Benas

Ethics and Poetry of the Chinese

THE ETHICS AND POETRY OF THE CHINESE, WITH PHASES IN THEIR HISTORY.

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I PROPOSE in this paper to lay before the Society a sketch of the inner life, aims and aspirations of more than three hundred and eighty millions of our fellow-creatures; the only family of human beings who can claim to have from the remotest ages to the present day, kept the cradle of their race and themselves in an unbroken historical continuity. The Jews, who have marvellously retained their ethics and racial instincts perhaps longer than any other Caucasian race, must yield to the Chinese the merit of having preserved both their territory and their political organisation intact.

I am not entering into the field of comparative ethics, nor do I wish to impress anyone with the idea that I at all disparage our western ideal of civilisation. I only ask for an impartial and philosophic enquiry as to the claims the Chinese have to hold a place among the nations of the world, who have contributed their share to wean mankind from a state of primitive savagery, to a useful form of communal life.

It is most difficult for us, perhaps the most serious task, for the philosophic mind to free itself entirely from inherited prejudices. I remember conversing once with the great Indian reformer, Chunder Sen, a man of transcendent intellect, who had a supreme admiration for all that was health-giving in our European customs and ethics, yet he admitted to me that he himself could not easily overcome his inherited prejudice against the use of flesh meat.

It has been jestingly observed, that if the pockets of some of the agnostics of Latin countries were searched, possibly an *Agnus Dei* or a sacred heart might be found on their ring of charms.

No people had a greater prejudice against the bearded strangers (barbarians) than had the great Roman nation; yet in the end the traditions of Rome would have been lost but for these very barbarians. If anyone could have foretold that the Roman people would in later years adopt the poems of, what was in their estimation, the barbarian Jewish king David, as sacred hymns, and chant and re-chant these verses daily in all the Basilica of the Eternal City, it would have seemed as ludicrous then, as though someone to-day were to venture to predict that in a future time, some Chinese poet might take rank with a Shakespeare or a Byron.

In fact, do we not ourselves associate ideas with modes of expression, I will not say thought, which our educated conscience warns us are erroneous? For instance, we asso-

ciate a German band with a wretched out-of-tune brazen performance, whilst we at the same time know that Germany produces some of the most tender and exquisite writers of harmony, and many of the most skilful executants. Again, an Italian organ-grinder and an Italian plaster-of-paris image man revolt our artistic instincts, the one by its machine-made inartistic harmony, the other by the soulless lifeless lump of dough which seems to burlesque art; and yet Italy, of all other countries, is the mother of much that is true and beautiful, whether in the domain of harmony, the brush, or the art plastic. It is just because both Germany and Italy are artistic nations, that where the cup is full to overflowing, there we find, as a rule, the froth and bubble as well; and we are apt to associate the froth and bubble oftentimes with the generous liquid itself. It is a matter of fact that those Germans and Italians, to whom none of their countrymen would fling a centime, get a few coppers from the country folk of people not their own. Hence so many of them emigrate, and thus give a false impression to the uncultured, untravelled, and unthinking multitude, respecting the character of the masses of their countrymen at home.

There is another pitfall from which we have to be warned, and that is the influence of the unscientific and superficial chronicler. For instance, the foreign professor, who may live in Soho, or the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, and who corresponds with some continental journal, professes to instruct the people abroad about the English nation, whereas he hardly knows the parish of St. Giles. What does such a critic as this know of our sturdy Lancashire men and their busy hives of commerce; our Yorkshire centres of industry; the charm of our lake district; the brawny Highlander and his wild and romantic country; our beautiful Devonshire meads and their gentle yeomanry;

or the grimy iron puddler of Dudley and West Bromwich; yet such writers profess to instruct about England. You have, again, the foreign Commission Agents, who live a few years in some of our important manufacturing centres. They attend their lager beer houses in London, Liverpool, Manchester, or Bradford; they go occasionally from Friday to Monday perhaps to Brighton, Southport, Buxton, or their nearest watering-place; they remain with us just long enough to make the money they want; they go back to the Vaterland, and these people tell you they know all about England and the English; nay, how many native born Londoners are there who know extremely little of the land of their birth. So that before presenting to you a few examples of the ethics and poetry of the Chinese people, I venture to entreat you to divest yourselves of any possible prejudice, which I regretfully admit exists against the Chinese, in many English-speaking countries, in the same degree as I warn you of the prejudice which clings to the Italian organ-grinder and the German brass band. I wish you also to take *cum grano salis* the opinions of many Europeans who happen to have lived a few years in the Treaty ports of China, who have possibly associated only with the English "set" over there, and have become saturated with our prejudices, going to China only to make money, and on their return venturing to tell you they know all about China and the Chinese. Their knowledge perhaps is about equal to, or possibly slightly less than, that of our foreign friend located in St. Giles, who presumes to be a popular educator with regard to Great Britain.

To study the history and tendency of a people, we must not merely visit the country as a tourist or as a commercial adventurer, but it is necessary to take a deep introspective view into their literature, religion, laws, ethics, and proverbs, as well as to their political and social organisation. A

Gibbon, or a Mommsen, has described the inner life of ancient Rome perhaps better than a local Roman *quidnunc*, who may have been in the flesh in the Eternal city centuries ago. These historians that I have mentioned have seen with their brains what the other merely thinks he sees with his eyes. Of course, those students who are satisfied without examination that they are only dealing with the "heathen Chinee," are no better than the prejudiced Chinaman of the lower orders, who calls Europeans barbarians and whiskey-drinking devils. These persons on both sides do not count for much in the domain of philosophic thought, though, alas, they do sometimes influence the material and political relations of mankind with each other, and oftentimes prejudice gains a temporary victory. A child may not like the multiplication table, but whether he likes it or not, it does not alter the fact that twice two are four.

Suppose a Chinese author quoting the opinion of an American Ex-Consul as to the position of womanhood in Germany, the so-called typical land of culture. Now this is what Ex-Consul Mr. Henry Ruffles says :—

I would not like to be a German peasant woman, I would much prefer to be a German horse, for German horses are well treated and well fed. The Germans are naturally kind to all dumb animals. Women, however, receive none of these kind attentions and considerations at the hands of the male portion of the community, but are treated as if they were of a species lower than the brutes, with no feelings and no souls. Woman is made to perform every kind of degrading labour. She prepares the fields for planting, she drives the oxen and holds the plough, and not unfrequently she takes the place of the ox before the plough. She sows the seed and tills the soil, she shovels, she hoes, she reaps, she gathers the harvest, she thrashes the grain and carries it to the mill, she grinds it at the mill, she markets the products of her small strip of land to buy bread for her children and beer for her lord and master. She does the work and drudgery in the factories, she is the scavenger for cleaning the streets, and gathering offal in the cities and highways for enriching the land. She does

everything but play soldier and hang about beer shops and drink beer from early morn until late at night like the German men, and these occupations would be assigned to her provided they required hard labour or drudgery of any kind. Yet they are strong and robust, and perform what is called a man's labour. While at work in the fields, and it is only during the warm months of the year that they can, they are only paid ten or twelve cents for a day's labour of twelve hours (that is fivepence or sixpence English money).

When they board themselves they receive from 20 to 28 or 30 cents a day, or 10d. to 1s. 3d. English sterling.

Might not a Chinese critic be reasonably expected to deduce from this opinion, that however high the ideal of woman may be in countries holding western ethics, in actual practice it does not amount to much; and might not such a student logically retort, when we point flippantly to the practical position of women in some of the treaty ports of China, that we ought to examine what the ideal position of woman is, in Chinese religion and ethics, before we assume that the Chinese Chowbenter's wife is the ideal of Chinese womanhood.

