

IN MEMORY

OF

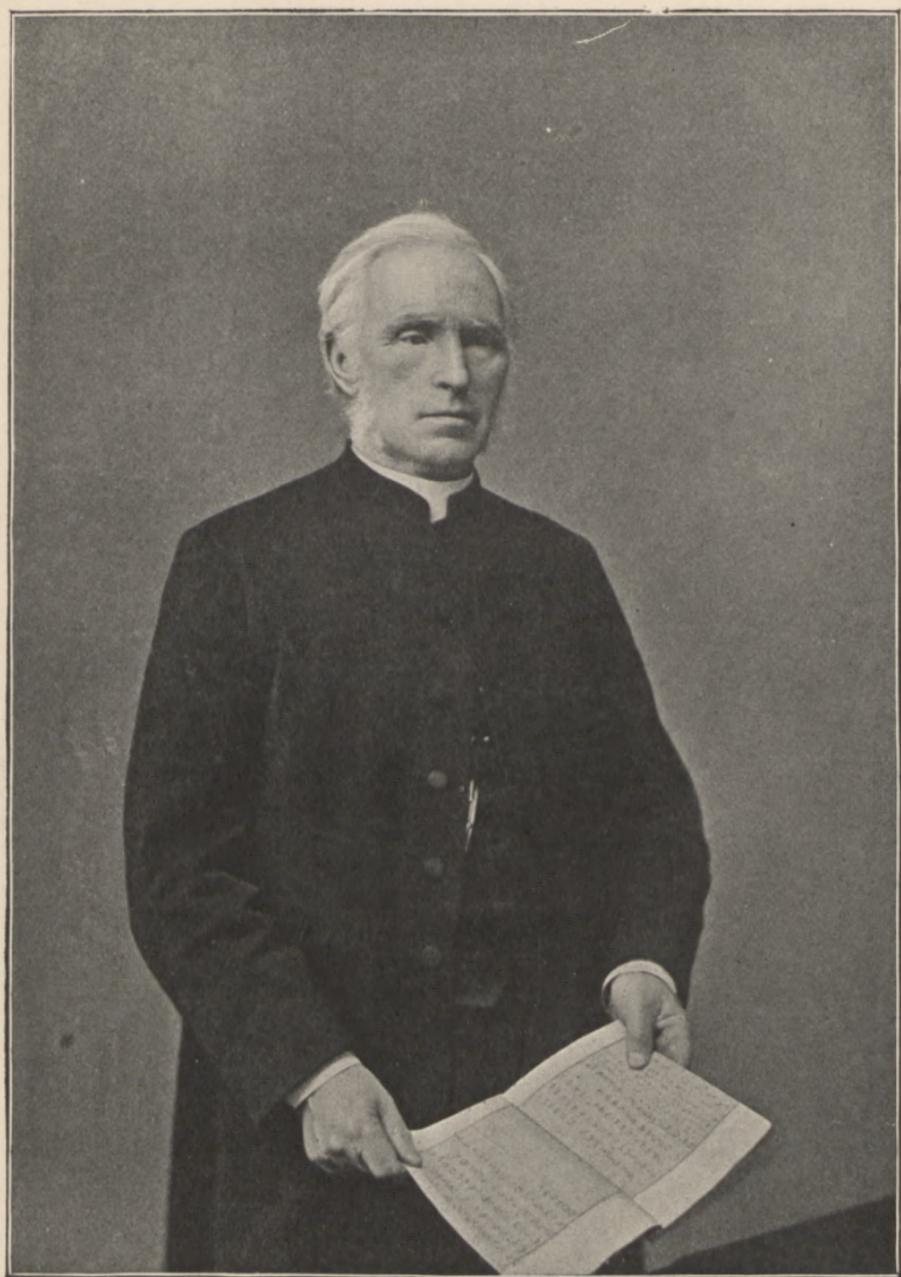
Rev. William Muirhead, D.D.

A SERMON

DELIVERED IN UNION CHURCH, SHANGHAI.

By Dr. Joseph Edkins.

Sunday Evening, October 14th, 1900.



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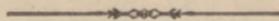
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Funeral of Rev. William Muirhead, D.D.

