

ADDITIONAL REMINISCENCES.

Additional communications from Mr. Douglas and Mr. Swanson reached my hand just as the first edition of this work had left the press. They seem to me, however, so valuable that I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of a fresh impression to insert here as much of them as is compatible with the limits of a brief appendix. Mr. Douglas devotes the chief part of his letter to the correction of certain "mistakes and misstatements, some made by opponents, some by over-zealous or ill-informed friends." In case I may myself in the foregoing pages have used expressions, or quoted words used by others, fitted in any measure to encourage such errors, I am very glad to be able in this way to provide the corrective. Mr. Douglas first notices the very prevalent impression,

"(1) *That he was gloomy.* He was indeed often reserved towards strangers; and his faithful rebukes of sin might tend to create an impression that his mind was gloomy. But in fact he was genial and hearty. Especially among his friends this warm and happy character of his mind was very conspicuous. Though he usually liked to live alone (especially in a room connected with some chapel or hospital), so as to be fully master of his own time, yet he was fond of having some missionary as a companion in going about the country: and he delighted to spend his evenings with missionaries and their families, or with any like-minded friend. He had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and was fond of a hearty laugh, which was often the effect of his conversation when he unbent his mind among his intimate friends. Jokes upon *words* he did not relish: the form of the ludicrous which was most congenial to him was what may be in general styled the humorous, as, for instance, anecdotes about remarkable adventures or strange mistakes, examples of unexpected skill in escaping from a dilemma or a difficulty, and singular traits of national peculiarities or personal character. I recollect one occasion, when . . . on board the *Challenger*, while reading aloud the speech of Tertullus before Felix, he burst into a fit of laughter, and having recovered his composure explained that it appeared irresistibly ludicrous as being so like what a Chinaman would say in similar circumstances. He had a wonderful fund of varied anecdotes, both of the graver and the lighter sort, connected with his wide-spread evangelistic labours in so many lands, which gave a great charm to his society. In him also was well exemplified that text, 'Is any merry? let him sing psalms.' He was extremely fond of sacred music, and delighted in singing psalms and hymns, both alone and with others, both in English and Chinese. His acquaintance with music was a great help to him in his mission work, as well as a means of keeping up his cheerful, joyous spirit.

"(2.) *That he was careless of his comfort: e.g.,* such absurd stories as his being ready to leave England for China with a carpet-bag; that he went about in China without a change of dress, 'ready with only scrip and staff,' as I see in a recent Dublin tract. The fact is that he was exceedingly careful of his health, and for that reason, of his comfort, both in regard to clothing and food and general care of himself. Of clothing he had always an abundant supply suited to the different states of weather. . . . When I began to go with him into the country, I was struck with the large quantity both of bedding and body-clothes which he carried with

him (more than I have seen other missionaries use), for we must carry our bedding as well as our changes of dress. His explanation to me was that he always made himself comfortable wherever he went, just as if he were at home. He was also very particular about having his dress thoroughly clean and well arranged. In summer he was so careful in airing his clothes that it was a frequent proviso in appointing a meeting to consult on any matter, 'if it be not a north wind,' as that is the best wind for airing clothes. . . .

"As to *food* (both its material and its preparation) he was very particular. While in Amoy and its neighbourhood he used to eat heartily, especially of pork. I suspect that his spare diet at Nieu-chwang must have been the result of a general feeling of weakness and want of appetite. I recollect hearing that before his last illness he was observed to complain of being exhausted even by the walk (about a mile) from his lodging to the foreign settlement there. But whatever was the cause of the spare diet at Nieu-chwang, the quantity of his food while at Amoy was much about the same as that of his brethren.

"When at all out of sorts he was very careful of himself, and he used to recommend similar care to others. He used often to blame me for not taking what he considered sufficient rest in the hot weather.

"(3) *That he was generally engaged in pioneering work*, a mistake into which even Mr. Johnston has fallen.¹ The fact is that he was usually assisting other missionaries in work already begun. A phrase very frequently on his lips was, 'Do not let anyone be sent out to co-operate with me: I co-operate with others.' I am not certain of the exact character of his work during the three years before he first came to Amoy. Certainly about half that time he was residing in Hong-Kong and in Canton, and during most of the remainder was co-operating, I think, with the German missionaries. The only periods of any length after that time that can be properly called 'pioneering' are his first stay at Swatow (somewhat over two years), and the few months of his residence at Nieu-chwang. But in the Swatow region he had been preceded by the German missionary Lechler; indeed one special reason of his going there was to carry on the work of Mr. Lechler, which had been for some time suspended, and soon after going there he found one of Lechler's converts, a man of very decided character. In his later visits to Swatow, as well as at Amoy, Fuh-chow, Shanghai, and Peking, almost his whole work was co-operating with the missionaries previously settled there, usually in stations already begun or a place where a spirit of inquiry had been already excited.

