







CHINESE LIFE.

The following account of Chinese life is from a correspondent of the Colonial Church Chronicle, January 9, 1854. The reader, if we mistake not, will find it well worth an attentive perusal.

We reached Hong Kong at last. It was very curious approaching China. A hundred miles away from Hong Kong we fell in with Chinese vessels—fishing-boats and junks—curious things, with high painted sterns, and low bows, and masts, and marvellous-looking men on board. We got safe to Hong Kong without being attacked by pirates—a thing our captain much feared, as he was carrying gold dust; and every fishing-boat is manned by pirates. They are most bold. A few weeks before, a pirate junk ran aside an American clipper in full sail before a stiff breeze, hooked on by grappling irons, and tried to board. However, H.M. steamer Hermes has been rather punishing them lately, having destroyed forty on her last trip.

The coast of China is very fine, mountainous, and indented by cliff-bound bays and islands. Hong Kong is a bold island; Victoria lying to the north, separated only by the straits from the mainland. It is a very striking place. The town straggles along the bay, between the sea and the high peaks behind, and is full of fine buildings. I was surprised to see such a pretty place, and such handsome buildings.

The cathedral stands on a knoll, rising above the town—the best site—and is really a very nice building, considering that it was designed, I believe, by the government surveyor: (1) a western tower standing on arches, a nave and aisles, transepts and eastern transept aisle, a few more feet of nave east of the transept, and a low arch under a window, admitting to an apse, which is the filling point, as it is low and small, and wants dignity. The windows throughout, clerestory and all, are full of Powell's quarries, so that the light is nicely toned down. Many of the windows open, and have venetians to take their place, necessary in a hot climate. The seats are all low, and made of open cane-work, very nice and cool. Two pulpits face you, standing against the corners of the transept. East of them, in the open outside of the apse, is a chair and desk on the north side for the bishop, and bench and desk on the south for the clergy. The choir should be here, but are with the organ, in the south transept. They consist of Chinese boys and young men, the pupils of St. Paul's College, in part of which the Bishop resides.

The Bishop had lately returned from Shanghai, and was full of the spirit of Christianity. He has no doubt that in a little time all China will be Protestant Christians. There is little doubt that the Tartars will be expelled. When we left on the 27th of December, the insurgent army was said to be less than twenty miles from Peking, and everything gave way before them. Captain Fishburn, of H.M. steamer Hermes, (which returned to Anson the day before Christmas,) sent some time with me; he says he cannot doubt their sincerity. He was fired at by the insurgent army at Shanghai, returned the fire, and demanded explanation. They said they had been told by the mandarins that the Emperor had hired the English to destroy them; and apologized on his denying this. Finding that the report had been spread, and that the imperial fleet actually followed him, he caught a boat on his way up to Nankin, dressed the men in insurgent colors, and sent them to the insurgent camp with a letter, saying that England took part with neither.

At Nankin he found the insurgent troops ready to attack him; but on reading his letter they at once withdrew, and the people flocked on board the Hermes with the greatest confidence. The first thing they did was to ask about our religion, and on hearing the Cross and Commandments, they at once claimed him and his ship's company as brothers. "There could be no fear of the Hermes attacking its brethren."

Captain Fishburn said he had quite convinced himself of their sincerity in faith, as worshippers of "Yee," and in the Holy Trinity, though it is most likely imperfect, and in the moral discipline they carry out. He learnt also that none but worshippers of "Yee" are admitted into the army; and these, after examination of faith, and professions of obedience to the Commandments, and promises to strive against sin, are admitted by baptism with water in the name of the Trinity.

He asked how they baptized, and was shown. A basin of water is placed on the ground, and the person to be baptized kneels, and dips his head in, or has water poured on him, while the appointed person pronounces him baptized in the name of the Trinity.

The Bishop also gave us the same report, which he had learnt from a Chinese in the insurgent camp, who had been brought to him by some one connected with the missions in the north.

It is also said that they have appointed a ministry consisting of three sorts of orders. It was a little difficult to carry away all one heard; but I think the highest consisted of three Wangs, or Princes, of whom the celebrated "Two-ping-wang" is one; the second order of two Wangs, or some such name. The Bishop said it was a very fair term for the office, "Y" meaning old, and "wang" (if that were the word) something synonymous; but altogether it was a fair and emphatic translation of elder or presbyter. The third order consisted of twenty-four of every camp of 10,000 (and there were ten camps of that number.) The business of the twenty-four was to instruct those under them, and when fit, to present them to the three Wangs, and by their command baptize them. This, I am confident, was in substance the Bishop's account, but in transcribing it from my journal, it strikes me as disagreeing with what was asserted about none being enrolled in the army till he was baptized. There may be some distinction made between the enrolled soldiers and those in preparation, who yet fight in their army.

Captain Fishburn spoke of their enthu-

siasm as great. He saw their service, which consisted of hymns, reading from a translation of part of the Old Testament, repetition of the Commandments, and prayers. They said they knew their way, and would receive teachers, but they thought it would be better to defer till they had finished the matter in hand, taken Peking, driven away and destroyed the Tartars, and established the new dynasty. They had no doubt of success. It was not man's work, but God's, and must succeed. The English might take part in it if they liked, or not; it would make no difference either in their success or their friendship towards us.

