

the contrary, so far as we can judge, the idea has taken a stronger hold upon the Canadian mind than upon that of any other colony. But in admitting this, the friends of the movement admit its weakness. A few men of influence in public affairs and a number of most respectable and worthy citizens are evidently in downright earnest in seeking to speed the movement. But not even its most sanguine promoters can claim that the idea has taken any deep or firm hold upon either the imaginations or the hearts of the people of Canada. To all appearance five-sixths of them have scarcely given it a place in their thoughts. Many who are thoroughly loyal to British institutions listen to what is urged in its favour with a kind of listless incredulity, as a thing too visionary to be worthy of serious consideration. More discouraging still, unless we misread public opinion, the idea itself impresses the minds of many disposed to favour it on sentimental grounds, as fundamentally impracticable, because of the irreconcilable elements or motives it involves. Sentiment may be a powerful auxiliary in forwarding national movements, but great political partnerships must have their foundations laid in mutual self-interest. It is just at this point Imperial Federation fails. The only condition which could commend the scheme, on grounds of self-interest, to the British people—viz., that of the colonies undertaking to bear their share of the tremendous cost of Imperial armaments and possible wars—is the very condition which the colonies, happily free from the turmoil and danger of European complications, would be most loath to accept. On the other hand, the only material advantages which could reconcile colonists—or, let us say, Canadians—to the arrangement—viz., a differential duty in favour of their products—is the very last which the British people would be disposed to grant. On the whole, we are unable to see that either the Canadian or English leaders of the movement have been able to carry it a single step towards general acceptance.

RAILWAYS IN CHINA.

ONE by one the hermit nations of the East have been opening their doors to admit the advancing tide of Western civilization. China, as the result of wars and treaties, has been rendered accessible to outsiders, while her own teeming population has overflowed until the question of Chinese exclusion has become a live issue on the American Continent and elsewhere. Corea is opening up, while Japan, having peeped out and seen that the wisdom of the world was not all concentrated within the borders of the group of islands which form that kingdom, soon opened wide her doors, and not only admitted foreigners and adopted their manners and customs, but sent forth her own sons to see what could be borrowed from other nations, adopting their ways with a readiness remarkable for a people which had hitherto kept themselves so completely from contact with outside barbarians.

But though China has, in a measure, allowed herself to mix with the people of the world at large, perhaps more from necessity than choice, she had never looked with much favour upon one of the world's great civilizers—railways. The recent announcement that the authorities of the flowery kingdom had given their consent to the construction of iron roads may therefore be looked upon as a decided step in advance, and one which will have a very marked effect in rendering further accessible the interior of a kingdom which contains about one third of the world's population.

The decision to allow railways to be constructed within their bounds appears to have been forced upon the Chinese authorities as a means of self-preservation from a military point of view, rather than as a commercial enterprise. During the late war with France, when the Chinese ports were effectually blockaded by the ships of the former, with which the Chinese vessels bearing troops to the scene of action found themselves unable to cope, it was only by forced marches of almost inconceivable difficulty that disciplined troops from the north could be brought to the assistance of the courageous but undisciplined men of the south who were fighting the French on the borders of Tonquin. These irregulars were able to inflict severe punishment upon their enemies, notwithstanding the disadvantage at which they were placed, and this might have been turned into utter defeat if there had existed facilities for bringing to their assistance the troops of the north, trained under the direction of European officers. Why these northern soldiers were so trained, while those in the South were not, I have not seen explained, but such was the fact. It is natural, therefore, that the authorities desire to obviate the possibility of being placed at such a disadvantage in any future struggle.

There are, however, three difficulties which stand in the way of railway construction in China. The first is the hostility of the provincial governors and officials, a class of men whose despotic power and corrupt administration puts that of the Turk to shame. These people are well aware that railways would prove the death blow to their power, and it is to be expected, therefore, that they will throw every obstacle in the way of their construction.