"(4) *That he was a Baptist*. This report has been industriously spread in some quarters, being founded on the facts that he never administered baptism, and that

¹ Mr. Johnston's view and that of Mr. Douglas I think admit of reconciliation. Mr. J., whom I have quoted with so much pleasure in the body of the work, meant, as I understood him, to distinguish my brother's work simply as *evangelistic*, and not *pastoral*, and on that account necessarily in large measure that of a pioneer—visiting and exploring fields of missionary labour rather than stately cultivating them. This I think really was the distinctive idea and purpose of his life, though in prosecuting this object he made the existing missions and missionary churches in every case his starting-point, and thus spent much of his time and strength in co-operating with other missionaries. His labours on the mainland opposite Hong-Kong, his early excursions amongst the villages around Amoy, his journeys along the canals and rivers of the Shanghai plain, his tentative operations at Swatow, his last days at Nieu-chwang—were of the former sort; his labours at Hong-Kong, at Amoy, at Fuh-chow, at Peking—were of the latter. I am glad, however, that Mr. Douglas has called special attention to an aspect of his missionary life which had been too much overlooked.

on some occasions he worked along with Baptists. I need hardly remind you that he firmly held the scriptural authority of infant baptism, and also of sprinkling, whether as applied to children or adults; and that his sole reason for never baptizing was the desire of so avoiding anything like a *pastoral* relationship. Again, his occasional co-operation with Baptists merely arose from the catholic spirit in which he could co-operate with Christians of any evangelical denomination, along with the circumstance that on one or two occasions the persons who happened to be most thrown in his way were Baptists. By the same style of reasoning it would be easy to prove him an Independent, a Methodist, a Lutheran, or even an Episcopalian, or all of them at once.

“(5) *That he approved of the mode of action of the Plymouth Brethren or of the ‘China Inland Mission.’* I need hardly say—as it is so abundantly manifest—that he had no sympathy with the *doctrines and church order* (or rather the want of definite doctrine and utter absence of church order) which characterize the Plymouth Brethren. . . .

“In regard to his own mode of action, he did not set himself up as a pattern to be copied in these respects. On the contrary, he was accustomed to defend his mode of action, not as a rule to be followed by others, but as a course suited to the special character of his own mind.

“He used to speak of himself as one of those supernumeraries or light-armed soldiers of whom a *small proportion* may be attached to the regular troops. . . .

“As regards the so-called ‘Inland Mission,’ his previous acquaintance with Mr. Taylor, and his catholic manner of ‘hoping all things,’ led him indeed in a private letter (published apparently without any authority) to express his hope that good might come of that movement; but in that very letter he stated very distinctly his disbelief of the practicability (under existing circumstances) of establishing missionaries permanently at such vast distances in the interior as ‘all the provinces where there is yet no missionary.’

“He has often given expression to his decided opinion that the standard of the qualifications of missionaries ought not to be lowered, as what the Chinese field specially needs is not merely men who can preach a little simple truth, but men fully furnished with the *gifts and learning*, as well as the piety and zeal, necessary for wisely watching over the infant churches and native assistants, and for the great work of teaching and training the future ministry of China. Over and over he decidedly refused offers of that very kind of undereducated labourers which the ‘Inland Mission’ so largely employs.

It is a common mistake in determining the views of any historical person to use passages from all parts of his writings, and incidents from all periods of his life, as of equal value, regardless of the law of change and progression which acts on all human minds. To the influence of this law Mr. Burns was no exception. It may be well to indicate a few examples.