THE Cathedral was well filled on Friday evening, October 5th, by a very large concourse of sorrowing friends and fellow-workers and residents of every known persuasion, as well as a number of native Christians, to pay the last tribute of respect and affection to the remains of the late Dr. William Muirhead, who departed to that bourne whence no traveller returns, on the Wednesday previous, after having laboured in the vineyard of the Lord in this benighted land since the later forties. The coffin, which was literally covered with wreaths, was received at the porch of the Cathedral by the Right Rev. Bishop Moule, Rev. Mr. Hodges, and Rev. Dr. Edkins; the pall bearers being Mr. W. H. Poate, Mr. G. Matheson, Mr. J. P. Donovan, Rev. W. Nelson Bitton, Rev. J. W. Stevenson, Rev. C. J. F. S. Symons, Mr. J. F. Seaman, and Rev. Timothy Richard. The service, which was a fully choral one, was conducted by Bishop Moule, assisted by Rev. H. C. Hodges and Dr. Edkins, and was very impressive throughout. In the course of the service Dr. Edkins, a fellow-worker of the deceased, delivered the following address:—

“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Our dear lost friend, Dr. William Muirhead, we shall see no more in the flesh. His soul has gone upward to the everlasting home of the saints of God. He was in his 79th year, and came to China in 1847 with Benjamin Southwell and with Alexander Wylie, the well known scholar. He had commenced studying for the law, but while in Edinburgh, his native city, his mind was drawn to missionary work in China. He felt that he was called by duty and as a high and holy privilege to preach Christ to the Chinese. He came direct to Shanghai, and in Shanghai remained during this period of fifty-three years. The Apostle

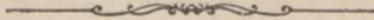
John says: "I heard a voice from heaven saying, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." Our friend, who has now joined this company, always had strong faith in God. He believed in the fulfilment of the promises of Scripture. He believed in that power which changes the hearts of men. He had consciousness of God's presence throughout his missionary life. Had he preached in England as he has done in China he would have been a very successful minister. His exhortations would have turned many wanderers into the way of peace, for he knew well how to be the physician of souls. He aimed directly at the conversion and spiritual growth of those he taught. The assurance of everlasting rest for such men comes to us from the same Spirit who taught to the apostles the deep things of God. "Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours and their works do follow them." Our departed friend was not easily wearied in his work. He preached and wrote incessantly. Yet the spirit in man needs rest, the rest that remains for the people of God. He who is all wise and provides in infinite pity and loving consideration for those who labour in his service knows just when to call the workman to lay down his tools and rest. How then do their works follow them? It is as the fruit grows on the tree. The diligent preacher and faithful missionary sows the seed. The seed springs up, becomes a growing plant, and produces fruit. The result stretches into the far future. There is a blessing wrapped up in the sown seed of the gospel, and the little one becomes a thousand. It is in this way that his works follow the preacher to his rest, and in coming generations many shall arise to call him blessed. So it will undoubtedly be with our brother who has gone to join the company of those who have won their crowns and now sing the song of victory. I was contemporary with him since the year 1848, and was a constant witness of his unflagging energy and evangelical fervour. Great readiness of utterance gave him an open door to the attention of crowds of listeners. He was the instrument of turning many into the Christian path of faith and hope in God. He was happy to act as their guide while he opened before them the Scripture teaching regarding Jesus Christ. A great advantage which he had in appealing to Chinese audiences was his transparent honesty of purpose. He had strong faith in the gospel he taught. To his mind the gospel is a message from God to a lost world, a message of rebuke, affectionate warning and earnest appeal. Here lay the secret of that power by which through his efforts many were led to lay down the weapons of their resistance to the authority of God and come and bow as penitents at the foot of the cross. God works by human instruments. Faith such as that of our friend, whose remains are committed to the tomb to-day, ensures the divine blessing. When we see religious fervour joined with a consistent life in any man we feel instinctively that God is

with him. It is also a fact that devoted men are like the patriarch Enoch in this that before their translation to another sphere they have had this testimony that they pleased God. It is a matter of extreme satisfaction to us, his friends who are left behind for a time in this changing world, that we see in him another eminent example now added to the long line of men who shine by their character as those who like Enoch walk with God. His voice, so persevering, so earnest in presenting to men the gospel appeal, will now be hushed for ever in the tomb. Younger men will come on stimulated by his example as subalterns in new regiments in the army of the champions of the cross. Like the navigator in distant oceans he came away long ago from England with special work to do. It was to pilot many wanderers in this country over the stormy waters of life's sorrowful sea to the haven of eternal rest. This he has done. Hope was the star to which he ever pointed. Faith in Jesus was the anchor on which he taught men to rely. A passion for converting men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God was an ever-burning fire in his breast. If he had a joy it was to hear tidings of the progress of the kingdom of Jesus amongst men. If he had a disappointment it was that more men did not believe in the gospel of salvation. If he had a fear it was that worldliness should draw away men's minds from the contemplation of soul-saving truths and mind-enlightening principles.

