should not be permitted thus to locate ourselves; but in the gracious and all-governing providence of our God and Saviour, we found favour and assistance from those whom we least expected to aid us, viz. the Canton merchants here, who are the agents or correspondents of the foreigners (our countrymen) down the river; and two days after our arrival we were, to our own surprise and joy, enabled to take possession of the lodging which we have since been occupying unmolested. Our lodging is not indeed large, being only a small upper flat of a house occupied below as a shop; but it is sufficient for our present wants, and we are the more thankful for it as of vacant houses here there are almost none. Swatow is not a very large place, but it is growing at present very rapidly, and has all the appearance of being in a few years a place of great importance. During the first ten days after our arrival, the *Geelong* lay at anchor along with another ship off the town discharging cargo, and Captain Bowers continued to show us the same Christian kindness which he had manifested in bringing us here free of charge. On the two Sabbaths that occurred during these days, I preached on board his ship, and on week-day evenings also generally met for worship with him and his crew. For the last week they have been down at Double Island, and on Saturday (29th) I went down, and yesterday preached twice in his ship to such of our countrymen as chose to attend. The number of ships at anchor there was, as usual, nearly a dozen, and among their captains and crews were an unusual number of Scotchmen, who, along with others, came very readily not only to the forenoon service, but in nearly equal numbers to a second meeting in the evening. I felt it a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel in a place where it has been, as far as we know, seldom before proclaimed. Originally there seems to have been almost no population in Double Island, but since first the opium-ship captains, and afterwards some other foreign merchants, began to build houses and to occupy it, there has sprung up also a small Chinese town, consisting of those who live by business which the presence of the foreigners creates, or are occupied, alas! I am forced to add, in pandering to their unholy lusts. Yesterday-week (on the Lord's-day) a Malay sailor was murdered in a quarrel there; and yesterday a Chinese woman was also murdered, and another Malay sailor stabbed dangerously, if not fatally. The latter crime was the work, I understand, of a British sailor. Mr. Taylor and I are thankful indeed that we are permitted to live apart from a place where such tragedies are enacted, and where pollution and debauchery seem to stalk abroad without shame; but at the same time I shall feel it at once a duty and privilege to take every opportunity of preaching there either on ship-board or on shore while we remain in the neighbourhood. Mr. Taylor and myself came here quite undecided whether we should be able to attempt more than simply to make a running visit for the purpose of Scripture and tract distribution to the open parts of the country; but now that we see more fully the importance of this region as a vast and unoccupied scene for missionary labour, we are anxious, before going further, to prepare ourselves for the purpose of teaching the people orally by acquiring some knowledge of their dialect. This is a comparatively easy work in my case, the dialect spoken here being, as I formerly mentioned, very similar to that spoken at Amoy. We have as yet done very little in the way of active labour among this people, but would pray that our zeal may increase with our ability to improve the openings for usefulness that may be afforded us. We have much need, as everyone must see who considers our present position, of special grace to support and render us useful. For this grace may many be led to pray, that for the gift bestowed on us by the means of many persons, thanks may be afterwards

given by many in our behalf, should it please the God of grace to preserve us in his truth and love, and make us a means of blessing to some of these dying millions.”

While the aspect of the field in a moral and spiritual point of view was thus at first by no means encouraging, the representations given to him of its great importance had not been exaggerated. Situated on a narrow channel connecting two wide and spacious basins, the one running into the land and the other opening out to the sea, Swatow possesses all the advantages of a convenient and commodious commercial centre. Behind it is an extensive, opulent, and densely peopled district, for whose produce and enterprise it affords a natural outlet; while before it lies the direct and open pathway to all the commerce of the world. At about five miles’ distance, near the entrance of the outer harbour, is the subordinate port and foreign station of Double Island, affording a convenient anchorage for vessels approaching either from the north or from the south. As a commercial mart it is only of recent formation, but has been rapidly growing in wealth and importance, and was two years after this advanced to a new position, by being placed by treaty amongst the number of the ports legally open to foreign residence and foreign traffic. It is, far more than even Hong-Kong or Canton, the true key to the whole district south of Amoy, from which it is distant along the coast-line about 150 miles.

The prospect, however, of a prosperous entrance into this new and untried field did not at first on further trial become more promising. Three months after, Mr. Burns was as it were still endeavouring in vain to effect a landing on what seemed an iron-bound and inhospitable shore.

“At Nan-yang, ten miles from Swatow, July 16th, 1856: During the last fortnight I have been moving from place to place, making known the gospel message and distributing tracts, &c., in company with two professing Christians, natives of this district, who came up from Hong-Kong fully a month ago, sent by Mr. Johnson, an American missionary, to cooperate with us. Previously to their coming, I had been out on a missionary tour accompanied by a servant only. Mr. Taylor having occupied himself in learning the dialect of this district since our arrival at Swatow, left us a fortnight ago for Shanghae, intending, if the Lord will, to return in the course of a month or two, and bringing with him his medical apparatus, use his knowledge of medicine for the purpose of opening a door for more regular missionary operations among the people. Had we obtained a place suitable for indoor preaching at Swatow, I would not have ventured at this hot season to go about in the country. Difficulties, however, have been thrown in the way of our obtaining such a place, and so no other course has been left open but the one we are now following. We have met as yet with but little decided encouragement, but still something is done to spread an incipient knowledge of the truth, and in a field which has been so little cultivated we must not be discouraged if we meet not with immediate success.”

Still as ever his eyes were unto the Lord, the salvation of Israel, as his one source of strength and hope of victory. Great indeed and heavy was the stone that closed the sepulchre in which slept this heathen people; but he went forth in the strength of One who by one touch of His hand could roll it away:—

“I need perhaps as much as ever I did since I came to China the presence and power of God’s quickening Spirit, to maintain divine love and compassion for souls in my heart. Are there those who feel for us in this unbroken field of heathenism, and cry to God with spiritual agonisings for the descent of the Spirit in his life-giving and converting power? The God of grace grant to us such helpers, for the glory of his own great name!”