We went to Canton. It is distant from Hong Kong eight hours by steamer. We passed the celebrated Bogue Forts, and up the river to Whampoa; the river swarming with boats of all kinds up to great painted junks of 600 tons burden, especially along the fifteen miles from Whampoa to Canton. The country, too, is very pretty—fine mountains and rich plains, studded with villages, or square clusters of houses, joined in rows, with narrow streets, about four feet wide, with a strong gate at each end, shut at night as a defence against pirates. Every street in every town is closed by gates at night. This speaks well for the honesty of the people! We were reminded of England and her church towers by the constant pagodas near the villages rising from among the trees.

The only place where foreigners are permitted in Canton is in the Foreign Factory, as it is called, a block of buildings, houses, shops, and offices, with a garden down to the river, in which stands a decent English church, shut off from the town by gates. The garden is pretty. The buildings (the Chinese centers) are the finest anywhere in China, the imperial palace not excepted.

We steamed up through rows of anchored boats, forming regular streets, to opposite the factory. Here a long boat, gaily painted, was sent to take us on shore, and the younger Mr. Justice entertained us most hospitably in the house of the firm.

Few of the merchants there ever venture fifty yards into the town, and they warned and begged us not to go. But we found Mr. Grey, the chaplain, Mr. Parker, the interpreter, and Dr. Dixon, ready to go anywhere, and so it ended in our walking all about the town. No foreigner, not without the treaty, has ever entered the city. I walked in through one of the gates, but was hustled out again directly. We made the circuit of the city on two different occasions. It is surrounded by a high wall of stone and brick, and is of an oval shape, situated at the end towards the river. We spent the first morning in visiting some of the best shops near the factory—furniture shops, wood-working shops, ivory ware, &c., and in the afternoon we walked round the city; and saw S. in chairs.

The streets throughout China are quite narrow; as you walk along you may touch the houses on both sides. I should say the streets vary in width from four to seven feet. The houses are low. The fronts of Chinese shops for the most part, tenable bodily, or run always open, and closed at night only by wooden upright bars, which fit in close to each other; but many shops, where gold and silver and other valuable wares are exposed, and, perhaps, the better sort of shops generally, are closed in front. The shops are painted and gilded outside, and have always long boards up and down all the sides, painted and inscribed with characters, which are "good words," or sentences from Confucius, to drive away evil spirits. Every house, and room, and door has its "good words" posted up. The shops inside are very handsome. Near the door two copies generally stand, who open the door, and welcome you, and go on errands; there are chairs at the sides, and perhaps a counter, and at the further end is always a quaint lattice-work screen, gilded and ornamented, with an arch in the middle. The master of the shop sits here, within the lattice arch, with a high ornamented table in front, on which whatever you ask to see is exposed. Ten is handed to you, or if not, there it stands, and you can help yourself. It is not particularly good, it is made just as we make it, in a teapot, or very commonly is kept boiling all day long in an earthenware kettle. There is always a "joss-house" somewhere in the shops, with perhaps a small image, and a little lamp burning a plate of sweet cakes, another with three oranges, perhaps, and three little cups of tea, and a few joss-sticks burning. In the wall, too, by every door of house or shop is a small recess, like a piscina recess in a church, and in this morning and evening, they make a "joss-pigeon," or, as they say, "chin-chin joss,"—i.e., they light up a few joss-sticks.

Every junk, too, has its joss-house at the stern, where a lamp and joss-sticks always burn; and every boat and common sampan has the same. You get into a boat in the midst of a carved and painted covering, under which you sit. The father rows, and manages the sail with his boys or girls ahead. The good woman, with perhaps no feet, sits at her busy tied on her back. Here, too, is the kettle boiling and the dinner cooking, and the centre where you sit is presided over by the household gods, in the shape of a joss, with offerings and a burning lamp, under the seat you sit on. Yet, with all this apparent reverence for the unseen (for whether Joss represents God or Satan I never could ascertain, but I believe the latter), there is really the greatest indifference. You may handle everything, and you may see man or woman in the joss-house, "chin-chin joss,"—i.e., making offerings, or burning joss-papers or sticks, and b-wing, and yet talking or laughing to a neighbor all the while. The thing is to be done, apparently, but how it is done does not matter. The religion consists in beating gongs, firing crackers, scattering burning papers in the air, in making offerings morning and evening, and in nothing else. The word "pigeon" has become universal, it is said, in China; I believe it is a corruption of the English "business."

We visited the temple of Honan. It covers a great space. You enter through

a large gateway, guarded on each side by a huge griffin image, and are admitted into a large courtyard. Right and left are detached joss-houses, with a fine tree before each. Facing you is the great temple, the doors open wide in front. Inside, facing these doors, is a great altar, with three incense burners and gaudy idols behind it. At the side are other altars and figures. The building was but shallow, there being perhaps from ten to twenty feet, in most places, between the door and the altar. Yes, perhaps, rather more. I never saw worshippers inside during the service, but indeed ever making part in the service—nothing but priests. I dare say the common joss-houses, which abound everywhere, are for the people.