The interest he felt in passing events, in political changes, and in intelligence from the seat of war was keen and constant. His translations in Chinese of a historical and scientific nature have had an extensive circulation. If, however, we could hear him to-day sending his last message to the men and women of Shanghai, where he lived and laboured for so long a time, it would be this. The Christian hope is real. Our duty to obey God's commands in the Bible is plain. Safety is found in believing in Jesus. The secret of happiness is to enter on the life of communion with God. Here there is an infallible cure for all the restlessness of the sceptic and the guilty fears of the impenitent. Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call ye upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him return unto the Lord and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. This is the message he would send to us. "Weep not for me; but be diligent in season and out of season, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

Almost every one who attended the service at the Cathedral followed the hearse to the old cemetery; and the cortege, with the chief mourners on foot, followed by a long

line of carriages, was very imposing. Bishop Moule read the last part of the service, which was as touching as it was impressive, at the grave. Among those present we noticed Sir Ernest Satow, Chief-Justice Wilkinson, Mr. F. S. A. Bourne, H.B.M.'s Consul; Mr. E. A. Hewett, Chairman of the Municipal Council; most of the Consuls; Mr. R. E. Bredon, Deputy Inspector General I. M. C.; F. A. Aglen, Commissioner of Customs, and the Councillors, and many of the leading residents, whilst the missionary element was strongly represented.



"He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost."

SERMON

ON OCCASION OF

The Death of Rev. Dr. William Muirhead.

PREACHED IN UNION CHURCH, SHANGHAI,

By Dr. Joseph Edkins.

Sunday Evening, October 14th, 1900.

ACTS 11.24, "He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord."

I have been asked as one who was closely associated with Dr. Muirhead for more than fifty years to speak to you tonight on his life career. He was a good man, spiritually minded, and a helper of many. He laid the foundation long ago of this congregation, which has gradually grown to its present size and prosperity during the ministry of seven pastors who have in succession acted as spiritual guides in this pulpit and fed the flock of God here gathering for worship.

Dr. Muirhead's chief desire always was to see the Saviour glorified in all his pastoral work and souls saved through faith in the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. He believed that when Christ gave the command to His apostles to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature it was the dawn of a new era in the history of mankind. In his interesting little book called "China and the Gospel" he says the changes that have occurred in this country since treaties were made with the nations of Europe are an index to still more marvelous upturnings in the future. It was thirty years ago that he said the history of the coming time in China will be diversified by political, social, and religious

movements far more striking than those of the period which had just passed away. The changes of the past were preparatory to those of the new era. He adds triumphantly that however great the difficulties in the way, however opposed the Chinese people may be to improvements or innovations, they cannot resist the progress of events. The face of the nation is destined to be greatly stirred. The heart of the Chinese race must be laid open to new influences. Who art thou O great mountain? Before the servant of Christ thou shalt become a plain.

There have indeed been very extensive changes as thus foretold, and the condition of the people has greatly altered during the last fifty and even thirty years. When Dr. Medhurst came to settle in Shanghai in 1843, Christian services were held in the city and the British Consul resided there in a large native house. The British Consul did not move out of the Chinese city to the foreign settlement till the land known as the British concession had been very considerably transformed from its original appearance as an expanse of open fields, cemeteries, and clusters of native houses. It had taken to some extent the form of the present streets, which remained for a long time without the names they now bear. There was an old and a new China, and Dr. Muirhead lived, it may be said, for thirteen years in the old China and afterwards for forty years in the modern Shanghai, characterized by very intense commercial activity and industrial life. There was a new treaty made in 1860, and the foreign ministers went to reside in Peking. Those of us who belonged to the London Mission, separated in various directions about the same time. Dr. Griffith John went to Hankow. Dr. Alexander Williamson went to Chefoo. I went myself to Tientsin and afterwards to Peking. Dr. Muirhead maintained his position faithfully in Shanghai. He was here before the Tai-ping rebellion originated, and witnessed its effects on the country during the occupation of Nanking by the insurgent chief, extending to many years while the Tai-ping

armies and the Imperial hosts arrayed against them spread devastation over the fairest portions of this devoted land. Nothing shows more clearly the persistent vitality of the Chinese race than that the population of the country still maintains its wonderfully high amount after those many summers and winters of indiscriminate slaughter.

