

Emperor having ascended the throne whilst still of tender years, it is most needful that his studies be undertaken in due time, and be pursued with continual progress to the end, that the results of education in the course of right may be secured, and the foundations whence good government takes its rise be laid straight." After this pompous introduction the edict commands the Board of Astronomers to select "a day of fortunate augury" for His Majesty to commence his studies, and appoints the officials who are to act as preceptors, who are then enjoined as follows: Let them, on each morning and evening, address him with suitable admonitions, and devote themselves with thorough attention to the inculcation of learning, in order to prepare the way to fruitful results." The translator of this edict adds that no mention is made of an important appointment in such cases, namely, of the child who is selected to share His Majesty's studies, and who acts the part of a *souffre-douleur*, or "whipping boy." It is considered an act of profanity to prove or strike the "Son of Heaven," and hence, whenever his youthful majesty is naughty or inattentive, the "whipping boy" is beaten or disgraced.

It may perhaps be interesting to some to know a little of the system of education that prevails in China. The respect paid to learning by the Chinese is well known; it descends to the most trifling materials employed by a scholar, so that his ink, ink-slab, pencil, and paper are popularly designated "the precious things." It is emphatically a reverence for letters, for the slightest scrap of paper that has been written on, even though it bear but a few hastily-scrawled characters, is treated with such respect, that not only in every house, but on all the public thoroughfares, there are receptacles—bearing the inscription, "Reverence and pity the character"—in which to deposit all such paper, and from which, at intervals, it is removed and burnt at the shrine of learning. Learning takes the first rank in China; its aristocracy is an aristocracy of scholars, and even military mandarins are socially inferior to the civil officers of the Empire. Let us examine how these results, many of them so excellent, are secured. It must be premised, first of all, that education in China is entirely undenominational and secular. It may not be without advantage to remember this fact in England at the present time, in view of recent controversies, for the influence of idolatry over the Chinese is undeniable, yet this influence is exerted altogether apart from the schools. The pupils are admonished with many a moral maxim and the greatest respect is inculcated for the sages of past ages, but there is no connection between education and idolatry. Never does the pupil hear the slightest reference to the popular idols of the country, nor is he in any way, directly or indirectly, indoctrinated into the religious systems of Buddhism or Taouism. It is the influence of the home alone, and especially of the mother, that leads to the propagation of idolatry.

There are different ways of conducting education, according to the means of the father. In the case of children of rich parents private tutors are employed, who, in ordinary cases, receive a salary of £6 to £15 per year, living with the family. This sum is about equivalent to a private tutor in England receiving from £60 to £150 a year, for in such comparisons it is necessary to remember that the rate of expense incurred by a native in China is roughly about one-tenth that of a European in his own country. Where more highly educated men are engaged as tutors to the elder sons of a wealthy man, the rate of day varies between the limits of £30 and £70 a year. But such men are mostly high graduates not in official employ.

Schools abound everywhere; there is not a village or a hamlet in the country without its one or more schools. Some of these are opened by needy scholars on their own account, who are thankful if they can earn three or four dollars a month, and often have to supplement their slender means by practising medicine, or, in the case of the very poor, by telling fortunes. Frequently, neighbours will agree to engage the services of a teacher between them, and the school is held in the house of the proposer if he has an empty room. In such cases the number of the pupils never exceeds eight or ten; while in the lower class schools, open to any who choose to attend, there are sometimes as many as thirty scholars. The schoolmaster never employs an assistant. The fees paid in these schools vary with the age of the children or the grade of the school; for the youngest scholars perhaps a shilling a month would be a fair average of the cost of tuition for each child, while for elder ones as much as four shillings to eight shillings will sometimes be paid. In all cases the school fees are paid three times a year, and are accompanied with a small present of food. There are no boarding, charity, or infants schools in China. Girls are occasionally educated along with their brothers by a private tutor, and an educated woman is treated with marked respect; but the very way in which a lady who can read is regarded is proof how few there are who are able to do so. There are no schools for girls, nor is it considered disgraceful for the daughters even of rich and educated men to grow up utterly ignorant. The age at which a boy begins his education is about six years old, until which age he is allowed unlimited time for play. As the time approaches for the commencement of school life, the thought becomes an all absorbing one in his mind. For days past he has been hearing fearful stories of the inhuman propensities of his future teacher, of his cruelty and strictness, until the poor little lad begins to regard his school life much as poor Smike thought of Dotheboys Hall. On the morning fixed for his introduction to the school his mother brings him some poached eggs to eat, instead of his usual basin of rice, with the object of loosening the tongue and imparting wisdom, after which he is led by his father, not without much shrinking and many a cry, to the school. Here a servant has preceded them bearing candles and incense, together with a small gift of money to the teacher; and on their arrival the "new boy" is led up to a tablet or scroll hanging on the wall, on which is inscribed the name of some great sage, patron of schools and all schoolboys, and supposed to represent his spirit. Here, first the teacher, then the father, and lastly the pupil, prostrate themselves in reverence, after which they advance with much solemnity to the middle of the schoolroom, where a crimson cloth is spread on the floor, with a small bench standing in the centre. A little ceremony is again gone through here, the father insisting on the teacher sitting, while he as obstinately refuses, the friendly strife being compromised at last by their both standing, one on each side, while the overawed boy bows down to the ground, this time in reverence to his teacher. Four times does he knock his head on the floor, while the schoolmaster responds by a low bow; at the conclusion of which the father and the teacher salute each other and offer mutual apologies, the boy is shown to his seat, and the regular routine of school life begins. The scholars sit at little desks or tables, each with his ink-slab, pencils, and books before him, while the master sits at the end of the room. Very different is the appearance of a schoolroom in China from anything we are accustomed to in other countries. Fireless, even in the coldest