

THE FUTURE OF CHINA.

The future of China has been discussed from many points of view by statesmen, travelers, merchants and journalists, but all these contributors to public knowledge of the subject speak from the most superficial acquaintance with it. Their information is either obtained at second hand, or is derived from the casual experiences of a rapid journey through the more frequented parts of the country. Even those who have spent a greater length of time there, have lived in it as Europeans lived, isolated from native society, and knowing the inhabitants only from the outside as foreigners sojourning in their midst. Much that is strange and interesting they have to tell even within the limit of these restrictions, but much is also omitted from so partial a field of view. All that marks the difference between East and West is what strikes them most, while the human sympathy that unites mankind even from those most opposite and widely contrasted regions is missing from their picture. For this element we must look to the teaching of the missionary, and the Catholic missionary above all; to the man who spends his life not in an Europeanized quarter of a great town assimilated as far as possible to western civilization, but in some remote rural district where he may pass years without seeing a white face, and where the yellow man's life must be his life, as far as at least, as its external conditions are concerned. He alone regards the Chinaman, not as an anthropological curiosity, an oddity for a museum of ethnology, but as a fellow human being with faculties and capabilities identical with his own. Hence the series of articles on "China and the Faith," which Father Watson, O.P., is contributing to Illustrated Catholic Missions, have an authority in forecasting the future of China not to be looked for in any of the speculations of lay travelers on the same subject. To these the Chinese Empire presents itself as a venerable ruin tottering to its fall, while here the opposite view is taken that its long and changeless past is an argument rather of continued length of years than of dissolution. All modern States are upstarts of a day compared to an empire "which can trace its history back to the time when the Assyrian was stamping the record of his conquests on the clay, and the Egyptian making mummies of his dead." The mere fact that 400 millions of men, somewhere about a fifth of the inhabitants of the globe, are here living in the same conditions as they did three thousand years ago, is one that in itself suffices to place China outside the category of ordinary historical precedent. "A thousand years before Christ (asks Father Watson) where were the European nations of today? Where were the English, the French, or even the Imperial Romans? They were not; their names were unknown; yet even then the Chinese lived and flourished in the East, not as savages running wild in the woods and living on the spoils of the chase, but as a cultivated orderly people, with their farmers, merchants, students, their civil magistrates, the books, and the etiquette they boast of to-day. Why should Egypt disappear, Babylon and Nineveh pass away, the old Roman Empire crumble into fragments, while China remains greater than them all and its people more numerous than at any former time? We cannot believe they have been singled out for nothing. They have a destiny yet to be accomplished, and it is the knowledge of Christian truth must be a part of it. So without any pretence of being a prophet, I may state my full belief in the future of the Chinese race and their conversion to Christ, and may at least try to show that such a consummation is not impossible."

That there is nowhere in the world a better or more fruitful field for the planting of Catholic truth than this ancient society is the thesis the writer sets himself to prove. In support of this argument he points to the remarkable success which has attended the preaching of the faith in such remote regions as seem to afford it the best opportunity. That the Chinese make admirable Christians when once converted has been sufficiently shown by the sanguinary persecution accompanying the Boxer rising in which untold numbers suffered martyrdom with the most heroic courage. Nor is their aptitude for Christianity disproved by the prevalence among them of vices inherited from centuries of heathen abasement. But it is rather to refuting objections to missionary enterprise based on the inherent qualities of the race that Father Watson addresses himself. That many of these are such as to place serious obstacles in the way of Christian teaching he does not deny, but that they are not such as to render the task impossible he maintains with all the strength of earnest conviction. The pride of the Chinaman he acknowledges, for instance, to be so colossal and overweening, that he never knew what the word meant until he lived among them. Based on the rock of secular ignorance, it is indestructible by argument and impervious to reason. From the highest to the lowest the race is permeated with it, "from the great mandarin ambassador, who complained that there was no room to move in the small cramped city of Berlin, to the farm laborer who works from sunrise to sunset for 20s. a year, and who will tell you that the ships come to China from the West, to get such luxuries in the way of foods as bean curd and pea jelly." Facts are powerless to penetrate this armor of arrogance, and the occupation of Peking by European troops, the annexation of Chinese territory by Europeans, or other national humiliations, are either disbelieved or explained away. Thus they admit no superiority in anything that comes from abroad, and this national or racial self-sufficiency is undoubtedly a formidable obstacle to the adoption of a religion which reaches them as a foreign importation. The Catholic missionary seeks to conciliate it as much as possible by adopting the dress and external aspect of the people, a concession which, no doubt, largely helps to the success of Catholic preaching among them.