He was every day painfully reminded of the urgent need of such help, and of the utter vanity of any other. Well might he, in contemplating the case of that blinded, debased, and almost savage people, have adopted the cry of Valignano, in looking across to that rock-bound coast, “O rock, rock, when wilt thou open?”

Again, in another letter, about the same time, he writes:—

“The people in this district are, I think, if possible, more blind and hardened in idolatry and sin than in any place (if we except Canton) where I have formerly laboured. Although society presents here the usual features of Chinese civilization, it is coupled with a barbarity in certain circumstances which I have seen or heard of nowhere else in China. The fishermen, boatmen, and people working in the fields, pursue their work in summer in a state of savage nudity; and within the last twenty years I am credibly informed, persons taken prisoners in the clan feuds have not only been cut to pieces, but their *heart* boiled and eaten by their enemies. Such is heathenism in this part of civilized China.

“The ravages of opium we meet with here on every hand, and the deterioration of the morals of the people generally I cannot but ascribe, in great part, to the use of this ensnaring and destructive drug. When will measures be taken by those in power to lay an arrest on the opium traffic, which is inflicting such indescribable injury on this people, and which threatens in its progress by its direct, and still more by its indirect, effects—poverty and anarchy, to sweep away a great part of this nation from the face of the earth? How blinded by the love of money are they who seek to enrich themselves by the gains of such a traffic! Oh! what need have we here of gospel labourers, and of the power of God accompanying their words! ‘Where are the volunteers for this service, and where are those who will hold up their hands in this fight?’”

To the other difficulties of this arduous and trying service, “perils of robbers” were, as on so many former occasions, added. In a postscript to one of the letters just quoted, he writes:—“About two o’clock A.M., or past midnight, July 18th, 1856. We have just been visited by robbers, who have taken all but the clothes we wear, without however doing us any injury. This is a new call to pity, and to pray for this poor people, sunk so low in darkness

and sin. One of our number, it is proposed, shall return to Swatow to get a small supply of money and books, while the other Christian and I go on to another town to await his return. We are preserved in much peace, and have just been joining in praise and prayer for this poor people.”

A momentary gleam of light seemed now to break upon them in the unexpected kindness and cordiality of the people in some of the villages which they visited; but the sky was soon again overcast, and a train of events followed which might well have issued in a sad and tragical conclusion. The history will be best told in his own words, in a letter bearing the unexpected date of “Canton, Oct. 10, 1856:”—

“*Canton, October 10th, 1856.*—MY DEAR SIR,—When I last wrote you in the middle of July, I and my companions had just been robbed in our lodgings at a village about sixteen miles from Swatow. The following day one of my companions returned to Swatow with my letters, and to obtain a fresh supply of books and money, while my other Christian companion and I went forward, as we had intended, to the town of Tang-leng, about six miles further on. We were without money, but God provided support for us in a way that was new to me. The people who took our books gladly contributed small sums of cash for our support, and the first day we thus collected enough to keep us for two days; a countryman also, going the same road, volunteered to carry our bag of books for us; it was heavy for our shoulders, but easy for his, and he said he would want no money, but only a book. Thus the Lord helped us in going forward on his work, instead of turning back to Swatow for help. At Tang-leng we were very well received. In the neighbourhood there are two native Christians, converted in connection with the American Baptist Mission in Siam, and who, though they are left much to themselves, seem to follow the Lord in sincerity. With these we had much pleasure in meeting on the Lord’s-day, and at other times. A heavy and continued fall of rain detained us at Tang-leng for some weeks, without our being able to do much abroad; and at last, on Monday, August 18th, we left this town, intending to return to Swatow. Our course by water leading us to within five or six miles of the *Chaon-chow-foo* (chief city of the Chaon-chow department), we agreed to pay it a visit; but fearing lest we should give offence to the authorities, we determined, instead of living on shore, to make the boat which conveyed us there our head-quarters while we remained. On Tuesday the 19th we went on shore, and were particularly well received by the people. The demand for our books among persons able to read them, was unusually great. In the meantime, however, an alarming report of the presence of a foreigner outside the city having been carried to the authorities, we were in the evening suddenly arrested in our boat, and, with all our books, &c., taken prisoners into the city. The same night we were examined publicly by the district magistrate, and after the interval of a day we were examined anew by a deputy (I suppose) of *Che-Foo*, or chief magistrate of the department. On these occasions my companions and myself had valuable opportunities of making known something of the gospel, and of the character and objects of Christ’s disciples in China; and as there was a great demand for our books, the work of many days seemed to be crowded into one or two. The magistrates examined us with great mildness and deliberation, seeming anxious to obtain information rather than to find fault; and on the evening of the 21st, the day of our second examination, a sub-official

