

Political and General Miscellany.

From the Home and Foreign Journal.

A CHINESE PRINTING PRESS IN RICHMOND.

I have often heard of the cheapness and abundance of books in China, and felt a good deal of curiosity to see the process of printing. I saw, the other day, a Chinese printing press in actual operation in Richmond, Va. Let me try to describe it for the readers of the Journal:—

It was at the Richmond Female Institute. Dr. Ball, of Canton, who has been sixteen years a Missionary in China, was exhibiting his collection of Chinese curiosities to the young ladies of that Institution. The spacious hall of the Institute had been arranged for the purpose, and the walls were hung all round with the frowning and grotesque pictures of China's idols, and the delineations of the punishments which they suppose to be inflicted on the wicked. Several score of little battered deities, of all sorts and sizes, in all imaginable postures, some standing on one leg, others supported by turtles and snakes, some riding on tigers, and one standing on his head with his heels in the air, were staring us in the face with great goggle eyes, until really one could almost fancy he was in a heathen land, where these things are thus paraded forth, not as objects of curiosity, but of worship, not as matters of sport, but of reverence and dread. Every one of the images before us had actually been adored. It was a saddening, sickening feeling that came over me as I passed from one to another of these hideous delineations, and remembered that to these things, and such as these, *one third* of the human race bow, and render the homage due to God. It was almost as if I had walked with Ezekiel, in the vision, through the "chambers of imagery," and beheld "every form of creeping things and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel portrayed upon the wall round about." But I did not intend to speak of these things.

Among the articles on the table, which Dr. Ball exhibited and explained, there was a complete and veritable Chinese printing press, one of the kind actually in use all over China, and with which they print cheaper than the foreigners there can, with all the aid of their inventive genius and machinery.

The Chinese, as is well known, do not use moveable metallic type as we do, though of late some have been manufactured by the Missionaries, but as yet they are unable to compete with the native printers for cheapness. Whatever they wish to print is first cut upon wooden blocks. The wood of the pear tree is most used. The article which they wish printed having been copied fairly, is pasted with a thin paste made of rice water, to the smooth face of the block. The paper is rubbed off, the black marks of the writing remain, and the workman proceeds to cut out all the places where no black appears. This is the *typesetting* part of the process. Now for the printing.

The implements used consist of a saucer filled with ink, (which is a mixture of lamp black and rice-water,) a large brush made out of the fibres of a peculiar kind of bark, and a board on which the ink is poured, and rubbed up with this brush. This constitutes the inking apparatus.

The press itself consists of a small bit of wood about as long as the page to be printed, and perhaps half an inch thick, and two inches wide. Some of the fibres of that same bark of which the brush is made, are wrapped around it so as to make it a little elastic, and tied at the top so as to form a sort of

handle. It can be held and used somewhat as a smoothing iron would be in ironing clothes.

The block having been prepared, is placed firmly on a table. The operator, who, in China, always *sits* at his work, rubs his brush on the board on which the ink has been poured, and then passes it over the block so as to ink the characters. By his side lie a number of piles of paper cut of suitable size. One of these is laid on the block, and pressed or *ironed* down equably with the bit of covered wood I have described. That is all.

The whole apparatus may cost about a dollar. It is portable, compact, and not liable to get out of order. A little practice enables one to print with tolerable perfectness. Several of the young ladies of the Institute printed a few sheets in order to see how it was done; probably the first Chinese printing that was ever done in Richmond.

There are three remarkable facts which I will notice in connection with this description:—

1. The first is, that *the people of China are emphatically a reading people*. No nation that ranks among the uncivilized has so large a proportion of inhabitants who can read; and some that are civilized are not much in advance of them. And Christian books are read by them, are preserved and circulated from one to another, when placed in their hands.

2. The second is, that *the printed language of China is the same all over the Empire*, notwithstanding the differences in their spoken language. A Canton man cannot understand a Shanghai man *speaking* to him. But anything printed or written is equally intelligible to them both. This may be illustrated by the figures or "Arabic characters" which we use and which mean the same to the English, French, German, Italian or Turk. The Chinese characters (like the figures 1, 2, 3, &c.) stand for words, * letters, and hence, though pronounced differently, are written the same, and understood alike by them all.

3. *This printed language is the tongue of one third part of the human race*. Shall any exertions be deemed too great which may be useful, in order to give them the word of God, so that they may read "in their own tongue wherein they were born?"

B. M., Jr.

From the London Times.

LETTER FROM CONSTANTINOPLE.

This capital has for some length of time been the scene of many mysteriously perpetrated robberies of houses, and the equally mysterious and sudden disappearance of many an English private or A. B. On the 2nd January a gipsy came to the chief cavass, or superintendent of police, and offered to disclose the haunt of a gang of murderers on payment of a reward of one thousand piastres. Though immediately secured, he refused to divulge a single fact without the promise of the above sum. The threat of immediate execution was next tried on him, when the gipsy declared the whole as a got up story. Hereupon he was sent in the charge of a cavass to the prison, but managed to make his escape. Next morning he was found dead in the open street, with four deep gashes in his breast. It is supposed that the gang got wind of the gipsy's intentions to betray them and accordingly quietly despatched him. In the evening of the 3rd, as some cavasses were making their rounds in one of the streets of Galata, they observed two men carrying a large bag between them, apparently with much difficulty. The policemen suspected them, when they let fall their bag and took to their heels. The bag was found to contain the body of an English soldier, with a bullet through