As a magistrate, I had the personal experience in our local tribunal, of an excellent heroic woman who nursed and tended, and by her long and faithful watching, saved the life of a desperately wounded canal-boatman with whom she lived as his wife, absolutely refusing the earnest appeal of the man in open court to marry with legal or religious form; "Nay," said she, "I love him, and he is a good man and kind to me now, but the moment I am his wife he looks upon me as his property, and he'll kick me like the rest of them do." And *vice versa*, how many women are there that have goaded their husbands almost to the verge of ruin, madness, and despair, who have lost all their womanhood, except, perhaps, as the poet Heine calls it, "their anatomical virtue?" Such instances as these, however, are the

exceptional diseases of western society, but not the ideal high type of the true biblical wife, whom the royal sacred writer describes as more precious than rubies. There is a popular Chinese song of very ancient date, seven centuries before the Christian era. It is in General Tcheng Ki Tong's collection, published in the French language. I give you two verses. I may add that, to the best of my belief, although there are translations, there is no metrical version in the English language of the ancient Chinese book of verses—more of which anon.

LITTLE WIFE.

Outside the eastern city gate
Are many damsels fair and gay,
Like clouds are they in numbers great,
To them I have no word to say.
My little wife in robes of white
For me is my heart's sole delight.

Outside the ancient city towers
Await me maidens, sweet and gay,
With coloured robes and gorgeous flowers.
They tempt me from my mate astray.
But little wife in robes of white
For me is my heart's sole delight.

I have carefully studied the many adverse criticisms of the Chinese people, and I find that they may be crystallised into three main charges; firstly, that woman does not hold as high a social position as in European and western communities generally; secondly, that their deterrent and punitive legislation is cruel; and, thirdly, that the Chinese personal habits are unsavoury, that their abodes are uncleanly, and that their general ideas of sanitation are either very primitive or altogether wanting. The prejudices of Europeans and English-speaking people generally have been for the most part fostered by the experiences of the Treaty

ports, and of Americans and Australians, where the froth of Chinese emigration has overflown, and we hear much of the unsavoury condition of the Chinese quarters and of their careless habits. Let me remind these adverse critics of what an observant foreigner wrote of us in pre-reformation days. Erasmus ascribes the frequent plagues in England to the nastiness, dirt, and slovenly habits of the people. "The floors," said he, "are commonly of clay, strewed with rushes, under which lies unmolested an ancient collection of beer, grease, fragments, bones, spittle, excrement of dogs and cats, and everything that is nasty." We have, however, improved all this off the face of the earth, so there is hope for the Chinese likewise.

I venture to think I have shown that in sanitary matters at least, China is what we were in former generations. It occurs to me that the reply of many Chinese ladies to those who adversely criticise their social position, would be very much like the reply of those British matrons who do not care to help their sisters to obtain political equality and complete parliamentary enfranchisement, these like the others say "We don't want to vote, we prefer to retain the sphere we now occupy." As a matter of fact, monogamy is the legal status of society in China. There is a recognised inferior union, similar to that permitted by the "first" Code Napoleon and the temporary morgantic alliances of the German aristocracy known as "standesherren," but law and Chinese society permits only one wife. On the other hand, a Chinese wife is a legal attorney for her husband. She can give a receipt for him and take delivery or accept a transfer for him; she can veto or consent to the marriage of her offspring, and she can endow them with her goods without the consent of her husband. In fine, woman's position in China is somewhat the Pauline one, but hardly as low as that of St. Chrysostom. Paul says in 1 Timothy ii, 11,12,

"Let woman learn in silence with all subjection, but I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence;" whilst St. Chrysostom calls woman "a necessary evil, a natural temptation, a desirable calamity, a domestic peril, a deadly fascination, and a painted ill." The *Fortnightly Review*, in its issue of October, 1889, has a remarkable article on the position of women in Asia, from which I extract the following:—

No one could for a moment maintain that if a highly organised specimen of the western women were picked out there could be found amongst eastern women any one to match her in beauty, grace, purity, and that highly specialised sense which we love to think of as refined womanhood, but on the other hand, among western women there are many whose infamy and depravity of nature it would be as equally difficult to match in the eastern world. Action and reaction are equal everywhere. Development cannot proceed apace without starting at the same time a retrograde course of degeneration. If the ideal aimed at is high it cannot be astonishing that the majority failed to come anywhere near it, and many fall lower than if they had no ideal at all to start with. The easterns are content with the mediocrity and materialism of this earth, their tread on it is firm and sure, and whilst failing to produce brilliant results, their condition of morality is one of inherent stability. We, like Icarus of old, spurn that which is material from beneath our feet, and attempt to rise on wings of our own making towards the ethereal expanse. May heaven grant that we may not, like him, come crashing lower down than that level from whence we sprung, and with disordered minds and broken up institutions find ourselves wallowing once more amidst the filth of primitive savagery.—HORACE VICTOR.

With respect to punitive and repressive legislation, we in England should be the last to throw stones upon another people. The act of Henry VIII, 22, Cap. 12, enacts that a sturdy beggar is to be whipped the first time; his ears cropped the second; and if he again offend, to be sent to the next gaol till the quarter sessions, there to be indicted for wandering, loitering, and idleness, and if convicted shall

suffer execution as a felon and an enemy to the commonwealth. W. Heaton in his work, *The Three Reforms of Parliament*, writes :—

"Our law recognised two hundred and twenty-three capital offences. It seems at first that there can scarcely be two hundred and twenty-three human actions worthy of even the mildest censure, but our stern fathers found that number worthy of death. If a man injured Westminster Bridge he was hanged. If he appeared disguised on a public road he was hanged. If he cut down young trees; if he shot at rabbits; if he stole property valued at five shillings; if he stole anything at all from a bleach field; if he wrote a threatening letter to extort money; if he returned prematurely from transportation; for any of these offences he was immediately hanged. In 1816 there were at one time 58 persons under sentence of death, one of these was a child ten years of age. This was England before 1830."

Before we enter upon the ethics and poetry of the Chinese people, and having disposed of some of the negative aspects of this great Mongolian family, we may now proceed to examine some of their positive institutions.

The pith and kernel of society in China is the purity of family life and the sanctity of the home. The father, the mother and the offspring, are protected in all their legitimate rights and aspirations, and respect for ancestry is carried perhaps to extravagant dimensions. If a man attains a position of dignity, not only is he ennobled, but his ancestor likewise. There are few hereditary titles in China, but those few have originally been ennobled on account of conspicuous merit. As in Great Britain, the title descends to the eldest son only, whilst the younger sons merge with the rest of the people. Promotion to high office is attained by dint of meritorious conduct and high culture. Children of the humblest parentage have been appointed viceroys and mandarins. Many men and women of the labouring classes pass through a life of privation to save enough to educate one exceptionally clever son. In the event of this lad gaining a

chief prize in the local school, which the government provide everywhere free for "elementary" education, the parents feel themselves amply rewarded in the homage paid by the village or the district to the successful prize-winners. These youths are carried on the shoulders of a deputation who wait upon them, they are crowned with flowers, and at night the streets are brilliantly illuminated. This annual prize day forms a feature in Chinese social life. Every Chinese mother looks forward with hope to this eventful day, for to train up a prize-crowned son is to raise her on a pedestal of social importance. The Chinese cannot well understand the English or American system of ministerial appointments, that is to say, choosing a banker as first Lord of the Admiralty, or a bookseller for the position of Minister of War, or a briefless barrister to be appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chinese insist upon a complete apprenticeship and step-by-step training for government appointments. They remark that we would not allow our coat to be made by one who is not a tailor, nor would we have our boots repaired by a blacksmith. "Every occupation," say they, "requires apprenticeship and training." They taunt English and Americans with having heaven-born legislators who are quite ready to mend a constitution, but who would not attempt to repair a coat or a pair of boots. The views of the Chinese Government are identical with those of the Papacy, whose hierarchy and priesthood permit no layman to take office in the church proper.