was deputed to inform us that the magistrates found we had been arrested on a false report, and that if the Canton merchants at Swatow, or any one of them, would stand security for us, we would be allowed to return to that place. The Canton merchants (through whom the trade in foreign vessels is carried on at Swatow), on being written to, came forward in the kindest manner with the document required; but in the meantime, it appears, the magistrates had reflected that, having once arrested a foreigner, confined and examined him, they could not, according to law or with safety to themselves, give him up to any other than a foreign consul, and so I was told that I would be sent to Canton. On Saturday the 30th I was put on board a river-boat, and carried about a mile above the city. Here we remained until Tuesday morning, when, being joined by a number of officials, high and low, in all occupying four riverboats, and going to Canton, some in connection with my case, and some on other business, we at last commenced our journey. I was provided with a servant, and with whatever food I wished, at the expense of the government; and had I been well, and had had with me a good supply of Christian books, I might have enjoyed the journey much. As the case was, my books were nearly all gone; and as to my health, a slight cold which I had caught before coming to the city had, through excitement, &c., taken the form of an intermittent fever, with chills (ague), which, violent at first, continued more or less during all my journey. Our course lay first up the Chaon-chow river against a rapid stream, through Ken-ying-chow, and then, when the river ceased to be navigable, we crossed the country through a hill-pass—a distance of about twenty miles—to where another river, flowing down through Heong-chow to Canton, becomes navigable for boats of considerable size. The first part of the journey was tedious, and (including days on which we halted until our business at the various cities we passed was concluded), we were on the way in all thirty-one days. The news of our arrest, and of my being sent to Canton, had reached Hong-Kong, and through the great kindness of many friends who felt anxious for my safety, and could not explain why we should be so long on the way, inquiries were made for us at the office of the native authorities in Canton. It was perhaps owing to this in part, that on reaching Canton on the morning of September 30th, instead of being taken to the mandarin's office, two men were sent by the authorities to conduct me straight from the boat to the office of the British consul. The consul has had a communication from the governor-general about the case. I did not see it, but the consul informed me that it was conceived in a mild strain, much more so than he had expected; and I am thus wonderfully preserved, and freed from the infliction of any punishment or penalty. I am sorry to add that there is reason to fear my two companions are still confined at Chaon-chow-foo, though the governor-general assures the consul they have been sent to their native districts (in the Chaon-chow department), to be liberated on finding proper security. You will remember that these two men, though natives of that part of the country, have been for a number of years resident in Hong-Kong, and connected with the American Baptist Mission there. It was Mr. Johnson, the American missionary there, who sent them up in the beginning of June to act as colporteurs, and to cooperate with us as far as found desirable. Looking at the lenient view of our case which the native authorities both at Chaon-chow and here seemed led to take, I was disposed, now that my health is graciously restored, to proceed very soon back to Swatow, in the hope of being able to prosecute the missionary work there unmolested; but yesterday, when in the act of making arrangements for going to Hong-Kong, I was met by a message from the British plenipotentiary, conveyed to me by the consul, to the effect that, 'after the representations of the imperial commissioner, he should deem

it imprudent and improper that I should return to the district from which I have been sent.' Met by such a message, from such a quarter, I think it will be my duty to delay making any movement of the kind I contemplated, at least until I hear from Mr. Taylor about his plans and prospects, and until the native brethren, as we hope they soon may, be released. Mr. Taylor went to Shanghai in the beginning of July, partly for a change during the hot months, and partly intending to bring down his medical apparatus to Swatow. Whether he has already come down, or whether, it may be, hearing at Shanghai of our arrest, he has delayed, I am as yet entirely ignorant. In the meantime, if shut up for a season at Canton, I am in the midst of kind missionary brethren, American and English; and my acquaintance with the Canton dialect, now revived, should save me, through the grace of God, from spending my time unprofitably. The field is the world, the seed is the Word of God. Most of those who came down with me from Chaon-chow were Canton men; they treated me with much respect and kindness, and with them, in the course of the month we spent together, I had many conversations on the subject of the gospel, which I trust may not prove altogether useless. Looking back on the whole scene through which I have passed, and contrasting the life and favour granted us with the misconstruction and suffering to which we might have been subjected, I cannot but adore the wonderful goodness and power of Him to whom the kingdom belongs, and who unceasingly cares even for the most unworthy of his servants. While the people of God have need to pray for us that we may be guided to act aright, and not to rush into danger without cause, they have surely cause to give praise for deliverance vouchsafed, and for opportunities, such as seldom occur, of making known something of the truth of the gospel to men in authority, and to many others.

"I am glad to learn that at the time you wrote there was a prospect of Mr. Sandeman joining the missionary band in China. I trust he may be now on the way, and that he will come to be a blessing to many. With Christian regards to all friends, I am, ever yours,—WM. C. BURNS."

There fortunately exists also a Chinese account of these events, which is so curiously characteristic, that I am tempted here to reproduce it as a supplement to the missionary's own narrative. It is contained in the official statement addressed by Commissioner Yeh to the British consul Mr. Parkes in delivering up his prisoner to him, and gives us a vivid glimpse into the interior economy and life of that singular people.

"COMMISSIONER YEH TO CONSUL PARKES.

"Translation.

"Yeh, High Imperial Commissioner, Governor-General of the Two Kwang Provinces, &c., addresses this declaration to H. S. Parkes, Esq., Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Canton.

"I have before me an official report from Wang-Ching, Chief Magistrate of the district of Hae-yang, in the department of Chaon-chow, which contains the following statements:—

"It being the duty of your subordinate to act with Le-seuen-fang, the major commanding at this city (Chaon-chow), in the inspection of the defences of the place, we

suddenly observed, whilst engaged in this service, three persons seated in a boat on the river whose appearance had something in it that was unusual. We found in their boat, and took possession of, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts; but these were the only things they had with them. On examining the men themselves, we observed that they all of them had shaven heads, and wore their hair plaited in a queue, and were dressed in Chinese costume. The face of one of them, however, had rather a strange look; his speech in respect to tone and mode of expression being not very similar to that of the Chinese. We, therefore, interrogated him carefully, whereupon he stated to us that his true name was Pin-wei-lin (William Burns); that he was an Englishman, aged 42 years, and, as a teacher of the religion of Jesus, had been for some time past engaged in exhorting his fellow-men to do good deeds. In 1847 he left his native land and travelled to China, and took up his residence first at Victoria, where he lived two years, and afterwards in the foreign factories at Canton, where he remained for more than one. Subsequently, he visited Shanghae, Amoy, and other places, and there spent several years; wherever he went he made himself acquainted with the languages of the Chinese, and by this means he delivered his exhortations to the people, and explained to them the books of Jesus, but without receiving from any one the least remuneration. In 1854 he embarked in a steamer from Amoy, on a visit to his native home, and in December, 1855, joined himself to one of his countrymen, surnamed Tae, who was going to Shanghae to trade. 'I accompanied him thither,' said Burns, 'in his vessel; but from Shanghae Tae returned home again, whilst I remained there and engaged myself in the distribution of Christian books. In the sixth month of the present year (July), I left Shanghae, and took passage in a foreign sailing vessel to Shantow (Swatow), in the district of Chinghae. There I fell in on the 12th day of the 7th month (August 12) with Le-a-yuen and Chin-a-seun, the two Chinese who have now been seized with me. I called upon them to be my guides, and we proceeded in company to Yen-fan, and from thence came on to this city, where we had it in contemplation to distribute some of our books. Scarcely, however, had we arrived at the river's bank on the 19th day of the 7th month (19th August), when to our surprise we found ourselves under surveillance, and deprived of our liberty. We entertained, however, no other views or intentions than those which we have stated, and declare that these statements are strictly true.'

