

original ideas and of freshness of language. They ought to contain nothing for which you cannot give the proof from books written two or three millenniums ago, nor a phrase of which you cannot find the original or its near relative, in the same source. Novelty or individuality are the high roads to disappointment and disgrace. I believe it is a fact that a scholar who once ventured upon a different interpretation of some of the classics than that contained in the standard commentaries, was beheaded for his pains, and is to-day regarded with opprobrium by all right-minded students.

By the time a pupil is about eighteen years old he is able to go up to his first examination, although no limit as regard age is affixed to any of the official examinations. The hours spent in preparation for this first trial have been increasing year by year, until probably he has become accustomed to working from day break to midnight without any cessation except for meals, and absolutely without any exercise or recreation whatever. That such is the case may be judged from the fact that, among the models held before the ambitious gaze of the youthful aspirant are the example of devoted scholars, one of whom gathered the snow together in winter that he might read deep into the night with the aid of the light reflected from its surface, while another, equally poor, enclosed innumerable quantities of the fire-fly in a silken net in order to study with the light afforded by their phosphorescent flickering. The first examination is held in the office of the district magistrate, after the candidate has passed which allowed two months to elapse, he passes on to another examination held in a provincial town, of which there are some eight to twelve in each province. If successful here, and it is unusual to pluck any of these preliminary examinations, the candidate enters for his first degree in an examination held twice in every three years, and conducted by an Imperial commissioner from Peking. Here, if successful he attains a rank that is estimated by foreigners as equivalent to our B.A.; in Chinese he is said to be a *shu-tsai*, or in other words, "A cultivated talent." Upon the truth of this opinions may differ; he receives, however, a special button for his cap—somewhat similar to a graduate in England being privileged to wear a special hood to his gown,—he is exempted from corporal punishment, and if he reside in a village, obtains a little notoriety for himself. By becoming a B.A., the successful student is said to have "entered the Guild of Learning," and now takes rank as a scholar. These and the graduates of higher rank, are the men who form the *literati* of the country, whose antipathy towards foreigners and power of disturbing the peace are so violent, and often so cruelly manifested. In Chinese they are called as a class "Book Readers," but it is to be feared they do a great deal else besides reading books, and, like the clerks of many other countries and of all ages, are often prime movers in fomenting disturbances among the more peaceably disposed populace.

The cost of obtaining the first degree. I am told, is at least £20, and this is apart from all previous expenses incurred by tuition, cost of books, &c. No emolument follows success at this stage, but once in every three years a more important examination is held at the capital of each province. This is open only to those who are already B.A., and not even to all of these, for local examinations of the graduates of the first degree are held repeatedly, and only the successful candidates in these local examinations are allowed to compete for the higher degree. These triennial examinations in the provincial capital are sources of immense excitement to the friends of the candidates, and the results are made

known by the swiftest courier, in every hamlet through out the province, within a very few hours or days of the official announcement. Success here confers the degree of M.A., and the graduate is called a "*Kü-jin*," or "A promoted man." As yet, however, his promotion brings him no reward for his diligence, beyond the honour conferred by success, although the expenses necessary to obtain this higher degree are estimated to a cost of £40, an enormous sum to men who consider £2 a month a satisfactory income. The money for all these examinations is raised by a voluntary contribution of friends—who feel promoted themselves by the success of a relative—or by incurring heavy debts which often remain unpaid to the end of life.

It is difficult to estimate what is the average proportion of successful candidates; and the average, moreover varies for different provinces. Only a limited number is allowed to pass, and the number for each province is a constant quantity. In this province of Kiangsu, which is the most densely populated of any of the provinces in China, there are generally 2,000 or 4,000 candidates for the B. A. I am told, not more than one-tenth succeed. For the intermediate examination of graduates 80 out of every 300 are usually selected to go to Nankin, the capital of this province, to compete for the higher degree. Nankin is the place of examination for the adjoining province, as well as for this one, and the number of students assembling there at the triennial examination is estimated at from 10,000, to 18,000, of which only one in a hundred can hope to be successful. In the province of Canton, Dr. Williams states that there about 12,000 who hold the first degree, and he mentions the number who enter for their M. A. as usually about, 6,000. The size of an examination hall in China can be imagined when it is remembered that a separate cell is provided for the accommodation of each student.

If not deterred by expenses, and if anxious for official employment, those who have obtained their Master's degree proceed the year after to Peking, where candidates from all the 18 provinces are examined, about one in twenty of whom succeed in obtaining their doctorate and are called "entered scholars." There are about 200 such successful ones every three years. These remain in Peking, and are again examined in the Imperial palace and of the successful ones the first takes precedence as first scholar of the Empire for that year, while the rest obtain the degree or office of *Hanlin*, which has been designated the Imperial Academy, and the members of which receive salaries. Other examinations follow, by which still higher promotion takes place, and the official rank of the members of the various Governmental Boards is determined. Thus the way is open by a series of steps for the lowest of the people to rise to the highest official appointment, and to obtain the greatest emoluments in the Empire. None but actors or their children, the lowest grade of coolies, public executioners and torturers, and the children of openly immoral people, are prevented from competing in any of the examinations; and it frequently happens that a man of very low birth finds himself suddenly elevated to wealth and honour by the fortunate success of a clever son. But ability is not the only test in these examinations. Purity is unknown, except in sentiment, and it is to be feared bribery is carried on here as in every direction. Chance, too, has much to do with success. Where so large a proportion necessarily fail in every examination, and where the candidates are counted by the thousand, it cannot but be that much depends upon what goes by the name of good luck. Many try for years without succeeding, and in the examination