The Government of China is strictly paternal. The Emperor is the almost infallible ruler of his empire, just as the Pope is the ruler of the Catholic Church. The Emperor delegates his power to viceroys, mandarins, magistrates, and thence to the lowest functionary, all of whom can be suspended at will. Of course no human institution exists to

which one might apply the term perfection. Necessarily the exercise of so much absolute power does and must give rise to instances and cases of injustice and peculation, but these cases are exceptional, the Chinese people, though a peace-loving, well-educated, and well-disposed people, would only tolerate their ancient system providing it brought them the maximum amount of, what was in their estimation, communal comfort with the smallest discomfort, and they accept their form of government with the same contentment as a believing Catholic does that of his church. The United States of America exhibit perhaps the very antipodes of the Chinese system, and are certainly not free from corruption or peculation. It would be difficult to predict whether the free American institutions will endure three thousand years hence, her polity having stood the test of scarcely more than a century. The occurrence, a few weeks ago, of two senators shooting at each other, one being mortally wounded, does not look like political perfection. Again, several Chinese writers have pointed out that if they dared believe a tithe of the charges which each political party in England inveighs against the other, they could come to no other conclusion than that Great Britain is divided into two governing clans, the one bloodthirsty ruffians, the other incompetent noodles.

China points back with some pardonable pride that her system has endured for more than four thousand years. The Marquis Tseng points out, in his epoch-making article in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* entitled "China: the Sleep and the Awakening," that his country has become rejuvenated and quite ready to hold her own now against all comers, both physically, intellectually, and commercially. The last chance that Europe ever had of making China subservient to her views, as with Hindoostan, was when the allied forces of England and France marched through the country and took

possession of the capital, but the burning of the summer palace near Pekin effected for the Chinese people, what the Carthaginians did for Rome after the battle of Cannae. China, the Marquis observes, is now wide awake, and will hold her own against all comers. It is admitted that their arsenal at Foo Choo is one of the finest in the world, and they now turn out some of their own ironclads and Krupp breech-loading guns. The best proof of their re-awakening is that in the late struggle with France, our gallant neighbours came off decidedly second best, and showed no symptoms of regret when England hinted a friendly suggestion of mediating.

Religion tempers the paternal government of the empire, and to a great extent acts as a protective force against injustice of all kinds.

Here again the Mongolian attitude towards religion is the reverse of that of the western races. The Mongolian is a creature deeply imbued with religious but not theological influences. Man seems to him to require two forms of sustenance, physical and spiritual, but towards both he accords the same absolute liberty and toleration. Just as if a human being chooses to live on salt fish and mussels, that is simply his own affair. A Chinaman may suggest that flesh meat and rice is a more desirable food, but with the advice he is content. Neither he, nor a European, would ever subject a man to political and social disability, or persecute him because he chooses to eat potatoes in preference to tomatoes, but the Chinaman proceeds in a like manner in his attitude towards spiritual nourishment. He both teaches and preaches, but he declares every human being free to adopt his own special method of spiritual sustenance. The government holds a benevolent neutrality towards all, and only interferes if any form of teaching attempts to infringe the law of the land. This was

the cause of the crushing of the Taeping rebellion. The Mahommedans of that province, in their iconoclastic zeal, began to demolish the shrines and altars of other faiths. The government put down the perpetrators, not as followers of Islam, but because they attempted a breach of the peace. Now, that the Imperial law has been restored, they can and do worship in their Mosques with all freedom, and enjoy the fullest protection. No better illustration of the genial effect of this universal toleration can be given, than the fact that the Chinese have accomplished what no other power or people have hitherto been able to do. That is, they have quietly absorbed their Jewish element. The Jews of Kai Fung Foo, who have been located there from pre-exilic times, have step by step relinquished their time-honoured institutions, and they are virtually indistinguishable from the rest of the population in their habits and general demeanour. They are now simply a community of Chinese monotheists; they have always enjoyed absolute religious liberty and equality. This should be an object lesson to many so-called civilised European communities.

Religious uniformity does not exist in China. There are three distinct religious groups, besides other subsidiary forms, namely: the religion of Confucius; the religion of Laotse; and the religion of Fo, or Buddhism. Confucius lived about six centuries before the Christian era. He taught high ethical principles, and above all obedient citizenship. The great aphorism of Confucius, "Never do anything to others which you would not wish others to do to you," is inscribed on almost every public edifice in the empire. Confucianism, however, seems to be a religion void of sentiment, and does not appeal to the heart and sympathy of the poor and suffering.

The religion of Laotse, equally ancient, whatever may have been its original inception, as at present practised is

anthropomorphism pure and simple in its crudest form. It embraced some of the elements of Confucianism, and, later on, absorbed Buddhism, and possesses a well-disciplined priesthood, who appeal to the superstition of the ignorant classes, and attract converts by appealing to the latent after-death terrors of the uncultured masses, this being entirely foreign to the teaching of the Buddha. The priests of Laotse decorate their altars with flowers, light up innumerable candles, have paintings and statues of their holy saints. Their priests wear gorgeous vestments; they burn incense during the service; they mediate for pardon of sins; they encourage the adoration of relics; they receive large fees for repeating prayers for the repose of the souls of the departed; and, to devote themselves exclusively to their religious profession, they generally adopt celibacy. The religion of Laotse furthermore owes some success to the hold it has upon the women of China, and indirectly through them upon their husbands and children. Woman is flattered by the worship of a queen of heaven, which has no place in real Buddhism or in the Confucian system. The godhead is decidedly more personal in the Laotse worship than in either of the other forms of religion. Thus the unlettered classes flock to the altars and shrines of Laotse. Moreover, the priests of Laotse make it a point never to argue as do the priests of Buddha or the preachers of the Confucian doctrine. They simply practise imposing functions, and ask blind obedience from their followers.

The great bulk of the middle classes, the landowners, agriculturists, and skilled operatives, are followers of the religion of Fo, or Buddhism. The great teacher Buddha has won the affection and heart of the thinking portion of the Chinese people. Unlike Confucius who appeals to a sense of duty, and Laotse to unknown terrors of an after life, the Buddha is loved and venerated for his own sake. His life

speaks more eloquently to them than the Dhamma-pada itself. His followers see in the life of their teacher, a prince born to succeed to a kingdom, nursed in the lap of every luxury, with palaces, equipages, and all earthly pleasures, married to a beautiful wife, and father to a promising child; yet the prince gives up all for his unbounded love of mankind. He quits in the dead of night his past glories, he kisses his wife during her sleep, blesses his child, leaves them in possession of all his fortune, doffs his royal apparel, assumes the cotton shirt of a mendicant, and wanders penniless into the jungle to consider in solitude what are the real aims and objects of life. After a period of hunger and a long probation of poverty, he preaches a doctrine of universal brotherhood, abolition of caste regardless of colour or privilege, elevation of woman to equal social rank with man, kindness to animals, care and tenderness in the treatment of the deaf and dumb, the honour of honest poverty, the danger of wealth, the forgiveness of wrong, patience under tribulation, and love for their enemies. Buddha says, "A man who foolishly does me wrong I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love, the more evil comes from him, the more good shall go from me."

