

three centuries before Christ, had opened up the east to western travel and commercial intercourse, the names of Sinenses and Seres became known in Europe in connection principally with the produce of the silk-worm. About the year 240, B.C., Ching Whang united the petty states of China into an empire, and built the famous wall as a protection against the incursions of the Tartars. This prince is charged with the same barbarous policy as that which led the Caliph Omar to order the destruction of the Alexandrian library. He is said to have buried alive four hundred and sixty learned men, and to have committed to the flames all the ancient literature of the nation. From his time down to the commencement of the Christian era, the Huns and Tartars maintained a continual warfare with the Chinese. Strangers now for the first time visited a country henceforth to be notorious for the exclusiveness of its people; and commercial relations were entered into with the surrounding nations. From the Christian era onward to the thirteenth century, the political history of China is an unvarying and uninteresting level. Many of the arts of life, however, were cultivated to a high degree, and discoveries, such as those of the composition of gunpowder and the mariner's compass, attested even then the ingenuity which has ever been a prominent trait in the character of the Chinaman. In 1279 A.D., the Mongols, a wandering horde, invaded China, and ruled for about a hundred years, when the native dynasty returned to power. In 1636 the Mantchew Tartars came down from the north, and again deposed the Chinese native emperors, usurping an authority which they have since retained, in spite of the efforts made of late years by a semi-Christian enthusiast, Tae Ping Wong, to restore the old line. In the 16th and 17th centuries commercial expeditions from England, Portugal, and Holland visited China, and obtained but a slight footing, being subjected continually to insults and restrictions on the part of the government, and violence at the hands of the people. Embassies were sent to the court of the Tartar king, Keen-lung, at the close of last century, from England, Russia, and Holland. It was not, however, till the year 1839, when the opium war broke out between Great Britain and China, that anything in the form of a settlement could be obtained by the British. In accordance with the treaty which ended the war, Hong Kong was ceded to Great Britain, and her subjects have the privilege of residing and trading at the ports of Canton, Amoy, Shanghae, Foo-Choo, and Ning-po.

Many different religions have taken root in China, the presence of which has complicated the labors of the missionary, who has often to meet in one man the opposition of many systems. The oldest of them all, or the ancient popular idolatry of the Chinese, differs but little from the Brahminism of India, and the Polytheism of ancient Greece and Rome. Of this religion the worship of ancestors, even coming down to deceased parents, forms a great part. The spirits of their ancestors are indeed their household gods, as those of their departed great men are their public divinities. About 550 years before Christ, Confucius, the first great Chinese reformer, is said to have been born. He is said to have written a large number of books, most of which were destroyed by Ching Whang, but of which others remain. The religion he instituted was one of rites, which extended to every relation of life, like the Jewish traditions of the fathers. Many of his precepts exhibit a high-toned morality worthy of a better faith; although his great rule of life seems to have been "the preservation of the golden mean," in which many of the western philosophers, Aristotle among others, found virtue to consist. "His knowledge of human nature is very limited: he considers man as naturally virtuous:—'To make a whole nation virtuous