All through that melancholy period it was well to have gospel preachers like our honored friend, whose loss we now mourn, to stand between the living and the dead to preach the gospel to the suffering people and pray for the divine intervention to terminate the horrors of war. He had excellent mental gifts, and soon learned to be an able preacher in Chinese. Insensibly he took Dr. Medhurst for his model, who had for many years laboured in Batavia and knew Dutch and Malay as well as Chinese. He had been in Java and the Straits Settlements from 1816 to 1842. Medhurst was a powerful preacher, who prepared well thought out sermons in English and in Chinese. I remember one in particular on the death of Moses preached in English in the first of the three structures known in succession as Union Church; that sermon made a great impression at the time. The active presence among us of such a man had a visible effect on his juniors in the mission nearly all through the fifties. He preached in the Shanghai city on Sundays to large audiences of well-dressed Chinese. He was a student of the Chinese classics and translated the Shu-king into English. During those years when Dr. Muirhead was learning to be the man he afterwards became, Dr. Medhurst and Dr. John Stronach, both of them able translators, were engaged in preparing the book-style version of the Bible. Excellent Chinese scholars came to help in translation into their language of all sorts of useful books. In this work of translation Dr. Muirhead engaged very early. The Pilgrim's Progress he first took in hand. He proceeded to geography, both political and physical. Two thick volumes

were the result of his active efforts during the first seven years of his missionary life. In his ninth year he published a History of England in two thick volumes. Few men have been so industrious as he. Before he had been twenty years in China he had published about forty theological tracts and books, the names of which are given in Wylie's Memorials of the Protestant Missionaries. Few men have been more diligent in the use of their time as missionaries. When we think of his ardent zeal for the spread of the gospel, his laborious work as a preacher, his numerous translated treatises and his activity as a secretary and member of committees on missionary matters and tract and Bible circulation one cannot but feel like King David when he followed Abner to the tomb. The king lifted up his voice and wept and said to his servants, "Know ye not that a prince and a great man is fallen this day in Israel?" He has left an example behind him which younger men may well follow of singular devotedness as a Christian, as a preacher, and as a translator. Quite lately I have heard that in the committee of annotators on the Bible he shone in the correct exposition of the Word of God. My informant thinks he was not exceeded as an expositor by any one among them. It is a good thing for the Christian cause in China that he was induced to leave his Scottish home and engage in the work of evangelizing the Chinese.

The motive power which operates in the lives of such men is the hope of the world, which would go to ruin without them. Jesus committed the precious trust of the gospel of salvation to certain zealous believers, and He armed them with power from on high. Our brother possessed much of that power. It is a most consolatory circumstance, when we consider the rushing energy of evil in the world, that there is a band of faithful men who hold the fort of truth against the unbelieving host of doubters. Such men are, like Abdiel among the rebel angels, the representatives of God and religion in the midst of

faithless crowds. It is in this way that God works slowly and surely for the restoration of manhind to the lost paradise of the promises. Some men say the age of men of genius is passed. There will be no new Raphael, there will be no new Shakespeare, there will be no new Isaac Newton. However that may be there are many industrious workers in the vineyard of the Lord. This is what the world languishing in sin and misery most needs. Jesus has been born in the city of David, a Saviour for all that weep and tremble for their destiny hereafter. Let men relate the story.

The wandering shepherds tell the breathless tale,
 Of the bright choirs that woke the sleeping vale;
 Tell how the skies with sudden glory flamed,
 Tell how the shining multitude proclaimed
 Joy, joy to earth. Behold the hallowed morn
 In David's city, Christ the Lord is born.
 Glory to God let angels shout on high,
 Goodwill to men the listening earth reply.

During half a century our deceased friend was faithfully doing the work of the shepherds of Bethlehem. A diligent, watchful shepherd he was, one who gladly went out to find lost sheep, and meeting them in the wilderness, brought them safely back to Christ.