Forsaken by his own immediate race, repelled by all his ancient friends, except his wife and child,—the princess becoming a nun, and his son an apostle,—Buddha goes forth among strangers, among the poorest and lowliest, teaches, consoles, and comforts; he dies in his eightieth year calmly, surrounded by his followers, exclaiming, "Children, work out your own salvation." There exists in all Mongolian countries a deep popular love and veneration for Gautama the Buddha; to follow the Buddha is their watchword, to live and die as the Buddha did is their ideal. The priesthood of Laotse, feeling how widespread was the appreciation of Buddha, quietly absorbed his personage in their cult, and

have made the Buddha the supreme head of their countless saints, though their practices and teachings are altogether foreign to his teachings. The ignorant followers of Laotse quietly worship Buddha as one of their many gods, without any investigation, merely by the awe inspired by their priesthood.

We may thus classify the members of the three principal religious systems of China. The doctrine of Confucius is followed by the upper and ruling classes; the vast majority of the middle and respectable wage-earning classes follow the cult of Buddha; whilst the lowest and ignorant worship at the shrines and altars of Laotse. So eclectic, however, are the Mongolians that they each and all pay respect to one another's feast days, and followers of Confucius make obeisance to the shrine of Buddha, whilst the Buddhist looks upon Confucius as a wise father and a great teacher. Laotse quietly embraces them both.

In the political arrangements of the Mongolian world, however high the ethics and the beautiful life of Buddha are held up as the ideal, it is really the law of Confucius that keeps their social fabric intact. Buddha's contempt for wealth, his purely spiritual aims, his preference for celibacy as the highest state of human perfection, his toleration of the married state only as a concession to human weakness, his constant reiteration that life is merely a preparation for a blissful Nirvana, have won the adoration of the Mongolian masses; but the Chinese people being somewhat canny, hardheaded, and fond of accumulating wealth, are really guided in mundane affairs by the teachings of Confucius, whose practical insight into the exigencies of real life, so evident in all his laws, constitutes even for the Buddhist, although he is loth to admit it, the linchpin of his social and political organisation. Whilst Buddha for instance places woman on an absolute equality with man, Confucius takes

the Pauline view of womanhood, and the Chinese of every section of society follow the latter rather than the former.

I ought to mention that Mahommedanism does form a considerable section of the population in the border provinces, and it must be admitted is making marked progress. Teachers of Islam and the Jesuit brothers are the two exotic missionaries who make some headway among the followers of Laotse, both by appealing to the fleshly instincts of the Laotse believers. The Mahommedan induces him to enter his fold by the promises of a carnal Paradise, whilst the Jesuits inspire fear of a carnal infernal region and never-ending carnal torments. The Chinese followers of Islam are known for their sobriety, and general frugality.

An eminent Chinese official expressed to me, that the cultured classes have great admiration for our Bible and its ethics, but, he observed, the books contain the traditions of the people of Palestine who knew nothing about the Chinese or their history. He further stated that they had no antagonism whatsoever to what he termed the "folk-lore" of the Old and the New Testaments, but he maintained it only concerns those who derive their religious aspirations from the soil of Palestine. The Chinese treat our biblical history as a work of great literary value, and respect it accordingly, just as we do the ethics of Marcus Aurelius.

An extract from the Buddhist catechism, approved and recommended for use in the Buddhist schools by H. Sungamala Thero, High Priest of Sripada and Galle, and head of the Widyodaya College at Colombo, may not be without interest :—

Q. Of what religion are you?

A. The Buddhist.

Q. What is a Buddhist?

A. One who professes to be a follower of the Lord Buddha and accepts his doctrine.

Q. Was Buddha a god?

A. No.

Q. Was he a man?

A. In form a man, but internally not like other men, that is to say in moral and mental qualities he excelled all other men of his own or subsequent times.

Q. Was Buddha his name?

A. No; it is the name of a condition or state of mind.

Q. What is its meaning?

A. Enlightened, or he who has the perfect wisdom.

Q. Did he become Buddha in his splendid palaces?

A. He left all and went alone into the jungle.

Q. Why did he do this?

A. To discover the cause of our sufferings and the way to escape from them.

Q. Was it not selfishness that made him do this?

A. No: it was boundless love for all beings that made him sacrifice himself for their good.

Q. What did he sacrifice?

A. His beautiful palaces, his riches, his luxuries, his pleasures, his soft beds, his fine dresses, his rich food, his kingdom, he even left his beloved wife and his only son.

Q. Did any other man ever sacrifice so much for our sake?

A. Not one. That is why Buddhists so love him, and why good Buddhists try to be like him.

Q. How old was Buddha when he left his royal condition?

A. Twenty-nine years.

The proverbs and maxims of the Chinese, like those of most nations, are perhaps the truest reflection of the inner life of the community, for were an epigram not like a mirror wherein people at once recognise themselves the phrase would not survive the author, perhaps not the day of its utterance. Such accepted English epigrams as "Much cry and little wool," "A stitch in time saves nine," "One halfpenny worth of bread to the intolerable amount of sack," "Look before you leap," etc., are current phrases in English speaking communities, as the French would say *hors*

de discussion, hence beyond criticism. Let us now observe how the Chinese express themselves in their aphorisms; for instance, we say "Happy as a king" or "Happy as a bird," whilst they have it "Happy as a fish in the water," a fish really requiring nothing but peace and tranquility, all his natural requirements being provided. We say "Union is strength," the Chinese express it "One single bamboo does not make a raft." Our aphorism "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak," the Chinese express "One is more or less willing, the other more or less weak." With the Mongolian the more or less comes in. We say "Carrying coals to Newcastle," they observe "He is like a blind man climbing up a mountain to admire the view." Our "Penny saved is a penny earned," is in China "A daily income is better than a fortune." We say "The walls have ears," they observe "Don't speak in the street, there are ears under the flagstones." For our remark of "A pill to cure an earthquake," they have "Like the clown who casts a net to catch a hurricane." I should observe that many of these sayings are to be found in the writings of Confucius. He credits them at his period with an antiquity of more than two thousand years, so that many of the maxims I have quoted date back to more than four thousand years ago. One proverb deserves special notice which declares the brotherhood of mankind. "In every human form you see your kindred and your brother." The charge of exclusiveness on the part of the Mongolian is decidedly more political than ethical. Our biblical proverb "Can a leopard change his spots or an Ethiopian his skin?" with them reads "Imperial dynasties may change, but human nature never." The reverse of our thoroughly English saying "Take care of yourself" is rendered by the Chinese "Warmth for all and cold for yourself." Our proverb "Heaven provides for all," they have "Every blade of grass

has its drop of dew." "When the water gets low the fish begin to show," is somewhat like our saying of "Rats deserting a sinking ship." The life of a miser they describe as a man who falls in the sea and grasps the foam. That ancient institution of the mother-in-law is not forgotten in the Celestial Empire. They observe "The glances of a mother-in-law are like the skies in early spring, very unreliable." Again, "An ugly woman may satisfy her husband, but she cannot conceal her ugliness from the critical view of her mother-in-law."

I shall now proceed to quote a few Chinese proverbs without comment :—

"Life has its destiny, but fortune depends upon Providence."

"Although the sea is immense yet oftentimes vessels meet."

"It is easy to make money, but not so easy to retain it."

"Pure gold is not afraid of the fire."

"An old bee will never touch a withered flower."

"A dotard's life is like the flicker of a candle in the wind."

"Endow not a son-in-law with overmuch money; if thy daughter is ill-treated she may return to thee, but if thy silver taels are ill-treated, they will never find their way home to thee."

