

LITERATURE.

CHINA.

Its State and Prospects. By W. H. Medhurst, Snow, Paternoster-row, London; C. H. Belcher, Halifax, N. S.

OCCASIONS OF SCARCITY IN THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE.*

Notwithstanding all this diligence and care, however, the people in most of the provinces find a difficulty in procuring the necessaries of life; many die of actual want, and many more are compelled to emigrate: while every encouragement is given to the importation of grain, in order to relieve a needy population. The general poverty of the people has already been alluded to, in showing them to be content with a diminished quality and sometimes quantity of food; yet many of them can hardly find food enough and numbers die annually of sheer starvation.—When a drought, or inundation occurs, when locusts invade the coasts, and the crops fail from blight or mildew, imperial bounty is obliged to be extended to the sufferers, otherwise a people, considerably straightened on common occasions, would in seasons of scarcity actually perish for want. For this purpose, a great quantity of grain is annually left in the various provinces, besides that which is forwarded to Peking, in order that the supply may be ready when necessity demands it. According to one statement, there are reserved in different parts of the country about 26,000,000 bushels of grain, and 12,000,000 bushels of rice, to be sold out at a low price to the poor in seasons of scarcity, a quantity sufficiently indicative of the wants of the people, and of the straits to which they are sometimes driven, to need such a supply. And yet this royal munificence sometimes proves inadequate to the relief of the wretched, or being pillaged by underlings in its way to the necessitous, leaves the hungry to starve ere the provision reaches them. The extreme poverty of the people in the south of China is well known to all who are acquainted with those regions, and the piteous scenes presented in winter by whole hosts of peasants almost destitute of food of fuel, are enough to affect most deeply the minds of the compassionate. The common wages of the day labourer is but fourpence a day, and the remuneration to a schoolmaster from each of his scholars is only ten shillings a year, while provisions are sometimes nearly as high as they are in Europe. The want of feeling generally apparent among the Chinese, argues their deep poverty.

We fully agree with the author in lamenting the effects of the opium trade, though we cannot look for the disuse of the mischievous drug, through the agency of the commercial forbearance or imperial restrictions.

THE OPIUM TRADE; ITS MORAL EVILS.

In China territory is not sought, nor lands coveted; there Europeans do not aim at conquest or colonization; they have no need, therefore, to use an intoxicating medium, in order to subserve their designs of political influence and territorial enlargement. The only inducement that English merchants can have to lead them to carry on the opium trade in China, is the desire of gain; and yet that gain is so considerable as to draw them on with increasing eagerness in its pursuit. It is with them not a means to an end, but the end itself; they do not contemplate the wasting away of the population in consequence of the traffic, and yet the terrible effects of the traffic may be the same as though they did contemplate it. Facts induce us to believe that it is so. Those who grow and sell the drug, while they profit by their speculation, would do well to follow the consumer into the haunts of vice, and mark the wretchedness, poverty, disease, and death which follow: the indulgence; for did they but know the thousandth part of the evils resulting from it, they would not, they could not, continue to engage in the transaction. Previous to the year 1796, opium was admitted into China on the payment of a duty, when a few hundred chests annually were imported. Since that time, the drug has been openly interdicted, and yet clandestinely introduced at the

rate of 20,000 chests annually, which cost the Chinese four millions of pounds sterling every year.—This quantity at twenty grains per day for each individual, would be sufficient to demoralize nearly three millions of persons. When the habit is once formed, it grows till it becomes inveterate; discontinuance is more and more difficult, until at length the sudden deprivation of the accustomed indulgence produces certain death. In the proportion as the wretched victim comes under the power of the insatiating drug, so is his ability to resist temptation less strong; and debilitated in body as well as mind, he is unable to earn his usual pittance, and not unfrequently sinks under the cravings of an appetite which he is unable to gratify. Thus they may be seen hanging their heads by the doors of the opium shops, which the hard hearted keepers, having sinned them of their all, will not permit them to enter; and shut out from their own dwellings, either by angry relatives or ruthless creditors, they die in the streets unpitied and despised. It would be well if the rich opium merchant were sometimes present to witness such scenes as these, that he might be aware how his wretched customers terminate their course, and see where his speculations, in thousands of instances, end. When the issue of this pernicious habit is not fatal, its tendencies are to weaken the strength, and to undermine the constitution; while the property spent in this voluptuous indulgence, constitute so much detracted from the wealth and industry of the country, and tend to plunge into deeper distress those weak and dependent members of society, who are already scarcely able to subsist at all. In fact every opium smoker may calculate upon shortening his life ten years from the time when he commences the practice; one half of his physical energies are soon gone; one third of his scanty earnings are absorbed; and feeling strength and income both diminishing, while the demands upon his resources are increased, he seeks to obtain by duplicity what he cannot earn by labour, and thus his moral sense becomes blunted and his heart hardened, while he plunges into the vortex of ruin, dragging with him his dependent relatives, and all within the sphere of his influence. Calculating, therefore, the shortened lives, the frequent diseases, and the actual starvation, which are the result of opium smoking in China, we may venture to assert that this pernicious drug annually destroys myriads of individuals. No man of feeling can contemplate this fearful amount of misery and mortality, as resulting from the opium trade, without an instinctive shudder. But the most appalling fact of all is, that the trade is constantly increasing.