"Such is the account given by the missionary, William Burns, who, together with his seven volumes of foreign books and his three sheet tracts, was given over into the charge of an officer, and brought in custody to this office.

"Having examined the above report, I (the imperial commissioner) have to observe thereon that the inland river of the city of Chaon-chow is not one of the ports open to (foreign) commerce; and it has never on that account been frequented by foreigners. I cannot but look upon it, therefore, as exceedingly improper that William Burns (admitting him to be an Englishman) should change his own dress, shave his head, and assuming the costume of the Chinese, penetrate into the interior in so irregular a manner. And although, when closely examined by the magistrate, he firmly maintained that religious teaching and the distribution of books formed his sole object and occupation, it may certainly be asked, why does William Burns leave Shanghae and come to Chaon-chow, just at a time when Kiang-nan and the other provinces are the scene of hostilities? Or, can it be that a person, dressed in the garb and speaking the language of China, is really an Englishman, or may he not be falsely assuming that character to further some mischievous ends?

“I have directed Heu, the assistant Nan-hae magistrate, to hand him over to the consul of the said nation, in order that he may ascertain the truth respecting him, and keep him under restraint; and I hereby, by means of this declaration, make known to him (the consul) the above particulars.

“William Burns, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts, accompany this declaration.

“Heenfung, 6th year, 9th month, 2d day. (September 30, 1856.)”

Another characteristic incident related by his friend and fellow-labourer, Dr. De la Porte, may be here introduced, as completing the history of these deeply interesting events:—

“When he was arrested in August, 1856, and brought before the chief magistrate of the Chaon-chow department, the magistrate required him to go down on both knees to be examined, as is the practice in China. Mr. B. very firmly but respectfully refused, saying that he would go down on one knee, as he would do to his sovereign, Queen Victoria; but that he would only go down on both knees to the King of kings. The magistrate was struck by this answer, solemnly and respectfully uttered, and allowed the missionary to be examined on one knee.”

There were several circumstances connected with the time and position of affairs in which these events took place which rendered them peculiarly critical, and which led him ever after to regard their peaceful issue as a remarkable instance of the Lord’s gracious leading and providential care. His arrest and confinement took place immediately on the eve of the hostilities which that year broke out between the British and Chinese powers, and just before the commencement of those sanguinary proceedings on the part of Commissioner Yeh, which sent a thrill of horror throughout the civilized world. Had he arrived at Canton while these events were in progress, it is not difficult to see what the swift and terrible issue would have been! It will be remembered, too, that he had been, shortly before his arrival in this province, actually on his way to the head-quarters of the rebel army, on an unknown errand, to which the habitual jealousy of the Chinese authorities might easily have ascribed a sinister purpose. Alive to the danger of such misconstruction he had refrained at the time from giving even to his friends any account of that journey, which might afterwards find its way into the Shanghae papers, and thus lead to possible complications and interruption of his work, and it remained in consequence up to this hour totally unknown to the Chinese authorities. Had it been otherwise, and had any written trace of the journey and the inquiries connected with it existed on the records of any Chinese court, it would have been infallibly brought to light in connection with the inquiries consequent on the present arrest, and lent strong colour to the suspicion which his Chinese garb, coupled with his foreign look and accent, seemed to have awakened. “Had an account of the journey,” he wrote

afterwards (June 28th, 1858), “been published at the time in the Shanghae newspaper, as would probably have been the case had it not been interdicted, it is quite possible that the Chinese authorities in this quarter might have got some hint of the circumstance, when two years ago I was detained with two companions at the Foo city (Chaon-chow). It would in that case have seemed to them evident that I was a rebel in disguise, and the result can be but little doubtful. As the case stood, our countrymen in this neighbourhood knowing nothing of the said journey, none of the Chinese in their employ could even have it in their power to cast suspicion on us. I thought it also a special mercy that in neither of the examinations by the authorities at the Foo city was a single allusion made to the rebel party, nor any entangling questions put as to where I went and with what objects when journeying in the neighbourhood of Shanghae. Had such questions been put, then I might have seemed to be self-convicted of abetting the rebellion, and so have been summarily dealt with as an enemy of the government. The possibility of this was painted in painful colours to my mind when suffering from fever in my confinement, but from all these fears and dangers the Lord wonderfully delivered me. It would have been indeed a different thing to suffer as a supposed rebel, and to suffer ‘as a Christian.’ This latter privilege was given to my native companions when beaten on the face and imprisoned for months; from the former I was most graciously and completely saved.”