"No matter how high a tree may grow, yet the leaves fall to the ground."

"A tree planted haphazard on the roadside often gives a welcome shelter."

"To understand the sufferings of others you must have suffered yourself."

"The hurricane has no chance against a well-rooted tree."

"A mandarin can easily equip a thousand soldiers, but he finds it a harder task to provide a single general."

"We should seek new apparel and old men."

"When Heaven creates a mouth the food is created to fill it; just as every blade of grass has got its little root."

"Sweet is the great metropolis, but sweeter still is my dear little village."

"A faithful man cannot be faithless even under fear of death."

"Of three familiarities observe two and avoid one: retain the

respectful familiarity like mandarin to mandarin; also the affectionate familiarity like brother to brother; but avoid the insolent familiarity that is like the ill-bred man whom your father accepts for a son-in-law."

"Mankind are not all good nor are all flowers beautiful."

"Do not be a slave to your children, they will find out their own path to happiness when they grow up."

"True charity is to send fuel to the suffering in cold weather, not in making presents to those who are rich."

"Train your child to help you when you are old, just as you fill a money-box to make use of it when you are in want"

"First listen to the speech and then give your judgment."

"The gates of the law are always open, but those who have rights only and no money had better keep away."

"A dead man has empty hands."

"An evil act is an evil act, and, however cleverly done, is sure to be found out."

"Charity that is done for the sake of notoriety is not worth much."

"If you think there is no power in Heaven look at the lightning." *(This is a Laotse proverb.)*

"A good bottle of wine oftentime elicits frank thoughts."

"Shame passes away but debts remain."

"To any one in a desperate hurry even his race horse seems to stand still."

"Through the chink of a door a human being looks very small."

"The hammer strikes the axe, and the axe strikes the wood."

"A near neighbour is better than a distant relative."

"A beggar does not succeed in climbing up a rotten bough."

"Take your own advice first and consult others afterwards."

"Many a soft speech conceals a vindictive mind."

"Ten rush-lights are not worth a single lamp."

"A man often shows his manhood after a long walk of sorrow."

"A clear conscience is better than a candle, for with the former you can walk in the dark."

"Jewels are seen at best when well set."

"A flower shows up better when it peeps through green leaves."

"To correct your neighbour is like attempting to cure leprosy."

"A stupid husband is afraid of his wife, a wise woman obeys her husband."

"One switch for a good horse; one word for a wise man."

"If men would only criticise themselves as they do others and exercise the same charity for others as they have for themselves." *(This is a Buddhist proverb.)*

"It is not the use of wine that makes the drunkard but the abuse of it."

"When men are well-to-do they rarely burn incense, but the moment they are in trouble they fall at the feet of Buddha."

"The failings of the great are as a rule exaggerated by the small."

"Talent is like the muscle, the more you train it the more it develops."

"The mistake of the moment is oftentimes the sorrow of a life-time."

"The anguish caused by envy is like a grain of sand in the eye."

"A wise man adapts himself to circumstances just like water takes the shape of the bowl that contains it."

The *Iliad* of the Chinese is the Book of Verses, and consists of a series of ballads, lyrics, and odes. They were first collected in the reign of the Emperor Houti, about seven centuries before the Christian era. They were subsequently edited by Confucius. The poem of the "Little Wife" is in this collection. A short ballad of this period is called the "Young Recruit." *

*I ought to explain that I have been obliged to paraphrase rather than literally translate the poetic effusions of the Chinese bards.

What Sir Edwin Arnold says of Japanese poetry holds good for the Mongolian on the mainland. I extract the following from a letter written by the author of the *Light of Asia*, dated Tmai-cho, Jan. 20th, 1890:—

"Where they will complete a thing, nothing can be completer; the microscope itself could find no flaw in the patient, faithful article turned out. When, again, they merely desire to arouse the imagination, one sweep of the brush, one turn of the dexterous wrist, and they have indicated twenty leagues of blue distance, or limned a bird's wing in the very act of beating. This latter manner also characterises their national poetry. Bear with one little scrap of it, in order to realise how the Japanese Muse can trust the quick fancies of her children in the domain of song. A Japanese girl, going to her well in the morning, finds that a convolvulus during the night has twined its crimson and purple bells and green tendrils round the pail. It is too beautiful to disturb! She abandons

THE YOUNG RECRUIT.

I climb the bleak and arid peak,
And glance towards home that's far, yet nigh;
Methinks I hear dear father speak,
Methinks I hear dear father sigh.
My lad is for a soldier gone,
He marches all the day and night;
My son is brave, he'll yet come home,
He'll perish not in deadly fight.

I climb the green and verdant hill,
And look tow'rds mother's holy ground;
Methinks her voice is with me still,
Methinks I hear its gentle sound.
"My youngest boy's a-fighting gone,
No sleep by night, nor rest by day;
My lad is kind, he'll fain come home,
His bones escape the deadly fray."

the bucket to the fragrant invader, and goes next door to fill her domestic utensils. Out of this simple incident comes a famous song, done in three lines and five words. These are:—

Asagao
Tsurube torarete
Morai midsu.

The literal translation of which is—

Convolvulus
Bucket taking,
I borrow water.

And every Japanese ear understands, and every Japanese mind can delight in, the photographic brevity with which the scene and the thought are thus flashed, as it were, into the music and into the heart. But, to convey these to a Western ear and understanding, it would be needful to expand the Japanese poem into at least as many words as the following:—

The 'Morning-glory'
Her leaves and bells has bound
My bucket-handle round.
I could not break the bands
Of those soft hands.
The bucket and the well to her I left;
Lend me some water, for I come bereft.

And so must all the finer and subtler specimens of Japanese art—outside as well as inside its classical poetry—be, as it were, translated and expanded for the general Western comprehension."

I climb the snow-clad mountain high,
Afar lies elder brother's cot;
Methinks I hear him gently say,
"Alack, my younger brother's lot,
To herd with fighting men and rude,
To strive with ruffians night and day;
But brother 's bold, he'll brave the feud,
He'll live to win a hero's fight."

Although this poem is pre-Confucian and of remote antiquity, we have vividly brought before us love of home, affection of child towards parent, respect for an elder brother, and a decided preference for peaceful village life, rather than the glorification of arms. Another specimen is a very simple lyric, somewhat in the style of Robert Burns or Heine, termed

TRUE LOVE.

An honest and a fair young maid
Hath pledged her loving troth to me;
She meets me at the Castle gate,
I wait the hour with ecstasy.

She brings a dainty sweet blue-bell,
The best, the rarest in the land;
Oh, little flower I love thee well,
For thou hast left my darling's hand!

There is a Byronic ring in this poem :—

LAMENTATION.

My pine-wood barque invites me now
To glide along the placid lake,
For sleep denies my fevered brow,
And grief will ne'er my heart forsake.

Think'st thou my heart is mirror-like
That thou can'st see what therein gnaws?
Yea, e'en my brothers coldly speak
With icy word that never thaws.

Think'st thou my heart is like a pearl
Which thou can'st fashion to thy will?
Or like a curtain thou can'st furl,
Or hang it up a void to fill.

My friends despise and pass me by,
And shoot their venom shafts of hate;
I kneel to Heav'n and there deny
The lying story they relate.

At times the sun we cannot view,
For clouds obstruct its radiant sheen;
The silvery moon is covered too,
Its disc, now great, now small, is seen.

So too my heart, men read not right,
I tire of all the world's delay;
Oh! give me wings of Heavenly might
From this dull earth to fly away.

Another poem :—

THE TWO FRIENDS.

Two gallant youths did plight their word
To rest in friendship ever true;
They parted and away they erred
To distant lands with tidings few.