“(1) *to Residence at the Ports.*

“In his earlier letters there is often found a tendency to depreciate work at the treaty ports, and a desire that missionaries should mainly reside or travel about in the interior. But afterwards, as he found the difficulties of obtaining healthy residences in the interior, and as the climate began to tell on his own constitution,

originally so very strong, and as the importance appeared of having strong churches at these centres of ever-increasing influence, his views were gradually modified; and while he still urged a greater amount of country work than had been usual in other missions, he was more alive to the need of having comfortable healthy residences at the treaty ports, as points from which to act on the interior. Of this no stronger proof could be desired than the fact that when he left Peking it was not to go to any of the great cities in the *interior*, but to settle at the port of Nieu-chwang, a place of comparatively small population, which derives its chief importance from being the *treaty port* of Manchuria.

“(2) *As to Colloquial Hymns.*

“During the year (1858-9) that we were together at Amoy, he strenuously opposed the attempt to make more *colloquial* hymns than the thirteen then in use (made by the Rev. W. Young, now in Australia), and urged in opposition the claims of hymns in the *literary style*, especially of the ‘Sin-si hap-swan,’ a collection in the literary style which he had made some years before. But very rapidly he not only changed these views, but set himself vigorously to make hymns in the colloquials of Swatow, Fuh-chow, Peking, and of Amoy itself. The hymns in the literary style are no longer used at public worship in the chapels here; and in the collection of sixty colloquial hymns used by the Presbyterian Church here (under the care of the American mission and our own) there are five hymns almost exactly as they came from his hand, and five others which are about half by him, and there is about the same proportion in the hymn-book of the L.M.S. At Swatow, Fuh-chow, and Peking also many of his colloquial hymns continue to be used in the several missions.

“(3) *In regard to the Chinese Dress.*

“Though he adopted it in 1855, and continued to use it till his death, he had for many years regarded it with indifference. Even before I went home (1862) he often told me that he had not found the benefit from it which he had expected, that he did not find it the means of making him more useful, and that he would not advise anyone to adopt it. He considered it much *less safe* than the foreign dress: for instance, once when sailing with me to Anhai in the Gospel Boat, a pirate junk came in sight; I was below at the time, but Mr. Burns called me on deck, that the pirates seeing my foreign dress might be deterred from attacking us. He also often showed a feeling of distress when the Chinese called out, as they did constantly, ‘Look at that foreigner pretending to be a Chinaman!’ And in the years that elapsed since I last saw his face, this feeling of indifference deepened into something like dislike: for I have gathered from quite a number of witnesses in Amoy, Peking, and Nieu-chwang, that he often said that if he had known as much when he adopted the dress as he had learned by painful experience, he *would not have adopted it*; indeed, that he would have changed again to the foreign dress had it not been that he had got accustomed to it, and wished to avoid

the expense and trouble of the change from one style of dress to another so different.”²

In a subsequent letter Mr. Douglas sends me the following deeply touching document, the last lines ever traced by the dying missionary’s hand, and bearing date about a month after his parting message to his mother.

“It is very touching,” writes Mr. Douglas, “to copy out again these minute details about his friends, especially his Chinese friends, and that wonderful composing of his own epitaph when face to face with death: so calm and collected and peaceful; and those last strokes which he ever traced with the pen, his own old well-known hand, yet strangely altered, irregular and trembling from extreme weakness—‘Wm. C. Burns,’ on that 25th February when all his intercourse with *old* friends, even by pen and paper, came to an end.”—

“FOR REV. CARSTAIRS DOUGLAS, AMOY.

“I got a severe chill at the end of the year, which has resulted in a low fever, preventing me from getting refreshing sleep, and so bringing down my strength. In case I should be taken away, I take my pen to say that Dr. Watson will send down my boxes to your address when he meets with a suitable vessel. The key of the overland trunks I shall enclose in this (there is a spare one), and in one of them the keys of the other boxes will be found. The Chinese clothes can be given to old acquaintances, among whom do not forget Tan-tai.³ The Dr.’s watch can be restored to him; my own watch can go home with the overland trunks when there is an opportunity. There is some new flannel and a few pairs of new socks which are at your disposal. Of four coloured silk handkerchiefs please give two to my friend Mr. A. Stronach. I would wish all my packets of letters (which Mr. Swanson took out of my chest of drawers, and put along with books, &c., in a box—you must remember it) to be put in one of the overlands, and sent home along with such as are at present in the boxes. I suppose it will be best to prepare a grave-stone at Amoy, and send it up well packed. For the inscription I would suggest, ‘To the memory of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, A.M., missionary to the Chinese from the Presbyterian Church in England. Born at Dun, Scotland, April 1st, 1815. Arrived in China, November, 1847. Died at Nieu-chwang . . . 1868, aged 53. 2 Corinthians v. chapter.’