How can we fail to sympathise with such a man in his steady, earnest labour continued through so long a period of time? Who can fail to admire him for the disinterestedness of his motive and the wise disposition of his time which he divided out in such ways as would be most beneficial to the Chinese and helpful to the cause of Christianity in China? Has there ever been a missionary, Catholic or Protestant, who has laboured as long, as consistently, and as faithfully in one city through more than half a century as a witness for the gospel in China? It was apparently an arrangement of that divine providence which directs human affairs, that such a man should appear before the Chinese through this long space of

time in this thriving city of Shanghai to tell them of the Christian hope and of the life to come, and to show them by a living example what is meant by the presence of the Holy Spirit embodied in a Christian man. The Chinese need instruction on these things. It is not enough that the future state is suggested to them by the setting sun which disappears in the west to return next morning. Yet it satisfied the poet Goethe, who said on one occasion to a friend, "The sun while it sinks, continues the same sun. It disappears to return once more." "At the age of seventy-five," he continued, with much cheerfulness, "one must of course think sometimes of death. But this thought never gives me the least uneasiness, for I am fully convinced that the spirit in man is a being of a nature quite indestructible, and that its activity continues from eternity to eternity." "Then," he added "the soul of the dying man is like the sun, which seems to set only to our earthly eyes. In reality it never sets, but shines on unceasingly."

The Christian hope meets this spontaneous desire. This longing of the soul for immortality is satisfied by definite statements on the testimony of Jesus. It was He who gave us the gospel which brings life and immortality to light. While the good man stands on the shores of time with the ocean of eternity in front of him he is cheered with the assured hope of the life to come because he looks on the soul as indestructible. The Greek and Roman philosophers held this view. The Jews in the time of our Lord held this doctrine and founded it upon the instructions of the Old Testament. The apostles taught by Jesus Himself spread far and wide among all believers in the gospel a strong belief in the future state of the soul. Our Lord Himself has taught us that the unbelievers shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into life eternal. He whom we mourn to-day loved to picture to an audience the entrance of the ransomed soul to heaven

and the eternal joy in which the dying saint will, on his departure from this world, for ever share. Swiftly passing the barrier between life and death, he leaves this workshop of busy activity for the eternal home beyond, the rest of believers, "the bosom of his Father and his God." He goes to receive the crown of righteousness promised to all who love his appearing. The Chinese are a practical race, preferring the secular to the spiritual. Dr. Muirhead saw this and acted accordingly; for he was a broad-minded man who read much in books of a varied character and felt a pleasure in translating historical and other instructive works into Chinese. His great diligence and unusual strength of physical constitution enabled him to accomplish a very large amount of useful work of this literary kind.

A man's development begins with the mother's training. She is the first educator. Then comes the school master and the college professor, and the pupil learns to read to advantage the works of great authors. But mental development does not end with school and college. It continues when the learner and the college-trained man becomes himself an actor. Dr. Muirhead came early to Shanghai and easily fell into the ways of thinking that prevailed in the London Mission at that time. We are made in great part by our environment. But beside environment men have each a character of their own which belongs to the individual. He had a character by which he was naturally philanthropic, disinterested, loyal, and kind-hearted. An excellent accountant, he was scrupulously careful in the management of the funds of a public and charitable kind committed to his hands from time to time. These desirable qualities he brought with him. In the acquisition of knowledge and the experience of missionary life, in his voluminous correspondence, and in his work as a secretary, he developed special aptitude as occasion required. For instance, his Famine Report of 1877 shows how death

from hunger and typhus fever spread over large portions of five provinces in the north of China till the population was lessened by eleven millions. This great disaster called out a whole army of missionaries to assist in distributing relief, some of whom caught fever and died. Such an overwhelming calamity woke up compassion in many hearts. Dr. Muirhead was extremely active in corresponding and collecting funds. He was selected to write the report, which, with the appendix, amounts to 157 closely printed pages. It constitutes a vivid picture of dire distress resulting from a drought of many years. It cost the government more than half a million pounds sterling, and foreigners contributed 200,000 taels. He shows how Catholic and Protestant missionaries with Consuls and others ministered with great effect to the necessities of the people and saved the lives of tens of thousands. Rain fell at last over a part of the famine area in the summer of 1878, and soon after the relief work was closed. It lasted from autumn, 1877, to autumn, 1878. Such work shows how necessary to China in all the interior provinces is the presence of missionaries. They are required by the people in those times when their lot is hard to bear, to give them relief and diminish the melancholy effects of disease and famine. Let any one read the many letters of Rev. Timothy Richard in Dr. Muirhead's famine report in order to see the variety and depth of misery to which the people of this country are liable. How is it that the northern provinces are so much afflicted by drought? From this disaster the inhabitants of Central China are comparatively free. Here the rice crops are abundant. Canton and Fukien also look to Central China for the rice they cannot themselves raise. Shanghai then is naturally a philanthropic centre. Dr. Muirhead was peculiarly fitted to be a famine relief secretary resident in Shanghai, discharging his duty *con amore* in times of the sorest need.

