

winter ; windowless, unless the light be admitted through a frame of oyster-shells ; without any ceiling but the tiles of the roof, and often with no floor but that of the mother earth—a more miserably cold, cheerless, and dirty place than a Chinese schoolroom can hardly be imagined. And the noise ! This defies description. If the school be a large one, you can hear it right down the street—a perfect hubbub of a score of children shouting out their different lessons all at the same time, and in a monotonous sing-song voice without a pause or a variation. Here, from nine or ten o'clock in the morning till six o'clock at night, the lads grind away at their books ; nor is their work finished then, for, unless they be very young, they no sooner reach home and have had their tea than they are set to work again at the old sing-song chant until ten or eleven o'clock at night. There is no play-time, nor any break during the day for rest or recreation, except the short space each pupil takes to run home and eat his rice in the middle of the day. But, worst of all, a Chinese schoolboy has no regular holidays ;—with the exception of a fortnight or so at New Year's time and an occasional break of a day owing to a public festival, school-life is one continuous system of cramming year in and year out. From this it is evident there is no need for playgrounds, nor do you often see boys engaged in play ; if you meet them in the street, it is generally either on their way to or from school. This seems a great tax on any lad, but the brain is exerted so little—the education being confined at first almost entirely to learning things by rote, without regard to the sense of what is learnt—that it does not seem to affect the health of the boys. Probably, too, a light vegetable diet and the exposed and draughty nature of all Chinese houses make it less necessary to take much exercise. But it is dreary work in the best case, and it is hard to see how any love of study can be fostered by such a method of education.

A Chinese school is not divided into classes, but each pupil is taught separately by the master ; nor are there any school examinations at any time during the year, and consequently there are no prizes or rewards of any kind. Thus one great element of stimulus—mutual emulation—is entirely wanting. The punishments administered for inattention or forgetfulness vary with the disposition of the master ; the most usual form of correction for slight offences being to rap the forehead with the knuckles, and if this be ineffectual the pupil is compelled to stand to his work. For graver offences, caning is resorted to, generally given on the palm of the hand, while the worst punishment of all, reserved for the very refractory, is to compel such to kneel on the floor and repeat their lessons in that attitude. No Chinese teacher is so foolish as to punish himself by dismissing any boy from his school ; he finds it hard enough to get a living in any case. On assembling in the morning, the pupils first bow before the tablet of Confucius in honour to his memory or spirit, and then salute their teacher in the same way, after which work begins. There are no primers in use for the education of the Chinese, nor has any attempt been made to shorten the laborious task of learning the characters. A beginner is supplied with a number of little square pieces of paper, on each of which a character is written, and his first work is to learn the unknown sound attached to each. After the sounds of a thousand or more characters have been learned in this way, he advances to one of the so-called elementary books, the most popular of which bears the title of "The Three-character Classic." This little book contains about a thousand characters arranged in groups of three, each pair of

three rhyming with the next pair. The whole of this is committed to memory by degrees, and as each section is learnt the pupil is called up to the master's desk and made to repeat it *verbatim*. This they call to *back* the book, because the pupil has to stand with his back turned towards the master while repeating his lesson. By the time he is about eight years old, supposing the boy to have entered the school when he was six, he is prepared to begin the "Four Books," which are slowly committed to memory as before. All this time the pupil is utterly ignorant of the meaning of what he has been reading ; so far, his education has been simply learning by rote pages and pages of sounds, which by constant revision become at length so ingrained into his memory that he is able to repeat whole books with the rapidity and accuracy of a sailor telling the points of the compass. And so the process goes on four years, instruction in writing being interspersed with the reading. This is taught by means of large characters printed in red ink which the beginner has simply to trace over with a fine paint brush. This is a very important part of education, and in this they certainly excel us, for bad writing and bad scholarship are synonymous. The greatest attention is paid to the way the characters are drawn, until each stroke is finished with the utmost delicacy of touch. By the time a boy is twelve or fifteen years old, he can usually repeat the greater part of the principal classical books, though still ignorant of their contents ; and at this age numbers naturally leave school and enter business, where they are taught to calculate (arithmetic is no part of the education of a Chinese scholar), and the routine of their future livelihood. Such remain, to the end of their lives, ignorant of the meaning of the books they have been for years so diligently committing to memory. Ludicrous illustrations of this occur almost every day, when one meets with numbers who are able to read all the characters in ordinary use, so far as giving their right sound is concerned, but are as ignorant of the meaning as though it were a foreign language. This is due to the fact that the spoken dialects of China differ so considerably in style from the composition employed in books, and the sounds in the two cases are also dissimilar. Two native scholars are able to carry on a conversation for a considerable length of time in the presence of an uneducated man speaking the same dialect as they, without his having the slightest knowledge of the purport of their talk. So, too, a Chinese book read aloud even to a Chinese scholar is quite unintelligible, unless translated into the vernacular.

In the case of those scholars who are intending to enter the public examinations, the course of study is different, and much more extended. After having learnt by heart several of the books, he begins to learn their meaning, and also the meaning of the commentaries on them which he has also previously memorised. Side by side with this, he is set to the task of composing essays. These essays are an all-important part of a scholar's education, for by his skill in making them he takes rank in his examinations, and find his position in the estimation of his friends. But a more profitable method of wasting time could hardly be devised, nor can one imagine anything more lamentably void of interest or use than the thoughts expressed even in the best of them. The text in all cases is a theme selected from one of the classics, upon which a series of remarks are strung together so trite and vapid, that even in the case of the highest examinations the essays would also disgrace a schoolboy at home. Their merit is estimated by the Chinese according to the absence of