One more extract is all we can find room for, which will exhibit

CHINESE POLITENESS AND CEREMONY.

The civilization of the Chinese will be seen in their complaisance towards each other. In no unchristian country do we find such attention paid to ceremony, such polish in daily intercourse, and so many compliments passing to and fro, as among the Chinese. In associating with friends, and in entertaining strangers, their politeness is remarkable. The poorest and commonest individual will scarcely allow a passenger to cross the door, without asking him in; should the stranger comply, the pipe is instantly filled and presented to his lips, or the tea poured out for his refreshment; a seat is then offered, and the master of the house does not presume to sit down, until the stranger is first seated. The epithets employed, when conversation commences, are in keeping with the character of the people. The familiar use of the personal pronoun is not indulged in; on the contrary, "venerable uncle,"—"honourable brother,"—"virtuous companion,"—"excellent sir,"—in addressing a stranger, are used instead of the pronoun "you;" and "the worthless fellow,"—"the stupid one,"—"the late born," or the "unworthy disciple," instead of the pronoun "I," are terms of common occurrence. "What is your noble patronymic?" is the first question; to which the usual reply is, "my poverty struck family name is so and so," again, the question is asked respecting the "honourable appellation, the exalted age, and the famous province," of the stranger; which queries are replied to by applying to one's self the epithets of "ignoble, short-lived, and vulgar;" thus the conversation

proceeds in a strain of compliment, the very commonness of which proves the civilization of the people. The titles bestowed upon the relations of others, together with the humiliating light in which persons speak of their own connections are also remarkable.—"Honourable young gentleman," for a friend's son, and "the thousand pieces of gold," for his daughter, are usual appellations; while the individual replies, by bestowing the epithet of "dog's son," and female slave," on his own offspring.

The ceremonies observed on the invitation and entertainment of guests are still more striking; complimentary cards are presented, and polite answers returned, all vying with each other in the display of humility and condescension. On the arrival of the guest, considerable difficulty is found in arranging who shall make the lowest bow, or first enter the door, or take the highest seat, or assume the precedence at table; though the host generally contrives to place his guest in the most elevated position.—When conversation commences, the mutual assent to every proposition, the scrupulous avoiding of all contradiction, and the entire absence of every offensive expression, or melancholy allusion, shows what a sense these people entertain of politeness; while the congratulations or condolence lavished on every prosperous or adverse occasion, and the readiness displayed to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep," manifest the degree of interest they appear to take in each other. Any one who would examine the style of their epistolary correspondence, the form of their invitation cards, and the phraseology of their polite discourses, must see that, professedly at least, "they esteem every other better than themselves," which is the foundation of politeness. Their civility may indeed verge towards adulation, and their compliments assume the air of flattery; but when we see a whole nation thus externally soft, affable, and yielding, we must acknowledge that they have made some advances in the art of good breeding.

We do not know that we have ever had the manners of the people of China brought so completely before us as in the present work; it has all the liveliness of a work of fiction, with the solid information of a statistical treatise.

BIOGRAPHY.

THE RIGHT REV. THOMAS WILSON, D. D., LORD BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN.*

Thomas Wilson was of a respectable family, living at Burton, in Cheshire. He speaks of his parents as having been pious persons; and such we may reasonably suppose they were, so far as the existence of early piety in a child is any proof of the training exercised by the parents. At all events, the elements of godliness were found in this child at a very early period; no small evidence of which is the language of filial tenderness in which, when he was very young, he speaks of his father and mother. The favour of God, which so clearly rested on this youth, in his future life, may surely be conceived to have descended on him, in no small degree, from the dutiful spirit of his early childhood. Such was the character of Him who, in the youthful days of his earthly sojourn, went down, and "was subject to his parents." Mr. Wilson received his early tuition from Mr. Harper, a school-master in the city of Chester; and, having laid a solid foundation under his care, entered at Trinity College, Dublin, with the intention of studying physic. But He who, aforesaid, had "called Luke the physician, whose praise was in the Gospel, to be an evangelist and physician of the soul," saw fit to divert the inclinations of Mr. Wilson into a different course. This change of purpose was the result of the persuasions of Archdeacon Hewetson, who afterwards gave him great assistance in his studies. Enough is not recorded of this period of his life to enable us to set it forth as an example to students: by its maturer fruits, however, we may decide, with tolerable certainty, that this period was well laid out. He was remarkable in after-life for the orderly distribution of his time; and, when we

* Concluded.

* From the Church of England Magazine.