In later years a haughty peer
Was riding on a prancing steed,
And saw a humble peasant near
Scraping the soil to pluck a weed.

The noble lord descended now,
And clasped the peasant to his breast;
"Oh! brother found, oh, lift thy brow
And join thy friend that loves thee best."

The preservation of such poetry is the best living record of the pulsation of a people. We find ruins of Palmyra and some remains of Carthage, but these nations have left neither songs nor proverbs, hence we know nothing but

what their conquerors choose to tell us about them. If, for example, only a few English epigrams survive the wreck of our empire, such as "Time is money," "Fair play 's a jewel," "Home, sweet home," "Let every man mind his own business," subsequent ages would have a literary lime-light thrown upon the ruined arch of Macaulay's prospective New Zealander.

The Augustine, Elizabethan, or, as the French have it, the Louis Quatorze and Golden period of Chinese classical poetry and literature was during the Thang dynasty, corresponding with between 618 and 917 A.D. Buddhistic influences then seemed to have penetrated the souls of their bards. The Chinese call Tou Fou their greatest poet; they rank him with Dante or Milton, and he is entitled the Prince of Poetry. I give an example of his writings. In the one entitled "Contemplation" we can observe the Buddhist spirit running through the effusion.

CONTEMPLATION.

Thou holy monk in silent cell,
Like me a speechless life lov'st well;
We've spoken every earthly phrase,
Exhausted blame, exhausted praise.
Are not the flowers as mute as we?
Yea, e'en the stars move quietly;
When thy great power, oh Heaven, I view,
I mutely say, "Thy work is true."

Another entitled

THE CELL.

The early dawn of summer's morn
Peeps through the ancient convent cell;
The golden sheen doth now adorn
The topmost trees where linnets dwell;
The flowers now greet the rising sun.
Their perfume scents the air;
The holy hymn has just begun,
The Monk bends deep in prayer.

Tseng Ming Tong has a style of his own. He alternates between grave and gay. I give a rendering of

SPRING.

Spring-time comes only once a year,
And life, if ten times ten,
It advent's rare enough, I fear—
It comes but now and then:
So, friend, let's hail it with a glass,
A welcome twice and thrice;
The wine-cup, onward let it pass,
Oh! never mind the price.

Li-Tai-Pé, one of the great bards of China, has written many volumes of poetry. I select some of his poems:—

THE GUITAR.

The Cheng Yang stream, with gentle flow,
Would'st thou its sylvan borders know?
Come, take my barque and glide along
Afar from city's busy throng,
Leaving strife and toil behind,
Thousand beauties there you find.
I loathe the busy hives of man,
Where house joins house; where schemers plan;
A poet I, I live another life,
Where nature smiles and peace replaces strife.
I once sought heated halls of revelry,
And fled, for no hearts there had sympathy,
Except one friend, whose heart and mind was pure;
I cleaved to him, his love was ever sure;
With him one eve I took my boat,
And as we gently onward float
We hear a voice so sweet, so soft at first,
Like heavenly tones on human hearing burst.
It louder grows, and then we hear the whole,
Like freedom's song from some erst shriven soul;
And strings seemed strung by ne'er a human touch;
Our glances speak, "Have ever ears heard such?"

A light approaches on a vessel's prow,
And then we see a gliding form below—
A craft with silken sails and gilded helm,
Both harp and song our senses overwhelm,
And on a gilded couch, 'mid flowers bestrewn,
We see a woman's hand the lyre attune.
We stopped our barque and gently waved
A signal, and its import craved,
A moment's converse with the tuneful player.
Answer comes, the seraph grants our prayer.

Ecstatic moments, gliding swift and fast,
Lengthen and lengthen into hours at last,
Till I, who ne'er believed a woman's heart,
At length found one, and could not now depart.
Oh ! form divine, would'st thou but share my love,
Not wanton-like, but blessed from above,
In wedlock pure I crave with thee to rest,
Oh ! say not nay to this my heart's request.

The beauteous lady heaved a gentle sigh,
And dropping tears streamed from her sparkling eye
"Alas ! tis human like to find our fate
Meets us at last. and that, alas ! too late.
Would t'were my fate to be a poet's wife,
But listen well till I recount my life.
Tis years ago, thirteen I scarce could count,
My lyre I took, and soon began to mount
On fame's unsteady ladder, till I grew
A songstress queen that all the world then knew.
My soldier brothers died by foeman hands,
My mother winged her soul to better lands,
Though at my feet with all mankind as slaves,
Friendless I tossed like barque upon the waves.
Wild cheers of crowds and gems and flowers approve,
No kindly heart, none offer honest love.
I older grew, and then I saw full well,
How others of my craft in anguish fell ;
And then I feared my beauty might not last,
And what would be when face and voice had passed ?

One night, I think I just had left the play,
A missive handed in, 'twas thus to say—
'A man desired at some convenient time
To ask if yet the gift of heart was mine.'
I thought at length that some enamoured swain,
With sweet request to lead me to a fane,
With wedded love to grant that life of rest
Which they who live on frail applause love best.

"But lo, I saw a shrivelled form and old,
Who offered me his hoarded stores of gold,
And then I thought and thought: "Perchance ere long
I cease to please the ever fickle throng,
Nor love nor gold will then await my lot."
So I my better self for once forgot,
Consent I gave, and to the priest he led
The public's idol, and 'twas thus I wed.

"Oh! thrice accursed from above
Is wedlock unhallowed by love;
A wedlock that is like the filled-up grave,
The clod retains, but spirit cannot save.

"So is my ancient spouse who bought my life,
And has the lawful right to call me wife,—
I have the gold to purchase every whim,
All this I have, and yet my soul grows dim,—
He piles up wealth, but what for that care I,
When yearning for a life of love I sigh?
Some weeks ago he left to bargain tea,
And thus for gain of pelf he leaves me free.
A sudden thought came o'er my fevered brain
To take once more my old guitar again;
Floating along the moonlit stream,
Dreaming a brief, but happy dream.

"'Tis over now, so, gentle youth, farewell!
Would 'twere my fate 'mid happier spheres to dwell,
But that, alas, is e'er so far from me.
God speed thee, poet, think sometimes of me!"

Her barque rowed east, my barque rowed west,
My friend now clasped me to his breast:
"Alas, poor soul, thy life a blank appears."
I grasped his hand and burst in bitter tears.

The Spring.

The flowers of spring around me spread,
Radiant as the silken thread;
The mulb'ry sheds its verdant leaf,
Yet why, Oh why, moan I with grief?
Oh, dearest one, if you but knew
How longingly I wait for you!
A rustling sound, I think her near—
'Tis but the zephyr's breeze I hear.

Absence.

Beyond the snow-clad mountain peak,
The golden sun sinks towards the west,
And through the clouds from out the east,
The silvery moon betokens rest.
My lattice window now I rise,
Unloose from folds my plaited hair,
From water lilies wafts uprise,
And zephyrs' wings refresh the air.
From bamboo leaves, stirred by the breeze,
The sparkling dewdrops gently fall,
My mandoline straightway I seize,
And string a dulcet madrigal.
The water lilies answer not,
The wind wafts on without reply.
Oh, what a dull and cheerless lot
Is all this world with thee not nigh!

There are many poems in China singing the beauty of spring-tide and flowers. The early season and the cult of flowers seem to be an ever-welcome theme with the Chinese poets. Pe Ku Hi is another poet whose writings possess

considerable dramatic force. I give you a rendering of one of his favourite poems, entitled

Eternal Love.