One was painfully struck by the resemblance of the altars to European altars: the same shape, covered in most cases with super-frontal and antependium, always topped with a narrow embroidered stole, a row of six or more candlesticks, and vases of flowers, &c.

The service consists of a low, inaudible, and rapid chant, hardly heard beyond the door; the priests kneeling, one behind the other, from what we should call the east to the west end; one of the front priests keeping time by striking a tom-tom to every syllable, varied by another priest every now and then striking a small silver gong. At intervals a young priest, whose position was always alone, near the west door, stalked up to the altar, bowed, and went back again. The priest's dress, which seems to be the same in the temple as out, is of pale yellow and brown silk or stuff, made something like our B.A. gown. His head and face are close shaved; all the rest of the world keeping a lock of hair on the crown, which is plaited with silk, and falls down in a pigtail to the heels. They are a despicable class, being generally foundlings. Any parent thinking his son sickly, and not likely to be of much use to him, may deposit him in a temple, when he is considered dedicated. Up to the age of twenty-one a man may enter the priesthood, and he can never leave it. The temple at Honan had about five or six hundred attached to it. They are supported by lands and offerings.

We went all over this temple. There were many yards, with numerous joss-houses, cloisters, cells, large kitchen, refectory, pagodas, and garden and orchard. In the garden was a stone building, in which the body of every priest who dies is placed in a chair, and burnt; and another near, circular, with four circular holes, one on each side, in which the ashes are placed.

This was a Buddhist temple. Inferred to the Temple of Longevity, which, I think, belongs to the Taoists, and the same day to the Temple of the Five Hundred Gods, a new building of the National, or Confucian religion. It was a large oblong building, standing surrounded by courtyards, as usual; in it were six rows of idols as large as life. We had great difficulty in getting in; a mob collected, and I thought we should have had to give it up, but we persisted, and at last a Chinese who spoke a little broken English, and had a shop near the factory, came up to us, and inquired what was the matter, and very kindly went and asked the abbot to admit us. As far as I could make out from him, every person might take any one of those idols as tutelary. They seemed to represent all classes—mandarins, crowned heads, military heads, and one odd figure in knee-breeches, coat, and hat, which, I supposed, represented the English; in which I was confirmed by a boy taking me to it, pointing, and exclaiming, "Fen-qui," the usual and opprobrious expression used by you pass along the streets, which means, I believe, "foreign devil." At the end of the building were the usual three large idols, behind an altar, and in front a single figure, behind a lower altar. The Chinaman went in front, and made his reverence, and said it was the Emperor. I asked him—"Do you chin-chin the Emperor?" "Yes," he said, and repeated it. "But is he Joss?" "No," "Why do you worship him then?" He had great difficulty in mustering English, and I in understanding. But I gathered from his words and signs that the belief is, that Joss being invisible, and unable to communicate with men by word of mouth, has the Emperor as vicegerent on earth to communicate with men. But I never could find one who could give me any information. They marry very young; and it is a disgrace for a man not to be married before he is twenty-one.

If there be any religion, it is useless for their moral improvement. I believe the people of Canton and the south are far inferior in every respect to the people of the north; but throughout China honesty and morality are unknown. The utter pollution of the people seems to have produced the effect St. Paul speaks of—the destruction of all natural affection. By law and religion (if any) a son is bound to support and reverence his parents, and this filial respect and nurture are never wanting, but most strictly paid. The male child therefore is carefully preserved. The female child perhaps is drowned as soon as born. I never saw any in the river myself, but I was told it was quite a common sight. Or else a girl is kept and sold. It is a fact that you may buy a child for a few shillings. There is no love for their children. Numbers and numbers are bought and brought up as prostitutes. Carcasses of young girls from eight to nine years old and upwards are bought for a few dollars a-head, according to the age, and sent for this purpose to California. Quite young girls, gaily dressed and painted, solicit you in the open day in the streets.

What we have done in missionary ways I do not know. I should think the English Church has done but little. A few Catholics attend the service at Hong Kong; and the Bishop has a school, or college, in which I heard the upper class translating Greek, but he did not speak highly of the work as producing real converts. I believe the Church of Rome works much more wisely. The Roman Catholic missionaries go for a few years to the College at Macao, an old Portuguese settlement, to get the habits and manners of the people, as well as to perfect themselves in the dialect of the district they mean to work in, and then

in Chinese dress, with shaven head and pigtail, go right away into the country. Whether they have done much I cannot learn. They say themselves that they are all over China, and have converted everywhere; and that quite a large part of the inhabitants in the interior are Roman Catholics. If this is so, how is it that they have known nothing of it, and have done nothing to stop this Protestant movement. It is also said that they make but slight difference in their practices, merely in many cases adding an image of the Blessed Virgin, and that their Christianity is but the worship of the Virgin grafted on the old worship. Certainly temples require but little change. In many cases, a statue of a figure with a child in her arms already stands in the joss-houses. But of this I really could find out nothing.

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