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THE CYPRESS TREE OF CEYLON.

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[Ibn Batuta, the celebrated Mussulman traveller of the fourteenth century, speaks of a cypress tree in Ceylon, universally held sacred by the natives, the leaves of which were said to fall only at certain intervals, and he who had the happiness to find and eat one of them, was restored, at once, to youth and vigour. The traveller saw several venerable Jogees, or saints, sitting silent and motionless under the tree, patiently awaiting the falling of a leaf.]

They sat in silent watchfulness,
The sacred cypress tree about,
And, from beneath old wrinkled brows
Their failing eyes looked out.

Grey Age and Sickness waiting there—
Through weary night and lingering day—
Grim as the idols at their side,
And motionless as they.

Unheeded in the boughs above
The song of Ceylon's birds was sweet ;
Unseen of them the island flowers
Bloomed brightly at their feet.

O'er them the tropic night-storm swept,
The thunder crashed on rock and hill ;
The cloud-fire on their eye-balls blazed,
Yet there they waited still !

What was the world without to them ?
The Moslem's sunset-call—the dance
Of Ceylon's maids—the passing gleam
Of battle-flag, and lance ?

They waited for that falling leaf
Of which the wandering Jogees sing :
Which lends once more to wintry Age
The greenness of its spring.

Oh—if these poor and blinded ones
In trustful patience wait to feel
O'er torpid pulse and failing limb
A youthful freshness steal ;

Shall we, who sit beneath that Tree,
Whose healing leaves of life are shed,
In answer to the breath of prayer,
Upon the waiting head :

Not to restore our failing forms,
And build the spirit's broken shrine,
But, on the fainting soul to shed
A light and life divine :

Shall we grow weary in our watch,
And murmur at the long delay ?
Impatient of our Father's time,
And His appointed way ?

Or, shall the stir of outward things
Allure and claim the Christian's eye,
When on the heathen watcher's ear
Their powerless murmurs die ?

Alas ! a deeper test of faith
Than prison cell or martyr's stake,
The self-abasing watchfulness
Of silent prayer may make.

We gird us bravely to rebuke
Our erring brother in the wrong :
And in the ear of Pride and Power
Our warning voice is strong.

Easier to smite with Peter's sword,
Than " watch one hour" in humbling prayer :
Life's " great things," like the Syrian lord,
Our hearts can do and dare.

But, oh ! we shrink from Jordan's side,
From waters which alone can save :
And murmur for Abana's banks,
And Pharpar's brighter wave.

Oh, Thou, who in the garden's shade
Didst wake thy weary ones again,
Who slumbered at that fearful hour,
Forgetful of Thy pain ;

Bend o'er us now, as over them,
And set our sleep-bound spirits free,
Nor leave us slumbering in the watch
Our souls should keep with Thee !

THE CHINESE MECHANIC ARTS AND SOCIAL LIFE.

Substance of a Lecture delivered by Mr. Williams.

The implements of the Chinese, though less beautiful than those preserved from the ruins of Rome, are more useful. They have made them sufficient to subserve the common purposes of life, and at so low a price as to be universally accessible. For a long time they have made no improvements. The descriptions of Marco Polo are still applicable, so that though they were before the English in the year 1600, they are very far behind the nations of the west now.

Agriculture is fostered by government as a means of its own security ; for farmers are isolated and contented. The pursuit is honoured by the emperor in an annual ploughing ceremony at Peking. The lands are held from him in small lots, not in fee simple, but as security for the payment of taxes. They descend to the eldest son, but the brothers may also settle upon them, so that subdivision is carried to a great extent. The principal grain crop of the country is rice. It is sown so thick as to make a dense turf, which is transplanted to the field, which has been in the mean time irrigated and prepared for it. The first crop is harvested in July, the second in November. Wheat, millet, and buckwheat, are raised as in other countries. Their implements of husbandry are very simple. A man may often be seen carrying plough, harrow, and buffalo-harness, together on his back. The farms are without fences : the dykes used for irrigation being the principal landmarks.

The other labours of agriculture are the cultivation of cotton, and of the mulberry for garments, and tea for exportation. The emperor honours the culture of silk by an annual offering of mulberry leaves to the patron goddess of the silk manufacture.

The fine porcelain comes mostly from the province of Kiang Tzi ; the common china ware from several other provinces. It is made with many ornaments of beautiful forms. In their gardens the wealthy delight to display many of these vases of large size ; some are sunken in the earth, and filled up with limestone and sand, which is soon covered with moss, and bears the appearance of a natural rock.

They have very little skill in working metals. Their chancing in gold and silver is however elegant, and unsurpassed. In carving they take the lead in some respects ; the granite posts before the temples are sculptured with historic scenes, two or three inches deep, and quite perfect. The lackered ware is made by coating wood with the varnish of the lacker tree, coloured with lampblack and embellished by gilding. The manufacture of lanterns is an extensive business in a country where they are so much used ; they are made with a great variety of designs and ornaments. Their lamp-oil is obtained from the tea and peanut.