The second difficulty is one expressed by the single Chinese word, *Feng-shui*. The Celestials do not bury their dead in cemeteries, but put them almost anywhere, and as the places of sepulture are regarded with veneration, or more properly superstition, the passage of a locomotive would be regarded as having a tendency to drive away the wind and water spirits, who are supposed to minister to the dead, and would therefore be resented. The *Feng-shui* difficulty can, however, be easily overcome, as has been demonstrated in the case of a short line of railway between Shanghai and Woosung, built a few years ago, through a region in which the graves were unusually numerous, and where a small solatium in cash overcame the scruples of those who had friends buried there, for a Chinaman's superstition generally takes a secondary place when compared with the influence of the almighty dollar. The first mentioned difficulty is one with which all promoters of railway enterprises are more or less familiar, but it cannot be allowed to stand in the way. If the Imperial authorities sanction the work the opposition of the provincials need not be feared.

The third difficulty is perhaps of a more formidable character. It is of a financial nature, combined with the question of management. The Chinese Government is not in a position to furnish the capital required for railway construction, except by borrowing, and though its credit is good, as is shown by the quotations of the London Stock Exchange, its borrowings, like its revenue, have been small, and its resources would be unable to stand the strain of a loan sufficiently large to build anything like a complete railway system. Foreign capitalists would doubtless be quite willing to advance the money, provided they were allowed to build and manage the roads, but the latter privilege the Government does not yet seem willing to concede. This is not to be wondered at, since military considerations would have a great deal to do with the permission to build and run, while those undertaking the work would enter upon it purely as a commercial enterprise.

That railways in China would pay there can be no doubt. They should, however, be built as independent lines rather than as part of a complete system. The country is already well supplied with means for internal communication, in its great rivers, which flow generally towards the east, and on which well-equipped steamers will doubtless soon be placed. The river system of water communication is supplemented by canals, but apart from these, communication is difficult, for the roads are very bad and beasts of burden are scarce.

Two important railway lines are in contemplation, one from Taku, on the Gulf of Pechili, to Tunchow or Peking, with perhaps an extension to Kalgan, on the borders of the desert of Gobi, the other through Burnah, Siam, and the Shan States into Yunnan, the most southerly of the provinces of China, where there is no water communication. The former has been authorized and the work of construction commenced. It will doubtless command from the outset a large overland trade in tea, which is now carried on by means of camels, some 50,000 of these animals being employed in carrying this staple product of the country into Siberia, Russia and other countries to the north and west, 60,000,000 lbs. having been carried in this way in 1887; the latter, though a good part of it would not be in Chinese territory, would develop vast mineral wealth in Yunnan, the province already referred to. The first mentioned road will also carry large quantities of coal, a commodity which now sells for £3 to £4 a ton in Peking, but which railway carriage would reduce to £1 or less.

Comparisons have been instituted between the results of railways in India and what would probably follow their construction in China. Mr. Dunlop, who has studied the matter, and to whom I am indebted for many of the facts contained in this article, tells us the conditions are entirely different. India, except in the north, has no navigable rivers, and £175,000 had been spent on 15,000 miles of railway before it had facilities for internal communication equal to what China now possesses in its rivers and canals. Indian railways have however paid handsome dividends, and Chinese roads should do the same. They would, however, as already intimated, have to be under foreign management, for the average Chinaman is proverbially dishonest, and were foreign shareholders at the mercy of the native they could not expect to realize much in the way of dividends on their investment. The Chinese, however, easily learn anything in the mechanical line, and will soon be eligible for the practical work of operating the lines.

The native prejudice against railways is likely soon to disappear. The people are beginning to see the benefit of western ideas. There are already many miles of telegraph line in China. In this the usual order has been reversed, the telegraph preceding instead of following the railway. But the former does not affect property nor run over graves, nor ruthlessly awaken the sleeping spirits of one's ancestors. The father of the present emperor, too, is a man of considerable enlightenment. In 1887 he went to Chefoo to inspect the fleet, and having come in contact with foreigners went back to the capital impressed with the superiority of some of their ways, impressions which he communicated to the empress, and soon after the fiat granting permission for railway construction was issued. One of his viceroys, enlightened far beyond what might have been expected from his surroundings, has long favoured railways, and at his death left a document urging their construction. He went so far as to recommend the manufacture of the rails in China, where large deposits of coal and iron exist in close proximity. When the emperor orders the work to go on native opposition must

speedily disappear, for his majesty's wish is law and it would be dangerous to stand in the way of its fulfilment. An insignificant circumstance indicates the trend of events. There is a model railway in the imperial palace grounds at Peking on which the emperor frequently amuses himself by acting in the capacity of engine-driver. This toy will have its effect in influencing the Chinese mind in favour of railways.