The Emp'ror Ming Noang desired to wed
  The best and fairest maid in all his land.
He tarried, and he tarried long, 'tis said,
  Before he offer'd gift of throne and hand.
He'd wed the girl whose highest aim
Was love of truth and country's fame.
He heard the ancient house of Yong possessed,
  With gold and lands and jewels rare,
A maiden sweet, whom all the poor had blessed,
  Whose life was pure as angel fair.
The monarch came with pomp and might,
And straightway loved her there at sight.

Grand was the nuptial feast he had,
The lowliest churl that day was glad;
The humblest folk throughout their lands
Blessed the link of the regal hands.

Sweet were the days of early love,
Like radiant sunshine from above,
Yet as the Emperor older grew
It seemed as though he had wed anew;
And all his kindly plans in life
Were guided by his pious wife.
He gave her bowers of marbles rare
And jade and gems and jewels fair;
Her brothers to the highest posts enthroned,
And countless districts now they owned.
Her kindred of the time gone by
Were classed with royal dignity.

But envy's tooth began to gnaw
The hearts of nobles when they saw
The Empress' kith and kin hold sway
In lands that erst did them obey.
At last a secret plot they hatch
Their sov'reign lady to dispatch,

And rising in rebellion loud
With weapons they o'ermatch the crowd.
They seize the queen, no help is nigh,
With prayer on lips doth Empress die.
The best beloved Queen, the fair, the good
A mass of clay lies weltering in her blood.

The rebels having now achieved their aim
Lay down their arms, and thus their King acclaim
"'Gainst thee, O Sire, we wish to draw no sword,
We love and venerate thy princely word;
So, Sovereign, mount thy throne anew to reign,
We fought to seek our ancient rights again."

Now years roll on, a monarch rules alone,
Lip-loyal peers cannot his loss atone.
His palace void, his hearth is cold,
His joys are gone, he thus grows old.
And day by day, like monk in convent's gloom,
The monarch kneels beside a silent tomb.

One night when long the Emp'ror vigil kept,
And o'er his ruined life with grief he wept,
A holy monk, absorbed in prayer,
Seemed to stand before him there.
"Oh, royal brother, dry thy tear,
Thy lost one's better there than here."
The monarch hearing words of holy love,
"I hope," said he, "but, brother, can'st thou prove?"
"I can, nay, will—this very hour.
My prayers and fasts give me the power
To visit heaven from time to time,
To hear celestial music chime.
Wilt send a missive to thy long lost Queen,
To her that now mid angels' paths is seen?"

"Oh, mock me not, thou holy priest,
Can'st for my soul prepare such feast?
Can'st give a hungry heart a crumb
Of solace, that for years hath none?"

The priest of Ling Kung travelled fast
Until the azure skies were passed,
And, whirling in ethereal space,
A golden mountain soon did trace,
Behind a rock a golden gate
Where countless angels, watching, sat.
The monk his errand now declared,
The Empress hither swift repaired,
And rising from celestial couch
With heav'nly smile, her sweet approach
Sheds light around, and all seems bright;
But she! whose face like snow was white,
With graceful move a veil unfurls,
A veil bestrewn with azure pearls,
And to the holy monk, with sweet incline,
Speaks: "Father, hail you now from husband mine?
Oh! thinks he still somewhat of me,
Retains he yet his dynasty?"

The holy monk, with accents grave,
In pious tone his message gave:
"Would you, if it were heaven's desire,
Descend to earth, rejoin our Sire?"
She gently tossed her graceful head,
A sighing "No" at once she said.
"The only spark of earth now left
Is lingering love of him bereft;
All else is gloom, and dark appears.
Their smiles are false, and so their tears.
Here all is tranquil, never-ending peace,
From falsehood free, from sorrow all release.
Yet take this token to my love of old,
A bracelet made of thrice refined gold,
And say, if love of me rests pure as this,
In heav'n we'll meet with never-ending bliss,
Like tree whose branches interlace,
For all time one in pure embrace.
Tell him again, good monk, O say
I love him still!
Eternity may end, but my love
Never will."

The Chinese have forestalled Europe with many inventions. The manufacture of paper for ordinary uses, the art of printing, the telescope, spectacles and eye-glasses, the mariner's compass and gunpowder, have all been known in the Celestial empire from remote ages. There is, carefully preserved in the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg, a bank note dated 1396 B.C., printed in blue ink on paper made from the fibre of the mulberry tree, and a notice of the pains and penalties following counterfeit. The note bears the number, date of issue, the name of the bank, signature of the official issuing it, indication of its value in figures, in words, and in pictorial representation, in coins or heaps of coins equal in amount to its face value. It was generally thought that the Venetians were the inventors of modern banking and bookkeeping and considered the triumph of modern commercial enterprise, but this the Chinese claim, and prove their claim.* The bank-note system at so remote a period in China, shows three distinct phases of civilisation, viz.:—the science of banking, the use of paper, and the art of printing. An extract from a lecture by Professor Hele Shaw, at the Marine Engineers' Institute in Liverpool, shews that the cantilever system of the Forth Bridge and the Eiffel Tower was known to the Celestials long before the idea reached us. The professor says:—

> The late Lord Napier of Magdala, in going over the Forth Bridge some time ago while it was in an earlier stage of progress, had remarked to the engineer, "I presume you touch your hat to the Chinese?" The reply was "Certainly," because the engineer knew that the Chinese were probably the first to adopt this kind of bridge.

The observatory at Pekin is the oldest in the world, having been founded in 1279 by Kublai Khan, the first Emperor of the Mogul dynasty. There are still in it three

*For an outline of the modern financial system of the Chinese Empire, see Appendix.

of the first instruments of observation. These were used for the observation of Halley's comet in 1738, and may also be used when twenty-two years hence this comet again appears. The oldest observatory in Europe is that founded by King Frederick III of Denmark on the Island of Hveen in the Sound, and where the famous Danish astronomer, Tycho Brahe, carried out his celebrated observations about the middle of the sixteenth century, among others, that of the bright star in Cassiopeia. The Paris observatory was established in 1671, and that of Greenwich three years later.

A by no means partial critic on China writes in the October issue of the *Fortnightly*:—

> The frugality, industry, perseverance and capacity which have enabled them to extend, in the course of centuries, from the basin of the Wei over the whole area of the immense empire which they now rule, and to elaborate a system of ethics and of government, a literature and a social organisation differing remarkably from our own, but efficient to maintain cohesion and national prosperity, whilst the kingdoms of Western Asia were rising and disappearing in periodic convulsions. Surely a race which has shewn this persistence, and which gives evidence to-day of the same qualities, will end by proving itself not inferior to its neighbours in capacity to adapt itself to the new conditions with which it is brought in contact.—R S. Grundy.

Perhaps the most dignified rebuke given to the outer world by the Chinese Government was the unruffled manner with which they settled the dispute between the rival nations competing for the construction of railways in the Empire, a full account of which is given in the *Times* of October 19th, 1889.

The contractors of England, France, Germany, and the United States, all volunteered to send in competing plans, and used all the political influence of their home Governments to secure the contracts for their respective countries. The imperial Chinese Government very properly accepted all

the various European plans and diagrams that were so kindly sent for their inspection. They afterwards published an edict, August 27th, 1889, announcing that, after mature reflection, the Imperial Government would only construct railways throughout the Empire by means of Chinese Engineers, and with the aid of Chinese capital only, obtained through their own native bankers. Another symptom of their re-awakening, is the absence of any apologetic tone now assumed by Chinese statesmen. Not only do they keenly criticise European politics, but they now assume an attitude of perfect equality, and claim to be able to return Europe and America as many benefits as they receive from them.