Notwithstanding Dr. Bowring’s friendly advice he was induced soon afterwards to return to Swatow, with the view especially of inquiring after his native brethren who were still in captivity at the Foo city. It was painful to him to find on his arrival there that they had been treated by the authorities with a cruel severity which they had not dared to use towards a British subject; but at the same time he rejoiced greatly that they had been enabled to witness a good confession in behalf of Christ in the presence of their heathen adversaries. Beaten forty blows on the cheek with an instrument resembling the sole of a shoe, they adhered unflinchingly to their testimony to the truth and preciousness of the gospel, as the one only remedy for the ills of the soul, and returned to their prison only to pray and sing praises to God, and to labour daily for the salvation of their fellow-captives, one of whom, to their great joy, was in due time given them for their hire. At length, after four months’ imprisonment, they were, at Mr. Burns’ intercession, set at liberty.

Meanwhile he had received at Swatow an unexpectedly cordial welcome from those to whom he had before preached, “enjoying favour in the sight of rich and poor, the rulers and the ruled.” He was enabled at last to effect a permanent settlement in the place, and to resume his interrupted labours under more favourable auspices, and with brighter prospects of success. Hav-

ing engaged the valuable co-operation of a medical man of the Wesleyan denomination, Dr. De la Porte, then practising amongst the foreign shipping at Double Island, he was enabled to combine the beneficent ministries of a medical mission with his usual evangelistic operations, and thus more rapidly win his way to the confidence and regard of the native community. Two days of each week were regularly employed in connection with this work, when he acted as interpreter between the physician, as yet imperfectly acquainted with the language, and the patients, as they came one by one to tell their case, while two native evangelists were engaged in another room, ministering the word of spiritual healing to the crowd of impotent folk who were waiting their time to be heard. About forty or fifty sufferers would thus be prescribed for in one day, while, at the same time, unnumbered seeds of saving truth were cast in faith upon the waters, to be found, it may be, after many days.

On December 4th, 1856, he writes to one of the earliest and warmest friends of the mission, in words of hopeful courage, which show too how his heart was encouraged and cheered in his distant field of labour, by the loving remembrance and help of brethren and children in the faith at home:—

“*Dec. 4th, 1856.*—MY DEAR MRS. BARBOUR,— . . . We thus have some encouragement in our present circumstances, as compared with the past; and were the spirit of grace and supplication granted to some of God’s people in Scotland to plead on behalf of us and this people, it would be a sure token that the Lord had special blessings in store for this hitherto so neglected and desolate a part of this inhabited earth. I am glad to hear of such spontaneous offerings to aid us, as that £6 which you mention. I shall endeavour, when such are forwarded, to dispense them in the way that seems best for the advancing of the Lord’s work. When I was in Scotland lately there were a number of small sums put into my hand, which I did not put into the public mission fund, and which I laid out in printing, at Shanghae and the neighbourhood, about 15,000 copies, in a sheet form, of one or two of Milne’s *Village Sermons* (in Chinese). These I found very useful for distribution on certain occasions, when a number of larger tracts could not conveniently be carried. The first contributors to this small fund, or rather the founders of it, were the children at M—— manse (Established), a little girl at the A—— Free Church manse, and another at a toll-bar to the north of that town. Some of the other sums were also from the north of Perthshire. I hope we have a few in that region, and in some other places, who pray for us and China’s conversion to Christ. The harvest here is truly great, and how few the labourers are. May the Lord of the harvest send forth many more labourers, and especially from among China’s own children.”

Meanwhile the preaching of the word, on week-days and on Sabbath-days, both to the foreign visitors and to the native community, went on steadily and in perfect peace, notwithstanding the rumours of war between the Chinese and British powers then raging in their immediate neighbour-

hood. It seemed to him as if the passing events of that stirring drama were far better known, and excited a far livelier interest, amongst his friends at home than amongst those living within a hundred miles of the scene of action; and from first to last, the friendly relation in which he stood both to the authorities and to the people around him remained undisturbed. "A week or two ago," he writes, Jan. 30th, 1857, "the principal local authority in this place, when sick, invited Dr. De la Porte's medical assistance, and was very grateful for the aid thus given him; and we are on such friendly terms with the authorities here, that it was in the small fort in the town, and from the military officer in charge of it, that we the other day got the news of the progress of the war, which had just come by steamer from Hong-Kong. He passed as we were speaking to the people near the fort, listened with some interest, and then invited us to take tea and converse with him, not only about the quarrel at Canton with the English, but about the gospel of Christ." Only by two incidents was he brought into closer and more personal contact with the political events then passing around him. The one was a proposal made to him in a very gratifying way by Lord Panmure, that he should undertake the office of chaplain to the British forces in that quarter, with the usual rank and salary of a major in the army. He respectfully but decidedly declined the appointment, chiefly on the ground that his connection with the invading army would be ever afterwards remembered by the Chinese, and thus leave upon him, as it were, an indelible stamp, most prejudicial to the success of the higher ministry to which he had devoted his life. Lord Panmure entirely appreciated the high motives by which he had been actuated, and replied in terms of Christian courtesy, which must have been most gratifying to him.

The other incident was the arrival of Lord Elgin at the port of Swatow, in the course of his important mission to the court of Peking, and is thus briefly alluded to by Mr. Burns:—"Lord Elgin in his way to the north called in at Swatow, about a month ago. I was invited to breakfast with him, on board H.M. steamship *Furious*, and had a full opportunity of expressing to him my convictions and feelings on various points—the coolie trade, opium, &c. He made particular inquiries in regard to the progress of the missionary work among this people, and also heard in detail the facts connected with my arrest, &c., in 1856." He ever afterwards retained the deepest respect for that distinguished and esteemed nobleman, who afterwards, when Governor-general of India, corresponded with him in the kindest manner, in regard to a matter in which he had occasion to ask his friendly intervention. It was no doubt in great measure in consequence of this visit, and the observations and inquiries then made, that we owe the fact that Swatow was, by the treaties then under consideration, added to the number of the free and open ports. The following letter to one of his sisters furnishes an additional reason for

his prudent declinature of the chaplaincy, and gives at the same time one or two interesting glimpses of his occupations and mode of life at this time:—