But if Father Watson allows this count in the indictment of the Chinese to be by default, he vigorously combats that which disparages them as an effete race. Hardy, patient, industrious tillers of the soil, the bulk of the population of China may compare favorably in point of physique with any other type of nationality in the world. The urban population is so small in proportion to the rural that it is here set down as perhaps no more than one per cent. In the first district in North China evangelized by the writer there were, in an area of 40 miles by 30, 800 villages to one city, and in his second station 999 of the smaller units were grouped round one of the larger. The movement that urges our own rural population into the great urban centres has no counterpart in China, and the physical degeneracy that results from it affects but a very small fraction of her inhabitants. Some astonishing instances are quoted by the missionary writer of the vitality of the temperate and abstemious Chinese peasant in recovering from terrible injuries and enduring shocks and accidents almost with indifference. "These are signs of bodily vigor or only, it is true, he says, but such things show that a nation composed of individuals of this hardy type is not physically decaying, though it may be as old as the hills. It is not the antiquity of a nation that makes its people effete, it is the want of sobriety, industry and self-restraint. Self-indulgence, disobedience to elementary moral laws, a soft and luxurious life, these make a people effete whether they be an old or a youthful race." It is notorious, too, that the Chinese type prevails over that of every other race with which it is mixed, so as completely to efface alien characteristics in a generation or two. But if all these facts prove that the individual Chinaman shows no symptoms of effete, the same cannot be said of the institutions of the country. Here it is that antiquated tradition breaks down in contact with a newer civilization with which it is reluctantly brought face to face. How the oldest society in the world is to be brought into intimate relations with the youngest save by a total break-up of its rigid structure, is the problem confronting those who speculate on the future of China. The present trend of events fosters the belief that it will be solved by the Japanese factor in the far East, and that the hoary Middle Kingdom will enter on the path of modernization under the tutelage of a kindred people rather than under that of the alien white man. The great and growing influence of the Japanese in China is one of the most striking features of its present condition, and in numbers alone they preponderate over every other nationality settled there. As merchants they have established themselves in northern China since the date of the war, and each exercises a leverage over Chinese ideals and modes of thought which no European can hope to rival. Even in the adamant soil of Chinese officialdom, the agents of the Island Empire are busily sowing the seed of reform, and many of the higher class mandarins have been induced to visit Japan, return allied with the desire of seeing its progress initiated at home. The reorganization of the Chinese army is one of the tasks Japan is preparing to take in hand, and the excellence of the raw material moulded such a

force officered and led by her, one of the most formidable in the world. Among evidences of the stirring of the dry bones under the breath of the new life is the prominent part taken by women in the "Young China" movement. They assist at public meetings, and are in increasing numbers receiving a European education, a significant symptom indeed of the change which is slowly permeating the great political organism of the Far East.—London Tablet.

THE ANGELUS BELL.

Sometimes persons who are strangers to our holy religion wonder at the triple ringing each day—morning, noon and evening—of the Angelus Bell. They do not seem to understand the real sublimity of the prayer that accompanies that ringing. In his delightful work, "Parfums de Rome," Louis Veuillot, one of France's most Catholic writers, has a beautiful passage in which he tells of the Angelus. He was on his way to Rome, and a halt in a desert spot permitted him to hear the noonday Angelus. A woman and child who were watching the train pass made the Sign of the Cross, and recited the Angelical Salutation. "Why," asked Coquet, "do they make the Sign of the Cross?" Is it the train or ourselves they take for the devil?

"Neither the train, nor me, nor you, Coquet, full of malice though you are. This woman and child are not thinking of the devil, they are thinking of God." And he added, then, the following beautiful description and explanation of the Angelus: "They have heard the Angelus, and they are praying. Listen to those sweet and noble sounds—that is the telegraphic language of the Church, invented long ago and now understood by all the people. 'What does it say?' asked Coquet. It says something which is infinitely above you and your learned kind, but which is still within the comprehension of these little ones."

"It says that the Angel of the Lord announced to Mary that she was to become the Mother of the Saviour of the world; that Mary answered the angel: Be it done unto me according to the will of the Lord. I am His handmaiden; that Mary conceived by the Holy Ghost; that the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us."

"To this divine account, to this profession of faith, the bell adds the prayer of the Church: 'O Mary, Mother of God, pray for us poor sinners; pray for us now and at the hour of our death.' And this is what these poor people are saying in unison with the bell—the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us!"

"Long ago, over the territories of St. Louis, King of France and Suzerain of England, fifteen hundred bell-fries used to point to the sky, with the Cross of Christ for a crown upon them. In those days a man could hardly raise his eyes without beholding the sign of our redemption—the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, and died for us!"

"This harmonious voice of prayer flooded the fields, climbed the mountain heights, descended into the hidden valleys, penetrated into the depths of the forest, dominated all human sounds. A voice of consolation, of hope, of love, of salvation! He loved us, He has pardoned us, He has died to win us, He has reigned over us!"

"It spoke without ceasing. It reminded men that they were kings, the sons of God, co-heirs of Heaven, and that Heaven is the reward of faith, hope and charity."

"The great voice did not disdain to speak of men after having spoken of God. It announced baptism, marriage, death; it asked the prayers of men for those who were just entering into life, and for those who were about to appear before the judgment; it asked prayers for those who were to be united in life. The human family in those days knew no pariahs."