The native superstition against works of the character indicated was shown by the fate of the first road built in the kingdom, a short line of eight or ten miles in length. It ran barely a year, carried large numbers of passengers, and promised to pay well, but at the end of that time it was purchased from the English company which built it, the roadway was pulled up and the rails taken to Formosa, where they lie rusting on the shore. A better fate surely awaits the lines which are soon to be built.

The beneficial effect of railways in China will be very marked. Agriculture will be helped, food cheapened, luxuries increased, and the terrible famines which have caused such suffering in portions of the empire rendered impossible. The frequent rebellions which have occurred in the past will be prevented. The language, which has proved such a stumbling-block in the way of foreigners, will be assimilated. At present it consists of about three hundred dialects, some of them as different from each other as English and French. In this connection it is curious to notice that the mere prospect of railway construction, on which a large number of English-speaking people will be employed as engineers, etc., has given quite an impetus to the study of the language, and many of the English and American universities have chairs devoted to this subject. It is usually looked upon as a very difficult language to acquire, and so it is, but fortunately the colloquial, which is that most generally used, and which differs entirely from the written language and from that spoken in official circles, is the most easily acquired.

The effect of railways on missions in China will be of the most marked character. Those who desire to see this work promoted will hail their advent with pleasure. Renewed activity in the way of evangelization in that country has been manifested of late, the floods in the Province of Honan and the famine and distress arising therefrom having paved the way for renewed exertions on the part of mission boards, Mr. J. Hudson Taylor's Chinese Inland Mission and the Presbyterian Church in Canada being examples of increased energy in that matter. But unless England is on the alert others will step in and secure the advantages which should be hers. France and Germany are moving in that direction, and the example of Africa should be a warning. The English people are slow in following up their advantages, and other nations too frequently reap where Great Britain has sown. It is to be hoped such will not be the case in the matter of Chinese railways.

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MORE PROSE WANTED.

THE publication of the "Songs of the Great Dominion," Canterbury Series, marks a distinctive epoch in the literary history of Canada. In this volume Mr. Light-hall has presented us with 167 carefully culled selections from the works of those of our writers who, having openly and boldly embarked upon the sea of letters, are already in some sense known to us, and also of many fugitive poems of more or less merit, which, having only appeared in the newspapers or the magazines, were in danger of being overlooked or lost altogether to the general reading public. The list comprises the names of over three score of the singers of the Dominion, native born, and those who have become so thoroughly identified with the land of their adoption as to have earned the right to be classed with Canadians.

To us who now on every side are awakening to proud consciousness of growing culture and intellectual prowess the mere advent of such a volume is in itself cause for congratulation; but it becomes doubly so when the book is edited and compiled by a Canadian; and Canadians will be cold indeed and unworthy the name, if they feel no glow of sympathetic exultation as they read the burning introductory words, pulsating with a heart throb of the purest patriotism; and the very titles, with but a few exceptions, indicative of new world characters, places, pursuits and events. That this great mass of poetic sentiment, local in colouring and national in tone, should be thus rescued from a possible oblivion and presented to us and to the world in consolidated form, is of the first importance.

But a thought strikes us as we read the "Notes Bibliographical and Biographical" appended. How is it that Canada seems to have produced and to be producing such a preponderance of poetry over prose?

In the list of sixty-seven poets represented, seventeen only, or twenty-five per cent., are described as having written prose also; and we are told that the number of those who have "at various times produced really good poetry might be roughly placed at three hundred;" so that if we suppose the average of these latter to be the same as that of the former, we shall have only seventy-five producers of combined prose and poetry.

Now it can be no disparagement to our poets or their poetry to ask, Why is this? Is it because, as one of our poets said recently, "Poetry is so much easier to write than prose"? It may be; but the fact remains that those who have tried both have been on the whole fairly successful.