“I have more than 300 taels at the British consulate, and when all local expenses are paid, Dr. Watson will remit what remains to your address to pay for the grave-stone, my subscription for Pechuia, &c. As to my present state of feeling, I may refer to the words of Paul, Phil. i. 23, &c. &c.

“Port of Nieu-chwang, Jan. 22d, 1868.”

[Thus far in his own hand: what follows is written by dictation.]

² I have given at length, in the body of this work, the reasons which he himself gave for adopting the Chinese dress, and which, as he then thought, rendered it very useful in certain circumstances. I can, however, easily believe that subsequent experience, and especially the circumstances connected with his arrest in the neighbourhood of Canton, might tend considerably to modify this judgment. I. B.

³ One of the deacons of the L.M.S. at Amoy.

“P.S. Of my Chinese articles the following I should like sent home to my relatives in my overland trunks:—1st, A new port-wine coloured camlet ‘ma-kwa.’⁴ 2d, A long gown of blue merino (or some such fabric), clean, though not new. 3d, A woven silk or floss sash. 4th, A Chinese leather-covered pillow.⁵ 5th, A new Chinese pouch (for tying round the abdomen). 6th, A pair of ivory chopsticks. A feather fan.

“7th, The long fur gown may perhaps suit yourself as a winter house-gown. The fur ma-kwa may be given to the native pastor of the Hok-tai church.⁶ To Tau-lo, the pastor of the Sin-koe-a native church,⁷ may be given a blue gown of heavy and excellent silk, along with a pair of Chinese leggings of flowered blue silk, and *not* wadded. The cloth ma-kwa with silk lining may be given to Tan-tai.⁸ Four or five good gowns I would wish sent down to Swatow to be distributed to A-kee and Kilin of our mission, and A-sun and I-u of the American mission. For A-kee⁹ may be selected a blue silk gown of inferior quality to that given to Tau-lo, also a full length camlet ma-kwa which I have worn a good deal. Then you must still find gowns for such men as I-ju,¹⁰ Liong-lo,¹¹ Bu-liet.¹² Other articles you can distribute north and south¹³ among the most worthy assistants and members, not forgetting my old friend Nui¹⁴ at Pechuia. In making your distribution please consult with your brethren Messrs. Cowie and Macgregor.¹⁵

“I already have asked you to give two silk coloured handkerchiefs to Mr. A. Stronach. Of the three remaining white ones please take for yourself, and ask Mr. Cowie and Mr. Macgregor each to accept a coloured one.

“Mr. Sandeman’s Geneva watch which I left in Mr. Swanson’s hands, I should wish returned to his mother (Mrs. Sandeman) or sister.

“The knife, fork, and most, if not all, of the spoons in the leather case which you gave me belong, I believe, to Mr. Swanson, and should be returned to him.

“The chest of drawers and cane-bottomed couch I leave for the use of the mission: the members can arrange at any time who has the most need of them. There are three volumes of Morrison’s Dictionary, the gift to me of the Rev. Mr. Keedy of London, which have been lent to Mr. Johnson of the Amer. Bapt. Mission, Swatow, for a number of years. He should be requested to give a receipt the same, and promise in case of his leaving China, or prospective decease, to return these to our mission at Swatow.—25th February, 1868.

[Signed with *his own* hand.]

“WM. C. BURNS.”

⁴ Sort of jacket worn *over* the long gown.

⁵ Stiff and round.

⁶ Also called Tek-chhiu-kha, or the second church of Amoy.

⁷ Or first church of Amoy.

⁸ Of L.M.S.

⁹ Who was converted under Mr. Lechler before Mr. B. went to Swatow.

¹⁰ One of the first Pechuia converts, now elder and helper at Chioh-bey.

¹¹ Assisting the Americans.

¹² Of Pechuia.

¹³ That is, from Chin-chow to Khi-boey.

¹⁴ The cloth-dealer.

¹⁵ Mr. Swanson had not then got back.

