

probably heaved its last gasp in that dreadful spot. Oh! are not the dark places of the earth full of the habitations of cruelty? All hail, blessed Gospel! it is thou alone that hast made us to differ.

Still, though Chinese parents may destroy their children, they *must marry them*. Living or dead, every Chinese female must be married. If she be dead, the parents wait until she would have been fifteen or sixteen had she lived. A husband is then sought for. An image is made to represent the bride; a procession is formed, the bridegroom is seated by the senseless block, and the whole of the nuptial ceremonies are performed as if the thing were a reality instead of a sham.

We will wind up our long story by a few remarks on the *language*. There can be no doubt that Chinese is the most difficult of all languages on the face of the earth; and we could not help feeling a profound respect for the courage and perseverance of those devoted men who are grappling with that difficulty. The language is in most respects *sui generis*; it owns only a remote affinity to other tongues. Properly speaking, it has no rules of grammar, nay, it has *no words*—no words, that is, built up of words or syllables. The written language is nothing more than a prodigious array of arbitrary signs, each of which represents an object or an idea. To learn the language is, therefore, a mighty and persistent effort of the memory. The learner must, by dogged perseverance, accustom himself to connect such and such a meaning to such and such queer strokes and quavers. In this way, and only in this, can he learn the language. No one can look at the perpendicular columns of Chinese characters without feeling that there is something very hieroglyphic in the aspect of the writing. We are at once struck with a resemblance between Chinese and Egyptian inscriptions. Now, it is an ascertained fact that the earliest form of Chinese writing was simply hieroglyphic, and the present style is nothing more than a modification of those original pictures. It is most curious and interesting to trace out, in many of the present characters, the lineaments of the primeval figures depicted. Formerly a single mountain or hill was written as a triangle; a range of hills was implied by two or more combined. Sunrise or morning was shown by a circle above a line; sunset was a circle under a line. A son was depicted by the figure of a person kneeling with folded hands; a father by a person standing with arms extended in a protecting attitude. All these, and many other original pictures, can be readily traced in the present style of writing, though the forms have, for convenience sake, yielded to important modifications.

The redeeming feature of the language is the fact that the written language is one and the same everywhere. When a man has once mastered Chinese so as to be able to write it (a point which but few attempt), he may literally make books "for the million." From north to south, from east to west, every *reading* Chinaman (and all but a small minority can read), may be blessed by the silent instructor.

But what of the spoken language? It is a Babel of Babels. You may see a dozen Chinamen of different provinces conning a placard in the street; and every man knows what it means; but the chances are that not one of them could make his fellow understand what he had been reading. The same written characters are pronounced in a totally different way in different districts. The dialects are *legion*. You may cross over a river, or journey twenty miles further into the country, and you find you are amongst a people with a totally different speech to that which you left behind you.

It is easy to see how this circumstance limits the usefulness of Missionaries. When a man has acquired the *written* language, he must set himself to master the dialect of his district. That district may be a very small one, but unless he get up *two* dialects (a hard thing to do), he cannot stir an inch beyond his contracted sphere. When this is borne in mind, it will be seen that the idea of