

## LITERATURE.

## CHINA.

*Its State and Prospects.* By W. H. Medhurst, S. Row, Paternoster-row, London; C. H. Belcher, Halifax, N. S.

This is another valuable work on China, for which we are indebted to the industrious zeal of a missionary. The avowed purpose is to disclose the prospects of China as a field for missionary enterprise; and most of the views brought under our consideration have an especial reference to the spread of Christianity in China. Notwithstanding the untiring, and in most instances well-directed exertions of the missionaries, the perusal of the present volume leaves on our mind an impression that Christianity will make small advance in China until foreign commerce or internal revolution shall have overcome the barbarous exclusiveness of the Chinese Government. The tracts and books of the missions are eagerly received by the lower classes with little more than nominal opposition by their officers and superiors, and the beautiful morality of the Christian doctrines is admitted, though the universal mental apathy seems to be in no respect aroused thereby. Probably such apathy may be eventually shaken by the spread of Christian writings; and when some external cause of impulse shall occur, the good seed now sown apparently by the way side may prove not to have been lost. At present our author candidly admits his auditors were more interested in examining the texture of his garments than in the perusal of his tracts. This points to the grand civilizer—Commerce—The laudable energy with which the study of the Chinese language is prosecuted by the missionaries, their formation of Chinese types, and the expenses they have incurred in perpetuating the means of reproducing these types, entitle them to the thanks of the community. This must in the end open the country to European intercourse. The abundant population of China is admitted, in fact concurrent accounts have now placed it beyond a doubt. The following passages in evidence of that fact, however, may serve as specimens of the writer's very easy style, and will entertain the reader.

## CHINESE CEMETERIES.

It has been objected to the statement regarding the occupancy of a great proportion of the land in tillage, that the cemeteries of the Chinese are both numerous and extensive; and much of the soil being consecrated to the service of the dead, there must of necessity be a smaller quantity left for the support of the living. The force of this objection seems to be heightened by the consideration that the Chinese never allow old graves to be disturbed; and, generally speaking, dig a new pit for each individual. But, an acquaintance with the fact, obviates the supposed difficulty; for, the Chinese seldom select, for burial-places, situations capable of agricultural use and improvement; and inter their deceased friends on the hill side, or under the craggy precipice, where little else could be made of the soil. During the various excursions, which the writer has made into the interior, along the shores of three or four maritime provinces, he was extremely struck with the extreme paucity of graves. In one part of the province of Shan-tung, a cemetery was discovered in a sequestered glen; and, here and there, a white monument presented itself by the road side; but by no means equal to the hosts of living inhabitants, everywhere met with. Near the populous city of Saang-hae, coffins were seen in the corners of the fields, kept above ground till the bodies should decay; when the bones might be collected into jars, placed by the cottage door, and the coffin and the room might serve for other occupants. At the great island of Choo-san, scores of coffins were observed under a precipice, scattered about in confusion, some fresh, and others in a state of decay, all deni-

ed the right of sepulture, from the crying necessity of a want of room. In the neighbourhood of Peking, the cemetery may be large, because the population is great and the ground round the capital comparatively barren; but generally throughout the country, and particularly in the more level and fertile provinces, the living cannot afford much room for the dead, and the cemeteries are therefore contracted and few.

## IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO AGRICULTURE IN CHINA.

The encouragement given to agriculture would also argue a dense population. It is an ancient maxim with the Chinese, that when people are hungry there is no attending to the dictates of justice and propriety, and only when a population is well fed can they be well governed. Hence from the earliest antiquity, the Emperor has set an example of industry to his people, by personally and publicly holding the plough once a year, while the Empress does the same with regard to the loom. In arranging the various classes of the people, the Chinese place the literati in the foremost rank, as learning is with them the stepping-stone to honour; but immediately after the learned, the husbandman takes the precedence of all others, because being engaged in raising the necessaries of life, he is abundantly more important than the mechanic, who merely changes the forms of matter and the merchant, who originates nothing, and only barter and exchanges commodities for the sake of gain. This honour put upon agricultural employments is evidently the result of design; and shows that the country, being overstocked with inhabitants needs cultivating to its utmost extent, in order to provide the people with sustenance.

