

A CHAPTER ON CHINA.

WHY CHINESE NEVER SAVE LIFE.

Much has been written of the peculiarities and eccentricities of the Chinese, but it is not generally known that the people of the Celestial Empire will not rescue one another from accidental death.

At a fire in San Francisco several years ago, six Chinese were imprisoned in a room by three half-inch iron bars, which could have easily been broken away. There were two or three ladders in the neighborhood which could have been placed at the windows and the unfortunates easily rescued from a horrible death. There were hundreds of their countrymen looking on at their frantic efforts to escape. Yet they offered no assistance and gave no evidence of sorrow.

A man who has saved many lives, in speaking with a Chinese once said they were very heartless, and cited this San Francisco fire as an example, whereupon the Celestial exclaimed:

"I tell you. You sabee Joss. G. Almighty allee samee. Chinaman call him Joss; Melican call him God. Call him anything—allee samee. Now you say Gol Almighty make ebleting?"

"Yes, everything."

"Make allee men?"

"Yes."

"Now ebleting?"

"Yes."

"Now, do you think you know more than Gol Almighty?"

"No, I do not."

"He makee allee men. He see one man. He think him no good. He say: 'You no use; go die.' You think you know beete Gol Almighty. You go swim; you no let man die. Gol Almighty he say: 'He velly smart. He catchee man I tell go die. Velly well, that man he begin new. He cally that man's life all him sins, all him troubles, all him bad luck. You hab heap good thing?'"

"No."

"No hab much houses, much money, much land?"

"No, not much."

"All light, you nebb hab much luck. How many you save?"

"About 50."

"Oh, you neber get out. You cally all 50 life. Ebleting you do, no finish, work allee time, heap trouble. You nebbe get old; you live long time. Sabee 50 life, you live hunded years—had bad luck allee time. Gol Almighty, he sabee best."

MARRIAGES IN CHINA.

A Chinese engagement dates its beginning from the exchange of red cards between the parents of the contracting

parties. These cards in many districts are immense documents almost the size of a horse blanket. They are important for the reason that they are used as evidence in case of disagreements in the future. We seldom hear in China of broken engagements. Yet if a quarrel cannot be settled peaceably recourse is had to the law, and the judge usually imposes a fine upon the party who has broken the contract. The chief incident in a Chinese marriage is the arrival of the bride in her bridal clothes before the house of her chosen one. That is a de facto fulfillment of the contract. The wedding day is determined by the parents of the groom. The imperial calendar names the lucky days, and on such days the so-called "red celebrations" take place, both in the city and country. The same bridal clothes may be used several times. In districts where it is customary to celebrate the weddings in the forenoon the weddings of the co-wives take place in the afternoon or in the evening, according to the Ostsiatischer Lloyd. The Chinese thus hope to make them less important. That the chief part of a Chinese marriage is the arrival of the bride at the house of the groom is illustrated again by the fact that the sons are often married without being present at their own weddings. It is not believed to be fortunate to change the wedding day when once decided. If the future husband, therefore, happens to be called away on the wedding day the marriage takes place by sending the bride to his house.

Chinese law recognizes seven grounds for divorce from a woman—childless, improper conduct, neglect of the parent of the husband, a tendency to steal, jealousy and incurable disease. A natural consequence of the importance attached in China to male heirs is that, where they are absent, the husband marries a co-wife. This, however, is not general, and is limited to families of wealth. The bad results of the system are recognized by the Chinese themselves. The practical Chinese, therefore, have adopted a more simple way of obtaining heirs—the adoption of children who belong to side branches of the family. In this way the family line is kept intact. In the absence of male descendants in the side branches of the family, the sons of strangers are adopted. The Chinese prefer this method to marrying second wives.

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