

EXECUTIONS IN CANTON.—At a recent meeting of the Asiatic Society the secretary read a paper of great interest, by Mr. T. T. Meadows, translator to Her Britannic Majesty's Consulate in China, descriptive of the execution of 34 rebels, or bandits, which took place in Canton on the 30th of July last. After a description of the place of execution, which was secured by a strongly guarded door, and after stating that more than 400 human beings have been put to death in the same place within the past eight months, Mr. Meadows states that he entered the place accompanied by two English residents at Canton, and found there a few of the lower officials. The only preparation visible was a cross, fixed up for the infliction of the highest legal punishment practised in China,—cutting up alive. There was a fire of fragrant sandalwood burning before the shed where the Mandarins sit to superintend the executions, in order to conceal the horrid stench arising from the decomposed heads remaining there. After waiting a considerable time, all the criminals were introduced, most of them walking to their places, but many carried in baskets, and tumbled out on the spot appointed for them, where they lay powerless, either from excess of fear or from treatment inflicted during the trial and imprisonment. A man stood behind each criminal, and placed him in a kneeling position, with his face towards the ground, holding him in this position by grasping his hands, which were bound behind his back. In case of resistance, which happens very rarely, the criminal's *queue* is held by a second assistant, and dragged forward by force, so as to keep the neck extended. When all the criminals were placed in the required positions, the executioner seized a sabre with both hands, and proceeded to his work. In the present instance the man was a mild-looking soldier, selected from the ranks of the army. The sword was a common sabre of three feet in length, and one of those employed on the occasion was laid on the society's table. It appears that there is no official weapon required, for the officers of the army, anxious to "flesh their swords," send them for the purpose to the executioner, who has thus a sufficient supply for his most extensive operations. The number decapitated on the occasion described was 33; and the executioner took up a fresh sword as soon as he felt the edge of the one employed becoming dull, which was usually the case after cutting off two or three heads. When all was ready the man stood firm, with his legs somewhat apart. On hearing the word "*Pan*" pronounced by the officer superintending, and after a sharp order to the criminal, "Don't move!" he raised his sword straight up, and brought it rapidly down with the full strength of both arms, giving additional force to the blow by dropping his body perpendicularly to a sitting posture. The horrid task was soon done; after cutting off the head of one victim the man threw himself, by a bound, into position by the side of the next; and, in somewhat less than three minutes, the whole 33 were headless—the head in every case but the first being completely severed at one blow. In three or four cases, where the criminals retained their full strength, the bodies, after decapitation, rose quite upright; and Mr. Meadows is satisfied that unless restrained by the man behind they would have sprung into the air. When this part of the tragedy was over, the more horrible work of slow death was carried into effect upon the remaining criminal, who was bound to the cross mentioned above. He was a strongly-built man, apparently 40 years old, who had escaped in the first instance, but who had voluntarily surrendered himself to certain death in order to save from torture his wife and family, who had been seized by the Chinese Government, with the cruel policy usual on such occasions. In this instance the flesh was cut from the forehead, breast, and extremities of the sufferer with a short knife, which was on the table before the meeting; the body was immediately taken from the cross, and the head cut off. The duration of the punishment was about four or five minutes. The bodies were then packed up in coffins and carried away.