“Swatow, February 22d, 1858.—MY DEAR SISTER,—I have to thank you for more than one letter which I have failed until now to acknowledge directly. You know that the use of the tongue is more natural to me than the use of the pen, and this must be my excuse. I am but poorly able to satisfy your inquiries about the people who, during last year, were about us at various times as applicants for medical aid. They were generally from places distant at least two or three days’ journey, and of course unless they come again, we lose sight of them. In consequence of the uncertainty of Dr. De la Porte’s continuance here, and other causes, the medical work was a month or two ago interrupted; and though it has been resumed, and is now carried on, patients have not yet begun to flow upon us in a stream, as was the case six months ago, when many of the poor people, both men and women, flocked to Swatow for medicine with almost the same zeal as they would resort to some famed idol’s shrine. During the past few weeks I have been almost constantly resident, not at the Chinese town of Swatow (my proper station), but at Dr. De la Porte’s (Double Island). I came down at first for a change of air, but after getting the full benefit of this I am still for a little detained here by superintending some repairs and improvements in the Dr.’s house. I need to attend to this rather than he, not only because I understand the language, but because, in the view of his going to England, I consented to take his cottage, &c., from him, wishing to hold the situation in behalf of the mission cause generally as well as for present use. We have the workmen about us, and have some of them always with us at evening worship. Among other things, we are at present engaged, like the patriarchs, in digging a well, and as the position is rather elevated, we need to go deep in order to find ‘springing water’ such as Isaac found, Genesis xxvi. 19.

You allude to the invitation given me to become chaplain to the Presbyterian soldiers in China. I have lately had a very kind acknowledgment from the War Office of my letter declining the appointment. As I had refused on grounds connected with my occupation as a missionary, Lord Panmure will not press the appointment on me. Unless the Lord in his providence should shut me up to such a course of acting, I feel more and more that I could not safely leave for a moment the position I occupy; and had I accepted the appointment, I would have found on the one hand at least, up to the present time, that the troops among whom I was expected to be, had gone to India instead of coming here, and on the other hand would have been in the greatest danger, from knowing Chinese, of being diverted from my proper work, and sinking down into a kind of interpreter about all and sundry matters. Mr. L——, whom you once wrote to me about after he had been in Glasgow, has lately got into a position somewhat of this kind. He is now at Canton assisting generally the provisional government established there by the English and French until matters are settled at Peking. He about a year ago disagreed somehow with the Chinese Evangelization Society, and became government school (Chinese) inspector in Hong-Kong, and from the newspapers I have just seen that he is gone to Canton in the capacity I have mentioned. This is not the kind of work that would suit me, and I anticipated from the beginning, that had I become an army chaplain, it was work that I could have hardly avoided. I was surprised to see from the same paper which contained the notice of Mr. L——, that my friend and former fellow-labourer here, Mr. J. H. Taylor, has just been married at Ningpo to a daughter of a late missionary, Mr. Samuel Dyer. I am almost surprised at the question you put to me

as to whether I have any near that can assist me in keeping my wardrobe in order. Formerly I had the kind missionaries' wives at Canton and Amoy, but now, where I have none such near, I happily am independent of such aid, wearing, as you seem to have forgot, the Chinese dress, which can be renewed or repaired everywhere. The only articles in which I still in part keep by the old attire are socks and flannel-shirts. The socks are hard to get repaired, but the native substitute answers very well. Indeed we need nothing here in addition to what we have but health of body—a mercy still continued to me—and our Lord's gracious presence and blessing in our souls and in our work. When there are ships here with English crews we have frequently public preaching on shipboard. Yesterday we had not this privilege, but I enjoyed much the season when in the forenoon Dr. De la Porte and I joined in English worship. The Saviour's promise is even to *two*, and I trust we enjoyed his presence. We long, however, to see his work prospering, and his kingdom established around us. Of this we have not as yet much evidence; but we are not discouraged. 'The kingdom is the Lord's: he is the governor among the nations,' and he hath promised that all nations shall yet be blessed in the Messiah, and all nations call him blessed. Happy those who are made God's instruments in helping on this consummation—first by through grace giving ourselves to the Lord, and then by prayer in the Spirit, or by active efforts, aiding to spread abroad the savour of Christ's name. May such happiness be yours at home, and ours in this far land where our lot is at present cast! Pray for us, and seek for us the prayers of God's people. Remember me specially to Mrs. Davidson (formerly Miss Mylne) and ask her prayers for me and this people. Fraternal regards to Mr. Stewart, and my prayers for your infant son.—Your affectionate brother,—WM. C. BURNS."

The carpentry labours here referred to were only a recurrence to the occupations and acquired skill of former days, when as a boy he lifted up his axe upon the trees around the manse of Kilsyth. Now he found the change of scene and the bracing exercise of great advantage to him, "as tending powerfully to reinvigorate his physical powers, after being a good deal tired through a too confined position at Swatow." It spoke well for the solidity and workman-like character of his work, that, as his friends afterwards remarked, in a terrible hurricane which shortly after passed over the district, sweeping away the entire shipping and demolishing a great part of the houses both at Swatow and Double Island, his was the only house amongst those in its vicinity which stood the blast. One other incident of a startling and solemn kind marked the period of his residence at Swatow. A terrible visitation of cholera passed, during several months, over the whole district of which it forms the centre, and created a wide-spread terror which brought out in a striking and affecting way the gross blindness and superstition of the people:—