"I do not know where bells were invented, but it is certain that the widespread use of them is to be attributed to a Pope. It is Rome who has given us this harmonious voice with its divine language. It is she who baptized bells conferring a sacrament on them that prayer might fall from Heaven upon our souls like a sea of benedictions!"

"O Rome, Mother of divine, Mother of light and of hope, Mother, too, of all sweetness, all joy and all poetry! O Rome, inspired of God to fill with strengthening delights the poor heart of man!"

Surely there exists no other faith on earth that could inspire such a sublime passage. There seems to be something, specially associated with Rome, with her magnificent and holy doctrines that is calculated to raise the soul above the littleness of earth and to lend it wings, far more powerful than those of mere poetry, to soar into the atmosphere of the pure and the spiritual.

Benefits of Longevity.

(By a Regular Contributor.)

The Brooklyn "Eagle" contains a lengthy article on longevity and how advancing years should be no bar to a man's success. We have no intention of analyzing the entire article, but a few sentences in it seem to us to furnish a fair text for serious reflection. The writer says, in closing: "It must be understood, in all this, that the statesman of experience whose case we are considering is no fossil. To the old man who has lost his vigor or who is out of touch with young life—its ideals, its points of view, its manner of speech—there is no salvation in the mere lengthening out of years. A collection of diaries is not in itself equivalent to a treasury of wisdom, and in changing world familiarity with precedents may sometimes be dangerous lore. But in every country there is, and always will be, a career for the man to whom the years have brought maturity and knowledge, without taking from his freshness of spirit and quickness of adaptation."

In these last words do we find the real point. It is generally the case with people who are advanced in years that they see the present through the spectacles of the past. Their very memories appear to wait them away into the years that are dead. They forget what took place last week, or yesterday, or an hour ago; but they recall with vividness and accuracy the most minute events of fifty and sixty years ago. In other words, they live in the past. Thus it is that they fail to keep pace with the times, and they naturally feel the coming on of that period of rest that is theirs by every right, for—

"If youth has its duty of labor."

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It would be wrong to rob the aged person of this consolation, this quiet of mind, this calmness of peace which so providentially predisposes the whole being for that end which is rapidly approaching, and which detaches the heart, the desires, the will, the ambition from all those things without which, in younger days, it could not live nor enjoy living. A contentment to go seems to fall upon them, and the transition is made easy by nature and by God.

But all the same, the man is an exception who carries into the seventies and the eighties the same watchfulness, the same ambitions, the same interest in the passing events of the day, that he had when he was forty, fifty, or even sixty. Hence it is that the statesman-like Gladstone, or Leo XIII.—who keeps up to the very end the intellectual vigor of mid-life, is an exception, and, as the article says, his utility depends greatly upon the manner in which he has been able to keep in touch with the times, with the men of younger generations, with the spirit of newer circumstances. And when he is able to do this, ah! then his great experience, his long years of gathered information, his wisdom, his acquired knowledge, all have a powerful bearing that no young man, no matter how talented or how learned he may be, could ever expect to possess. When, then, we meet with one of those rare examples we should cherish him, for he is a favored gift of God to humanity.

PERPETUAL PRAYER

The command given by Our Lord to "pray always" seems to the unreflecting very hard. How are we to constantly be in the presence of God? How can a person continually pray? Each one has his duties, his daily work, his serious occupations of life to engage his time and attention. It is a duty also to work, and if we neglect we are to expect punishment. The two commands seem to be incompatible. If you are at prayer, or all the time you must neglect work; and if at work all the time you must neglect prayer. The following little anecdote, related by a good nun of one of our religious orders, is an illustration of how we can pray unceasingly:—

"A carpenter was fixing some presses in our sacristy and the Sister who overlooked the work asked him if he was attentive to his religious duties. He replied, I have not time to do much, but I have never forgotten one little practice taught

me long ago by one of the holy priests who was a saint—Father Furniss was his name. During the mission of Ann's street he told us we need not go on our knees to pray, but we should from time to time raise our hearts to God during our work and say: 'My Jesus, I do this for love of Thee.' I can never forget the impression the sermon of that holy Father made upon me, and very often during my work I say the little prayer he taught us."

"This simple avowal explained something which had often surprised us—we noticed that this carpenter often touched his cap without apparent reason, but we were far from suspecting that he was breathing the little aspiration he had learned so many years ago from the zealous Redeemer."

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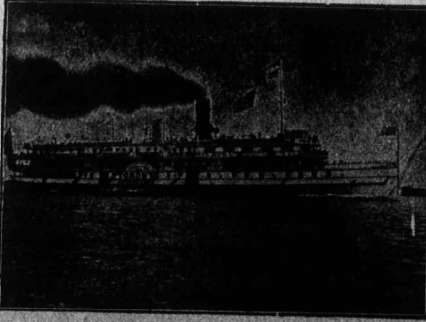
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