Mr. Swanson has written an important paper on the general history of the Amoy mission of which I cannot now avail myself, but which I hope will appear in another form. The following glimpse, however, of my brother's last visit to Amoy is so bright and life-like that I gladly insert it here:—

“In 1862 he came here from Fuh-chow. He arrived in the spring of that year, and remained in Amoy till August of the year following, when he left for Peking. Mr. Douglas left Amoy for a furlough home in June of 1862. It was during this last visit that I learned to know, love, and value Mr. Burns: and I can never think of that time without recalling our companying together, and without thanking God for permitting me to know him as I then did. Although he refused to take any part with me in the examination of inquirers, the administration of ordinances, and the general business of the mission, yet his labours and his advice were most valuable. He visited the stations regularly, and preached every Sabbath-day. I can recall how heartily and zealously he threw himself into the breach to help the persecuted brethren at Khi-boey; and I am certain that it was his wisdom and tact that were mainly instrumental in bringing matters to a happy conclusion in that region.

“At that time our American brethren and we jointly had a station at Chang-chow. The native church there had long been forced to meet in a small, confined house, quite unfit for a chapel in such an immense city as Chang-chow. They succeeded in getting a large and commodious house suited for a chapel. We expected some disturbance at its opening, and our expectations were not unfounded. There was some trouble. Mr. Burns went up soon after the opening, stayed in the chapel for two weeks or so, and then Dr. Carnegie and I joined him there. The doctor soon became most popular, and patients came crowding in. Mr. Burns, myself, and the native evangelists had some excellent opportunities for preaching, and I remember yet how delighted he seemed to be to see us all as busy as we could be with this work.

“During this time Mr. Burns also made several visits to our *then* most northerly station, Anhai. We frequently went there as well as to the other stations together. On these journeys he has again and again given me accounts of his life and labours in Scotland, England, and Canada. We often sat up till far on in the morning—I, a most eager listener to the deeply interesting details of his labours.

“While we were in Amoy together we saw each other twice daily. He lived in a room in the Amoy Medical Missionary Hospital, and there I went to see him daily at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, he coming to see me about 5 o'clock in the evening. He had always some very nicely boiled rice and a delicate little pork-chop for me, and used to force me to eat. Oftentimes I used to feel weary and oppressed with a number of things connected with such a scattered and extensive field of labour as that of our mission. I can yet recall his loving, kindly manner, how he used to pat me on the shoulder, lead me to the side of the room where stood a large bamboo couch, and kneel down and pray. These prayers I shall never forget. I was young and inexperienced then, and felt keenly the weight of responsibility that was on me, but he always had a kind word to encourage me. I can remember well one such day when I felt more than usually troubled on account of some mission matters, when he clapped me on the back and told me to

keep my mind easy, for if I were pastor of a church at home, and had some troublesome elders or cantankerous deacons, it would be worse for me than even such trials as I had in Amoy.

“But I cannot omit one thing so bright, so profitable to us during that brief season. He spent most of his evenings in the houses of his brother missionaries, and in our house he was naturally more frequently than in any other. He was one of the most genial, cheerful men I ever met, but he took great care as to when, how, and where he unbent himself. The presence of anyone with whom he had not full sympathy immediately made him quiet, and I have seen him sit long in such circumstances without uttering a single word.

“His short expositions at family worship were always remarkable and most deeply interesting. Mrs. Swanson and he were great friends, and seemed always to understand one another. I remember yet his great anxiety about her at one time when she was rather indisposed.

“He left me for Peking in August, 1863. I saw him on board ship, and very soon after our getting on board the ship left the inner harbour. Next day I saw she was still at anchor off Amoy. I went out to see him, and stayed two hours with him. We prayed together, and I turned to leave. He sent his love to my wife, and I think I hear him yet saying, ‘The Lord bless her and Willy’ (my little boy) ‘and yourself.’ I saw him no more, and shall not see him again till, I trust, we meet above.”

Long months ago, with anxious heart and sore,
We prayed for him, whom our dim fancy's sight
Saw, faintly labouring, 'mid the harvests white,
On Sinim's distant shore;
For selfishly we grudged that one who bore
So well the fiercest onset of the fight,
And used so well the arms of heavenly might,
Should give the conflict o'er.
But even while, with blind, weak love we pray'd
Thus for the toil-worn, bowed, and weary one,
The Master, more compassionate, had said—
“Rest now, thou soldier, rest! Servant, well done!
“Let others hold thy plough, and wield thy blade,
“And wrestle for the crown which thou hast won.”¹⁶

July 8, 1868.

W. B.

THE END.

¹⁶ Lines by an unknown hand, which appeared in the public prints immediately after the tidings of Mr. Burns' death reached Scotland.