He says of opium smoking: "I have seen enough to touch the hardest heart, and that might justly lead those who have to

do with this trade solemnly and entirely to renounce it. Not one word can be advanced in its defence. Let no one say it is a useful medicine and only its abuse is to be condemned. The physical and social effects of opium smoking are sufficient to demonstrate that it ought not to be pleaded for, for it is a destructive and degrading vice and affords no compensation to its victims in the way of personal or relative advantage.

How great is the need of the gospel message to be sounded in the ears of the Chinese as a warning against opium smoking ! Dr. Muirhead gives the following facts from Dr. Dudgeon's reports : Among small officials, 40 % are opium smokers ; merchants, 20 % ; men servants of Mandarins, 70 to 80 % ; women servants of Mandarins, 30 to 40 % ; of the fighting soldiers, 20 to 30 %, and the same is true of the class of scholars ; of the eunuchs in the palace, 50 %, so that 3,000 smokers belong to this class. In Shansi, where opium is grown, 40 to 60 % of the field labourers are victimised, and from 4 to 5 per cent in provinces where it is not grown. This is a mournful picture.

Such is China now. But Christian men and women have advanced into all parts of this land with the cross as the only effectual remedy. In the Book of Revelation Jesus gives authority to His two witnesses, and they prophesy in sack-cloth. Truth was to be told to men sorrowfully as well as cheerfully. Such was our departed brother, a faithful witness on behalf of the gospel during a long course of years when there was a loud call for such testimony, and he gave both sides of the gospel call.

Many of the witnesses have lately become martyrs who have suffered death for the gospel testimony at the hands of cruel and unreasonable men. He was deeply affected by this new feature in missionary history. No one could have foretold that very many missionaries and native converts would in this fatal year lose their lives in an indiscriminate persecution of all foreigners and of all those men who loved foreign ways of thinking. Yet it has been so. Our friend whom we remember

to-day, saw all this and made it the subject of much prayer. His house was a place where prayer was wont to be made.

Now the labourer's task is o'er,
 Now the battle day is past.
 Now upon the farther shore
 Lands the traveller at last.
 There the tears of earth are dried,
 There the hidden things are clear.
 There the work of life is tried
 By a juster Judge than here.
 Father! in Thy gracious keeping
 Leave we now Thy servant sleeping.

On Wednesday, October 3rd, almost his last words before his spirit left the earthly tabernacle, were, "When I awake I am still with Thee." Before he became unconscious he listened, evidently with deep interest, to the first verse of "Jesus, lover of my soul." When he heard the words "Safe into the haven guide," "Oh receive my soul at last," he raised his hand as if to say, "It is enough." Then he passed away.

How sure, how evident it is, that though he is dead he yet speaketh, in the hearts of his dearly-loved Chinese converts especially!

At a memorial service held this morning in the London Mission, three of them expressed their sorrow, and in addition to what Mr. Bitton and I said, urged on the people to imitate Dr. Muirhead's loving heart and prayerful diligence in the discharge of all his missionary work.

He lived near to God. He was a man of prayer. His thoughts, when near his end, were upon the heavenly inheritance. He seems to resemble Simeon, who said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation. The Holy Ghost was upon him, and this made him a good man, full of faith, who has added many of the heathen to the Christian fold. They will welcome him joyfully in the home of all believers, where he will be made exceedingly glad in the presence of his God and Saviour.

Letter from Rev. James Thomas.

BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIBLE SOCIETY,
146 Queen Victoria Street,
LONDON, *October 12th, 1900.*

DEAR MRS. MUIRHEAD:

I cannot tell you how deeply I sympathise with you in your great sorrow and bereavement. With all my heart I sorrow with you, for I have lost one of my warmest friends. From the time when I landed in China in January, 1868, until he was taken your dear good husband has had a very warm place in my heart. He was more like a father to me than a friend. For years he had practically been the minister of Union Church, but when I arrived to take charge of it as its formal minister, he gave me invaluable help. By every right of long experience and years of earnest labour he might well have felt that he had a claim to the direction of the affairs of the church. Yet he stood absolutely aside, save that he was ready at all times to give me the counsel which I was not slow to seek, and was most willing to take the service for me when I was either ill or dispirited. I have ever cherished for him a tender and true affection. As a missionary he was one of the most laborious and unselfish men I ever knew. He was never weary in well doing, and great number of the Chinese will bless God that he ever went to China. He was a noble-hearted man and a splendid missionary, and now that he has finished his course, there is not a cloud to dim the sky into which he has entered.

