

NOTES ON CHINA AND THE CHINESE.

(Concluded.)

Some years ago we heard that a rebellion had broken out in the south of China,—that the leader was a literary candidate who had been for some time under missionary instruction,—and that the objects of the outbreak were religious as well as political. News soon followed of the rapid successes of the rebels,—of their capture of Nankin and near approach to Peking; and about the same time we began to hear more of the mongrel and seemingly blasphemous compound of Christianity and Confucianism which they professed. Their leaders—in the pride of victory it was said—had assumed the names of the Trinity. China under them was the heaven of Scripture; while various old Jewish rites, such as that of animal sacrifices, were religiously performed. Then the tide seemed to turn against them; they were beaten back to the south, and now from official accounts, they are generally represented as merely organized bandits and murderers whom Europeans, instead of encouraging, should aid the authorities in suppressing.

Were this rebellion only an uprising of the old Chinese element against their Tartar invaders and rulers, it would deserve notice. But associated as it has been with the labors of missionaries and some of the truths of the Bible, the only wonder is, that we know so little and care so much less about it. As far as I have been able to gather the chief facts of the case from books and men who have spent some time in China, they are very wonderful. Tai-ping-wang, the leader of the movement, seems to be a man of deep feeling and with a strong actuating sense of religion. He had very little intercourse with Mr. Roberts, the missionary, to whom he was brought in the most accidental manner, by a friend, and from whom he received some tracts and a Bible. Sometime after falling sick, he had dreams and visions, but of this part of his life almost nothing is known. When he next appears, it is at the head of an army, chiefly composed of the members of secret societies which the Tartar government had never been able to put down in the provinces about Canton, and of turbulent bands from the mountainous districts. In his camp, the Sabbath was strictly observed; tracts and parts of the Scripture were printed and circulated in tens of thousands, and so zealous were many of his followers in this work, that they used to put copies in tiny vessels which they would float down the great river Kiang to their enemies the Imperialists. Tai-ping-wang himself has never been seen by Europeans since the rebellion broke out; and his death has been reported rather more than half a dozen times; but there is little doubt that he is still alive, though Chinese notions of etiquette render it impossible that so exalted a person should be seen by the crowd

or by strangers. We should not forget, too, when disparaging stories are told about the rebels, that we have been accustomed to derive most of our information about the rebels from the Imperialists, who have not the slightest scruple in telling facts backward or in any way that suits their own purpose. It is much to be regretted that Lord Elgin, in his trip up the Kiang, acting evidently upon the statements of the interpreters of the Chinese government, did not seek any intercourse with them, but rather kept them off in the most hostile and insulting manner. It surely does not become the representatives of a Christian nation to act unfairly towards, and to look with prejudiced eyes upon men, many of whom seem to be struggling to the truth, merely to please that government which has never once kept faith with us. But if God wills it otherwise, our opposition will do little harm except to ourselves; for now that the Imperialists have again brought upon themselves the might of Britain and France, it is most probable that the days of the Manchoo dynasty are numbered; for rent as the country has been for years by the most devastating civil war, it can scarcely hold together against the formidable attack preparing against it from without.

And thus a mighty drama is now being enacted in China, which affects the weal of three hundred and fifty millions of human beings, about as many as there are in all Europe and America, and yet the Christian churches do not seem to think that it much concerns them. The proportion of Protestant missionaries to the population is not so great, I think, as if all British America had one minister. No efforts have been made to enlighten the rebels, though the work seems half done to our hands. We have set them down as blasphemers, without considering that that may appear profanity to us which their modes of speech and thought render harmless to their understanding. I for one do not believe that all this wild fermenting of the Chinese mind is without a divine meaning. Chaos there may be yet, but surely the Spirit of God is brooding over the waters. Where a free Bible is, I have faith that the truth will rise above all confusions and errors, till at length it shine clear into the dimmest eye. And how much better these upheavals, and new thoughts, and leavening influences, and ebbs and flowings of success, than the former torpid and chilling state of the Chinese mind, when the whole face of the country spiritually was like a stagnant, unwholesome pool. "Truth, like a torch, the more it's shook it shines." Yes, there is a hope for China as for all lands, because the truth is powerful, because the Holy Spirit is divine, because Jesus Christ reigns.