

Selections.

CHINA.—In the *Spirit of Missions* a letter from the Rev. Robert Nelson, one of our Missionaries at Shanghai, is given, which contains the latest, the most startling, and the most horrible budget of news received from that miserable country for a long time. We give it in full. The "Christianity" of these Rebels will no longer be much of a problem:—

SHANGHAI, CHINA, Jan. 5, 1857.

Some of the mystery which has so long hung over the true state of things among the insurgents at Nankin, is at length cleared away by information just received from three persons recently arrived here directly from that place, which they left about the 12th ult. Two of these are Europeans, and the third a Chinese boy, and all of them illiterate. The two foreigners state that, during their absence from Shanghai, they entirely lost their reckoning of time, months as well as days, and therefore can give only rough guesses for the precise dates of the events they relate. But having been eye-witnesses, and often actors in the scenes they describe, they can, of course, bear clear testimony to facts, and with some approximation to the order and time of the occurrence. The credibility of their testimony is inferred from the substantial agreement of the accounts they have each separately given to Dr. Bridgman and myself, their further agreement in many points with what has been learned from other and independent sources, and from the minute knowledge which these persons show of the localities about Nankin, and for hundreds of miles above and around it, as tested by Dr. Bridgman, who had seen many of them himself.

The substance of their narrative is as follows:—Some time late last Spring, or at the beginning of the Summer, these two foreigners went up to "Ching-Kiang," where they were for a little while in the Chinese Imperial service, after which they passed over to the other lines and joined the Insurgents. About that time the rebel garrison at Ching-Kiang became very short of provisions, and sent up to Nankin for relief; and the appointed signal of relief coming, was charcoal floating down the Yang-Tze-River.—After a sufficient time the charcoal was seen, and was soon followed by a reinforcement with supplies, under the Chief, or King, styled No. 7. It may be observed, that these men almost invariably speak of the Insurgent Kings by their numbers, as No. 1, for "Tai-Ping Wong—No. 2, for the Eastern King," &c.

With the No. 7, these two foreigners went up to Nankin, when he returned some six weeks, perhaps, after their arrival at Ching-Kiang, or about the middle of the Summer. They went first to the quarters of No. 7 in Nankin, and were carried by him to No. 2, the Eastern King, who was famous for calling himself the Holy Ghost. By No. 2 they were well treated, and had good quarters assigned them among his officers. They were sent for, from time to time, by No. 2, and questioned as to the foreign mode of eating, fighting, and using arms, such as pistols, swords, &c. Generally they spent their time as they listed, going to and fro when and where they chose, and being treated as rather privileged characters. In this way passed a month or more, during which they had opportunities of seeing more of the Insurgents than any other foreigners have seen. Knowing, however, nothing of the Chinese written character, and a very small amount of the spoken language, their means of communication were necessarily limited, and they found no help except from a Canton carpenter, who could speak a little broken English, and the boy whom they brought down here with them, who joined them at a later period, and whose English vocabulary is not very large. As we might expect of them under such circumstances, they know nothing of the theories of the Rebels, whether political or religious—of their future plans or prospects of empire; but of their actual government, they state that "Tai-Ping-Wong," or Tien-Wong, or No. 1, was the still living head of the whole movement. They never saw him, as he kept himself entirely secluded from public view. His proclamations and orders were delivered from a lofty arched door-way, in front of his palace, by female-messengers, who heralded them aloud in the hearing of the people. Next to him was the Eastern King, or No. 2 (under whom they were enrolled), and subordinate to these—No. 3 and No. 4 having been killed in a battle before reaching Nankin—were Nos. 5, 6, 7, and 8. Each of these Kings had his own palace, and his own army of followers. The government was entirely despotic; and if not the laws, at least the execution of them, was registered in blood. For almost any offence, the penalty was beheading.

As to the religion of the Insurgents, these men know only that at their meals the head man of each mess says grace before they eat; that they have a Sabbath once in seven days, which they celebrate by offering incense and reciting prayers, &c. at midnight previous. What day of the week it is, they don't know, but they think, from the calculation of their time when they arrived there, that this "Saturday night," as they called it, when the Rebels have their worship, is Wednesday night; and when they first went into the presence of No. 2, they were required to kneel, and some one said a kind of doxology over them: further, that No. 1 was reputed to have been up to heaven, and was called the Brother of the Heavenly Father. Beyond these items, and the destruction of idols wherever they went with the Rebels, they seem to know nothing of their religion.

The Kings, except Nos. 1 and 2, went out from time to time with their respective followers, to fight with the Imperialists, and to secure the regions they had previously gained—making the people pay taxes, or submit to having their produce taken from them. Small trade went on actively in Nankin, and presents of all manner of provisions were frequently sent from the country to the Chiefs in the city. Such, these two foreigners testify, was the general state of things for the first month or more after they reached Nankin.

This period having elapsed, they witnessed another act in the great tragedy of Nankin, the like of which has rarely been enacted. The preparation for it had been going on behind the scenes. As they afterwards learned, No. 2 had for some time been suspected of designs upon the head of the celestial King No. 1; and the power and influence of No. 2 rendering him very dangerous to his "elder brother," orders were sent out to Nos. 5, 6 and 7, who were at various distant points with their armies (No. 8 being in the city), to return with dispatch to Nankin (but for which orders they suppose the Rebels would at that time have come further down towards Shanghai.) They came, except No. 6, who being several days further off than the others, either did not receive his orders in time, or when received, did not obey them. The others being within the city, No. 1 commenced the execution of his plan. The first of it, known to these two foreigners, was the report of guns, very early one morning, towards the latter part of August; after which they discovered that the palace of the Eastern King, No. 2, was strictly guarded by a strong force; and in the course of the morning they saw the head of No. 2 himself hanging up over the gateway in front of the palace of Tai-Ping-Wong. And whereas there had been a long continuance of drought before, just after this an abundance of rain fell, which was interpreted as the approval of Heaven for what had been done; and with this began a course of butchery which hardly has its parallel in modern history.