"It is melancholy to see the means to which the people resort in order to free themselves from this dreadful visitation of God's hand. First, they had a procession of *lanterns*, each house furnishing one or more large lanterns, with bearers for them. This was continued for three successive nights. Next they had a public procession, contin-

ued during the day and a great part of the night, with drums and gongs making a discordant noise to *drive away evil spirits from the streets*; this was accompanied too with plays and exhibitions of all sorts of finery, children on horseback, &c. Our doors or windows were shut, so that I can give no description of what I did not wish to see. Again the people went out in procession to a neighbouring field, and drew water to drink, a cupful of which was ordered as a recipe against the disease. These means having failed, for the last week or more all animal food, fish or flesh, has been forbidden. On one day no one was to wash clothes; and, to my surprise, on Monday, 19th, when I went up from Double Island, the town appeared like a forest of shipping, high flag-staffs being erected in all directions, formed of long bamboos, fixed the one above the other, and some as high as a ship's mast; to these are attached small flags; and at night small lanterns are suspended from them. In what way these things are expected to be beneficial I cannot ascertain. The only answer to be got is that they are ordered by their idols; and this brings out the most affecting feature of the whole. There are young lads who either really are possessed by evil spirits or feign to be so, and in a kind of raving madness give out what are looked upon as the oracular voice of the idol whom the people worship. There are two principal idols' temples in Swatow; and both of these idols have been in succession personated by these insane youths, by whom this blinded people are led! It is by such direction that all the foregoing remedies have been used to save them from cholera! Not one word is heard of the need of repentance, or of turning from any of the sins in which this people are lying, and in which they seem to go on with as unblushing boldness as before. How true that darkness covereth the earth and gross darkness the people! What need that He should arise and shine who is the Light of the world! In the midst of such a people how weak and helpless does all mere human instrumentality appear, and what need have God's people to pray for us that in these circumstances our faith may not fail, and that we may not sit down in despondency, but still persevere in doing the work of the Lord among this people!"

One or two further extracts from his correspondence will complete the history of his labours here, which were marked by no other memorable event or important change, save only the gradual opening up of the field and the increasing interest and hopefulness of his work. His remarkable reception and hospitable treatment at the town of Tat-haw-poe is especially interesting, as an instance of the manner in which he often overcame difficulties by simply confronting them in the spirit of faith and prayer, and found favour in the sight of those from whom hostility and opposition only had been expected:—

“March 31st, 1857.—MY DEAR MOTHER,— . . . All things are going on as before in this place. We have outward peace, and an increasing attendance at our meetings, both ordinary and on the days when medical aid is given by Dr. De la Porte; but we need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Swatow, as in Kilsyth, to turn the souls of sinners from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We need this, and this God has promised to prayer—true prayer. Who among us has the spirit of prayer! They are mighty who have this spirit, and weak who have it not. We need that the Lord would prevent us with his mercy, and quicken us when we are brought very

low. Help us for the glory of thy name! Deliver us and purge away our sins. Come, Lord Jesus, and take unto thee thy great power and reign! Is there any special prayer among you for China? Perhaps in seeking the awakening and conversion of these perishing millions a blessing may come down on your own borders as well as on us.

“Brethren, pray for us, pray without ceasing! I will conclude this note with Christian regards to all who love the Lord Jesus, especially among my own kindred. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, how dreadful the judgment recorded against him! Oh that all may have grace to flee that judgment and to love Him who is altogether lovely, who loved us and gave himself for us. Wishing grace and peace to my beloved parents,—I am ever your affectionate son,—W. C. BURNS.

“P.S.—Finished near midnight, entering on April 1st, 1857, the beginning of my forty-third year.”

“Swatow, June 3d, 1857.— . . . Oh! that they were as anxious for the salvation of the soul as for the healing of the body. Alas! the gospel pool does not yet seem here to be visited by the angel to trouble the waters. All is sin and death around us.”

“Swatow, August 5th, 1857.—Whatever change we can mark is in the way of progress. The medical work brings an increasing number of persons about us, to whom we seek to make known the truth, and gives us, in connection with our efforts to diffuse the truths of the gospel, a very favourable position in the eyes of the community. There is a district of country, Phoo-ning, at a distance varying from thirty to fifty English miles, from which we have had of late an unusual number of visitors, both men and women. They have taken lodgings near us for a succession of days, and not only have seemed to value the medical aid for which they came, but have very generally attended all our daily religious services, and have shown a more than common interest in our message. That district of country seems particularly afflicted with a species of leprosy, and some persons suffering from this and other diseases having *received* benefit, the poor people form parties and come out, at no inconsiderable trouble and expense to themselves. Those that come to us from this and other quarters we generally make the bearers of tracts and Scriptures to their villages; and sometimes when we neglect to supply them, they apply of their own accord. . . .

“I am resuming my pen after being below at our usual evening worship. We had with us, from the opposite house where they are lodging, seven or eight sick persons who have come a distance of from thirty to forty miles for medical aid, and must wait until Friday, when Dr. De la Porte comes. These sick people come thus sometimes as many as thirty or forty at once; and while they are here, as well as merely on the patient-seeing days, they have a good opportunity of hearing the glorious gospel. A week or two ago a large party of women thus came, having hired a boat for themselves, and many of them seemed a good deal interested in our message. One old matron of seventy-three I was specially interested with. Staying opposite she was often below stairs. She came generally to worship, and by her serious and intelligent look one might hope that she understood something of what was taught her. One evening, after she retired from worship, I heard her, across the street, mentioning the Saviour’s name, and she appeared to be attempting to pray.

“Have you any prayer-meeting now in which China is specially remembered? We need much prayer in our behalf, and in behalf of China at this time, *when new treaties may be made with foreign powers, either very favourable to the entrance of the gospel or the opposite.*”

“*Swatow, June 9th, 1858.*—MY DEAR MOTHER,—Dr. De la Porte is at last about to leave us. He was here seeing patients yesterday, as I suppose, for the last time, and tomorrow, if the Lord will, I go down to Double Island to see him away. He goes down to Hong-Kong in the expectation of finding a vessel in which to sail for England. It was affecting yesterday to join with him in prayer, probably for the last time, in a place where we have had so many meetings at the mercy-seat; and when he was gone, the thought that we should see him not again here caused a tender pang which found relief only in looking up to Him who hath said, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.’ We have already parted here with two of God’s servants, Mr. Taylor two years ago, and now Dr. De la Porte. It has been by the Lord’s special favour to this poor place and people that they were sent for a time to labour with us here, and now that they are being removed we trust that the same Lord has still chosen instruments in store whom he will send here, and support in doing his work among the poor heathen, and among countrymen more privileged but in many cases equally polluted and far more guilty. . .