The industry and skill of the Chinese, striving to produce as many of the necessaries of life as possible, would also argue a dense population, ever struggling against threatening want, and compelled to exert themselves for their daily bread. In tropical climates, where the ground is fertile, and the population scanty, the natives find that, by a few months' labour, they can produce sufficient food for a whole year's consumption, and are therefore indisposed to exert themselves further. But in China the inhabitants are incessantly employed, and every individual is obliged to be busy in contributing his quota to the common weal. Every one in the least acquainted with the manners of the Chinese, knows that they are untiring in their exertion, to maintain themselves and families. In the business of agriculture they are more particularly active, raising two crops from the ground every year, extending their cultivation in every possible direction, and bringing the most unpromising spots into use, in order that nothing may be lost. Their skill in effecting these objects is not, considering their few advantages, contemptible. They thoroughly understand the importance of varying the crops; they know well the seasons and soils adapted for certain productions; and they are fully sensible of the importance of manuring the ground, in order to maintain its fertility. A stranger is struck with this, on first setting his foot on the shores of China. Almost every individual met with, in the paths and fields, is provided with a basket and a rake; and every evening the cottager brings home a certain quantity to add to the nest heap, which is a most important appendage to every dwelling. Having but few sheep and cattle, they are obliged to make the most of the stercoraceous stock of men and swine. This is carefully collected, and actually sold at so much per pound, while whole strings of city scavengers may be seen cheerily posting into the country every successive morning with their envied acquisitions; little heeding the olfactory nerves of the less interested passengers. Every other substance likely to answer the end is anxiously collected, and carefully disposed, so as to provide for future exigencies; such as decayed animal and vegetable matter, the sweeping of streets, the mud of canals, burnt bones, lime, and what is not a little singular, the short stumpy human hair shaven from millions of heads every ten days, is industriously gathered up, and sold for manure throughout the empire.

To be concluded in our next number.

## ADVANTAGES OF KNOWLEDGE.\*

1. Knowledge in general expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste of pleasure, and opens innumerable sources of intellectual enjoyment.

2. By means of it, we become less dependant for satisfaction upon the sensitive appetites; the gross pleasures of sense are more easily despised, and we are made to feel the superiority of the spiritual to the material part of our nature. Instead of being continually solicited by the influence and irritation of sensible objects, the mind can retire within herself, and exultate in the cool and quiet walks of contemplation.

3. The poor man who can read, and who possesses a taste for reading, can find entertainment at home, without being tempted to repair to the public-house for that purpose. His mind can find him employment when his body is at rest; he does not lie prostrate and afloat on the current of incidents, liable to be carried whithersoever the impulse of appetite may direct.

4. There is in the mind of such a man an intellectual spring urging him to the pursuit of mental good; and if the minds of his family also are a little cultivated, conversation becomes the more interesting, and the sphere of domestic enjoyment enlarged.

5. The calm satisfaction which books afford, puts him into a disposition to relish more exquisitely, the tranquil delight inseparable from the indulgence of conjugal and parental affection: and as he will be more respectable in the eyes of his family than he who can teach them nothing, he will be naturally induced to cultivate whatever may preserve, and should whatever would impair that respect.

6. He who is inured to reflection will carry his views beyond the present hour; he will extend his prospect a little into futurity, and be disposed to make some provision for his approaching wants; whence will result an increased motive to industry, together with a care to husband his earnings, and to avoid unnecessary expense.

7. The poor man who has gained a taste for good books, will in all likelihood become thoughtful, and when you have given the poor a habit of thinking, you have sown on them a much greater favour than by the gift of a large sum of money, since you have put them in possession of the principle of all legitimate prosperity.

## OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD.

"How widely diversified, and multiplied into many thousand distinct exercises, is the attention of God! His eye is on every hour of my existence. His spirit is intimately present with every thought of my heart.—His inspiration gives birth to every purpose within me.—His hand impresses a direction of every footstep of my going.—every breath I inhale is drawn by an energy which God deals out to me. This body, which upon the slightest derangement, would become the prey of death, or of woeful suffering, is now at ease, because He at this moment is warding off from me a thousand dangers, and upholding the thousand movements of its complex and delicate machinery; His presiding influence keeps me through the whole current of my restless and ever-changing history.

"When I walk by the wayside, He is along with me,—in the silent watches of the night, when my eyelids have closed and my spirit has sunk into unconsciousness, the observant eye of Him, who never slumbers, is upon me; I cannot fly from His presence, go where I will; He leads me and watches me, and cares for me; and the same Being who is now at work in the remotest domains of nature, of Providence, is also at my hand to eke out to me every moment of my being, and to uphold me in the exercise of all my feelings and of all my faculties." *Chalmers.*

There is more true heroism in suffering God's will with meek submission than in doing our own, or that of our fellow mortals, with the utmost valor that was ever exhibited in a field of battle.

\* From Rev. R. Hall's Sermons, "Advantage of knowledge to the lower classes."