To effect his purpose the more easily, No. 1 on the following day caused a public announcement to be made by his female messengers, that No. 5 and No. 7, who had been the chief agents in the execution of No. 2, had transcended their orders, for which they should be punished by a certain number of blows with a stick. This punishment, however, their friends were permitted to share with them, by interposing their hands to receive the blows, in which these two foreigners participated. Nos. 5 and 7 expressed much sorrow for their offence, and submitted to the penalty. Besides this, the officers and followers of No. 2 were invited to come and receive other appointments from No. 1, with the promise that no harm should be done to them.

This blind had the desired effect. The followers of No. 2 were entirely deceived, and came many of them to the palace of No. 1. The principal of the officers and men were induced to go in and be disarmed, and then, to the number of 6000, they were crammed into two large walled enclosures, or apartments, two stories high, of the palace of No. 1; those of highest rank in one, and the remainder in the other, and there secured. The next day, the doors and windows of these apartments being forced in, the unfortunate inmates were slaughtered, en masse, with all the implements of destruction which could be gotten. Fire-pots—small jars very commonly used in fighting by the Chinese, filled with explosive materials of the most offensive smell—were thrown in upon them; and guns, spears, knives, were all used to do the deadly work, until human blood was up to the knees in depth, and the dense masses of mangled bodies were past all description. The officers and men, on both sides, made all possible resistance, and some even got upon the house top, and fought until all the tiles on the roof were exhausted.

On the other side they seemed panic-stricken, and made no opposition to their murderers. When dead they were all stripped of their clothing, and as soon after as might be, their bodies were carried out to an open space, not far from the palace of No. 1. The palace of No. 2 was plundered of all its rich adornings of gold and silver, silk and satin, which they describe as truly magnificent. Among these ornaments, they mention particularly a golden lion, weighing some fifty pounds; a golden bell, and many other things of exceeding richness and splendor among the garments of the Eastern King. When this pillaging was done, the building was destroyed, to leave no trace of the greatness of "Yang-Siu-Ting." But these atrocities were only the beginning of the work. The city gates having been closed, that none of the followers of No. 2 should escape, systematic search was made for them from day to day, from week to week, until all who had "eaten of the rice of No. 2," were hunted out and exterminated. This "Reign of Terror" lasted about two months, during which, not only the fighting men, but the aged, the lame the blind, women, children, and infants at the breast, were all unmercifully butchered. These men mention the horrid spectacles they witnessed, of blind and lame dragged to their fate, and of women with their children in their arms, and others hanging to their clothes, and beheaded in their turn, with many more barbarities too horrible to tell. Their estimates of the whole number thus destroyed is over 30,000; and they speak of afterwards having seen those masses of dead on the ground above mentioned, in the vicinity of the palace of Tai-Ping-Wong.

During the progress of this bloody work, No. 6 returned to Nankin with a portion of his army, leaving most of it without the city. He there sharply reprimanded No. 5 (who had been the chief actor in the destruction of No. 2 and his followers, and particularly for having killed so many who were not guilty of any crime). But finding himself not very comfortable there, and perhaps in danger of sharing the same fate with No. 2, No. 6 left the city the same night with what followers he could collect, and killing two of the gate-keepers, took the keys and made his exit, and joining his forces again went off to Ngan-Hwuy. About a month after this, he sent back and demanded of No. 1 the head of No. 5, (who in his absence had killed his wives and sons), threatening to destroy Nankin unless his head were sent; whereupon the head of No. 5 was cut off and sent in a box of salt to No. 6, who had it publicly exposed.

After the horrid scenes above mentioned, No. 7 left Nankin, taking with him these two foreigners, whom he had again attached to himself after the death of No. 2. Soon after the decapitation of No. 5, however, No. 7 was ordered back to Nankin, whereupon they went and joined themselves to No. 6, whom they found, after several days of searching. It was not very long after this before they returned with No. 6 to Nankin, having been absent some two months, or more. They found, among other changes since they went away, that the great Porcelain Tower had been blown up and destroyed, most probably by order of No. 1, for fear that No. 6 should take advantage of it for executing his threat against the city. No. 6, a few days after reaching Nankin, made himself master of the chief places of power and profit, and had Nos. 7 and 8 (who, it appears, had particularly informed No. 1 against No. 9, the friend of No. 6) beheaded. All rivals were thus removed, leaving no one in the way but the "Celestial King." And there were not wanting those who said that his head would follow the others before many days; and as more trouble seemed to be brewing, and those with whom these two foreigners had been associated before were all gone, and they might themselves meet a like fate, they concluded, if possible, to make their escape. So sending to No. 6 (whom they could not now see, since he had grown so great) for clothes and money, with a few Chinese garments, and a little money apiece, they passed the city gate early in the morning of about the 12th December, and made the best of their way down here to Shanghai, where, after many "hair breath escapes," they arrived about two weeks ago; and after all, they have made nothing by their long adventure, arriving here without money, and having even had to sell some of their clothing by the way.

The testimony of these men establishes the fact which has long been a matter of doubt, that Tai-Ping-Wong, or No. 1, was alive and in power up to the time of their leaving Nankin; and that the Eastern King, No. 2, was put to death with his followers—uncertain rumours of which were long since heard through the Chinese; and what had not been heard before, we learn from them, the fall of Kings No. 5, No. 7, and