“Perhaps you have wondered that I have not alluded to the new dignity conferred on my beloved father.³ I felt, when I heard of it, in a way that hindered me from at once noticing it, for while I was unwilling to seem to make light of it, I felt on the other hand how poor and insignificant it was compared with that dignity to which, I trust, my dear parents are daily expecting to be promoted—even the crown and the palm of the redeemed in glory—in the presence of God and of the Lamb. To this glory let us hasten, in that glorified company may we meet, to give praises to Him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb who bought us with his blood! The face of Christ in glory, as one says, is the glorified church’s Bible, from which we shall learn in one day more of divinity than now by faith we attain by many years of study. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! Make us like thee, and in thy time take us to be with thee, to behold thy glory which the Father hath given thee. ‘Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and our Father, to Him be glory!’ Continue to pray for me, dear parents, and seek an increase of prayer in behalf of this place and people, that the desert may be made to blossom, that the glory of Jehovah may be revealed, and all flesh see it together. Praying that my parents may be filled with the fulness of God, through the knowledge of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, I am, dear parents, your affectionate son,—WM. C. BURNS.”

“*Swatow, September 15th, 1858.*—Within the last month I am glad to be able to mention that we have obtained an additional standing-point for missionary labour, at the large town of Tat-haw-poe, distant about four or five miles from Double Island. I had often wished to visit this place, but delayed in consequence of being tied down, through the medical work, to Swatow, and being thus unable to follow up any favourable opening that might be given. Four weeks ago, after the assistants and I had specially sought the divine direction, we determined that two of them should go direct to Tat-haw-poe from Swatow, and that the following day, August 17th, one of them should join me at Double Island, and conduct me from there to Tat-haw-poe. He failed to come for me on the day appointed, and next morning came to say that, at Tat-haw-poe had just been posted up a Canton proclamation, warning the people from having anything to do with the English, and that it was a question I must myself decide whether I

³ The degree of D.D., shortly before conferred on him.

would venture to go or not. There was some reason to fear that no one would give me lodging, but I thought it my duty to go, and wonderful to say, just as we were about to conclude addressing the people, a man of respectability invited us into his hong, gave us a kind welcome, asked where I was to lodge, and when he found that there was but poor accommodation in the shop where my assistants were staying, he pressed us to come to him, leading me from room to room, and desiring me to take which one I preferred. Finally he put me into his own room, and one of the assistants into the adjoining; and there I remained for several days. Though passing the night in this gentleman's hong we continued to take our meals in the shop where the assistants had been lodging, until on Saturday morning, August 21st, the shopman informed us that his landlord had, on the previous night, given him notice, that he must on no account admit foreigners into his shop, and that therefore I must cease to come. On this we went and made known the matter to our host, asking him whether he shared in the fears of this man. He made no account of the matter at all, and said that though, from the near approach of a Chinese term, he was a good deal occupied, and could not attend to us as he wished, if I would come again in a few days, he would give us an unoccupied part of his house to stay in as long as we liked.

“In this he was not deceiving us; for while I returned back to Double Island on that day, one of the assistants continued to remain in his house, and yesterday, September 14th, I returned from a second visit of six days, and have now a room waiting me whenever I am able to go.”

But the work at Swatow, at least for the present, was now drawing to a close. The departure of Dr. De la Porte had greatly abridged his power of effectively occupying the field, and at the same time urgent invitations came to him from his brethren at Amoy, to return, at least for a season, to the scene of his former labours amongst the villages of Fokien. After much hesitation he consented, on the understanding that the Rev. George Smith, a young missionary of great devotedness and high promise, who had recently joined their number, should meanwhile, more or less permanently, take his place at Swatow. He had as yet reaped but little fruit of his labours in this field; he could not count one single decided convert from amongst all the multitudes to whom he had here declared the Word of life; but he had thoroughly broken up the ground, and plenteously sowed the seeds of a harvest, to be gathered in by those that should come after him, and enter into his labours.

He sailed for Amoy about the middle of October, 1858, and reached that place in safety a few days after. His next letter is, alike in its date and its subject-matter, deeply touching, and a brief extract from it will fitly close this chapter:—

“Amoy, November 25th, 1858.—I am sitting in the room formerly occupied by our dear and respected brother⁴ and fellow-labourer who is now no more with us, but has, like his divine Master, left us an example that we should follow his steps, in order that we may overcome like him at last through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony! On the occasion of his so sudden removal from us, I felt unable in any suitable manner to write to any of his kindred, although I took the pen in hand more than once to do so. On coming up here four weeks ago, I went to see the spot where his mortal remains are laid. It is as yet marked by no monumental stone, but is side by side with the graves of not a few members, old and young, of the missionary circle, and with many of them we trust he will rise in glory at the Lord’s coming. What a lesson to us, and to all! When little more than a year ago I visited Amoy, I had much sweet intercourse with him; and as the vessel that conveyed me back to Swatow left the harbour, he stood on the balcony above, and waved to me until we were out of sight. Now we may imagine him from a higher elevation, beckoning us to follow on in the Christian race, laying aside every weight, and running that we may reach the prize—the crown of life, which we believe has been already given to him by his Saviour and Lord.”

⁴ The devoted and greatly beloved David Sandeman, who died of cholera, at Amoy, July 31, 1858, and whose memory has been embalmed in an interesting biography by the Rev. A. A. Bonar