General Tcheng Ki-Tong at the Ethnographic Congress in Paris, September, 1889, said:—

"A wonderful assimilation of the peoples was now going on. The word "foreigner" was every day losing its value. It would soon have to be dropped out of the French dictionary. We were all melting into one great people, and would soon speak only of the East and of the West. At present America was an obstacle between the two, but what with river and lake steamers, railways and telegraphs, it was becoming rather a highway than a terminus." General Tcheng Ki-Tong then gave a rapid sketch of Chinese history, referring to the introduction of Buddhism and ancestral worship. He dwelt on the influence of the latter on Chinese society, which it bound into family groups. He contrasted the family system of China with the European. In conclusion he remarked that the Chinese were learning the languages and customs of the West, and he expressed a hope that Europeans would devote their attention to the Chinese. They would perhaps find that they had more to learn from China than China had to learn from them. The speech of the General, thanks to his good delivery as much as to the interest of the matter, was received with great applause.

The fortunate geographical position of China has secured her many advantages not given to other races. For instance, the Jews were a puny people wedged in between a powerful

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia, to say nothing of the numerous kindred nomad Arab tribes. Thus they were physically unable to hold their own against their powerful neighbours, though from time to time they made a good stand, and of the many failings of the ancient Jews, want of valour was not one of them. The Chinese, however, ethnologically speaking, had almost the advantage of an island, bounded as they were on the east by the ocean, on the north by trackless ice-bound regions, and on the west by fierce, warlike nomads, forming an impenetrable wall to the eastward march of Hellenism and Latinism. They were for centuries isolated, and were thus enabled to work out their national idiosyncrasies.

Could anyone have imagined, at the time of Queen Elizabeth, when an embassy of semi-barbarous envoys from Muscovy, bowing low to the Virgin Queen in Asiatic form, and who were hardly credited with a better Christianity than the Abyssinians possess at present,—could anyone then have foreseen that the ruler of France two centuries later would be a fugitive vanquished by Muscovite arms, and that their legions would occupy Paris, and that the Muscovite capital would rival Paris itself in luxury? No philosophic thinker will dare to speculate rashly as to what history may or may not evolve.

Whether we shall be able to impress the Mongolian with any of the present forms of the religions which we take from the Old and New Testaments, is a problem which is no part of the present enquiry. An ecclesia of the Bible converted every other people that had no popular sacred book of their own. Thus it was with Greece, with Rome, the Gauls, the Celts, the Teutons, and the Slaves; none of the cults of these people possessed a popular Holy Book. The followers of the Evangelists, drawing their ethics and psalmody from the Sacred Books of Palestine, spread

their influence and their teaching wherever they came in contact with a bookless community. But Islam, the Hindoo Church, and the Buddhist, each possess a popular and Holy Book of their own, hence to influence these religionists is a task of great difficulty. Sir Edwin Arnold addressed a meeting of Japanese students at Tokio in December last, and made use of the following words :—

"I must, indeed, be bold to say that, wherever the doctrines of the Great Teacher of India have passed, they bring to the people adopting them, or partially adopting them, more or less of embellishment and elevation. Nay, I believe it impossible that the religious tenets of the Buddha should ever enter into the life of any large body of people without stamping on the national character ineffaceable marks of the placidity, the kindliness, the glad beliefs, and the vast consolations embodied in the faith of Sakya Muni. Nor, believe me, is it ever possible, in spite of the grave authorities which assert the contrary to me, that Buddhism once entering a land should ever altogether and finally depart from it. You will instantly think of India, and remind me that the professed Buddhists there are to be numbered by scores or hundreds, but I must answer that all Hindoo India is Buddhist in heart and essence. The sea does not mark the sand more surely with its tokens than Gautama has conquered, changed, and crystallised the religious views of the Vedas and Vedantas, and so far from encouraging anyone to hope that Buddhism will pass away from Japan, or from any other of its homes, I announce my conviction that it will remain here long enough to reconcile its sublime declarations with the lofty ethics of Christianity and with the discoveries of Science, and will be for all of you who love and serve the East no enemy, but a potent, necessary, and constant ally."

History seems to indicate that the Latin races, heirs of imperial Rome, are scarcely able to retain the leadership of the western world. Byzantium, Venice, Spain, France, each in its turn, enjoyed supreme recognition. Now it would appear to be the destiny of the Anglo-Teutonic families, represented by Great Britain, the United States, and Germany, to claim precedence in contemporary history. The

Slave is watching and preparing to come to the front should the Teutonic races fall back in their civilising mission. But behind the Slave is the Mongolian, to whom patience is almost a religion. What destiny history has in store for him lies concealed in the womb of time. The Marquis Tseng,* formerly ambassador to the Court of St. James', in an article previously quoted, uses these pregnant words:— "China will surely and leisurely proceed. . . . . The world is not so near its end, that she need hurry, nor the circles of the sun so nearly done, that she will not have time to play the role assigned to her, in the work of nations."

APPENDIX.

A WRITER in the *Morning Post* of January 28th, 1890, gives some extracts from the *Chinese Times* with reference to the present financial position of the Empire.

A Chinese Budget is a novelty, so far, at least, as the Western world is concerned, and an interesting novelty, too, in its way. It is not, as most people are aware, the practice of the Celestial Government to publish an annual statement of its income and expenditure for the information of the people after the fashion of more progressive countries; for the Finance Minister of the Brother of the Sun and Moon is in the happy position of being accountable to no one save his Imperial Master for the revenues of the State. Still, the official estimates prepared come under the cognisance of the Pekin Board of Control; and based upon the figures there available the *Chinese Times* gives us, for the first time, what may be regarded as an authoritative summary of the ways and means of the Dragon Empire. From the official returns made, it is estimated that the actual imperial revenue of China amounts to 85,000,000 taels, or, roundly speaking, £21,250,000 per annum—not an extravagant sum by any means when the extent of the Empire and its enormous population are taken into

* Since the above has been in type, the death of this distinguished diplomatist has been announced.

account. The chief items of income are the Maritime Customs, which yield just under £4,000,000; the opium duty, which yields about £2,000,000; the Inland Customs, from which £1,125,000 are derived; the "Likin," which stands for £3,200,000; salt, which is responsible for another £3,200,000; the land tax, furnishing some £2,600,000; the the tea tax, yielding £450,000; salt merchants' tax, £320,000; pawnbrokers' licenses, £180,000; and duties on sundries amounting in all to about £4,000,000. This £21,250,000 is the sum which, it is calculated, reaches the Imperial Exchequer, but it is believed that nearly twice as much is actually raised from the people by the provincial officials, the moiety being absorbed by these functionaries, for local purposes they assert, though it is to be presumed a goodly proportion sticks to the fingers of these personages. As regards waste that is alleged to go on in the provinces, it would be unfair to assert that the whole of the difference between the amount levied and that which reaches the Imperial Exchequer is lost to the people. The Chinese are quite content that a portion of the official "squeezings" should find its way to the pockets of their provincial administrators, but, as the *North China Herald* remarks *apropos* of the matter, they are pretty sharp in seeing that a reasonable part is actually spent in the locality where the money is raised.

After the foregoing statement of revenue it will probably surprise most people in this country to learn that the great bulk of the Chinese people pay absolutely no taxes whatever, and contribute absolutely nothing to the expenditure of the state. This is a feature of the Chinese fiscal system which, for some inexplicable reason, has never been referred to by any of the many authors who have written about the Celestial Empire and its government. It is really only within the past six or eight months that this feature of the Chinese system of taxation has attracted the attention of an outsider, the United States Minister at Pekin, who deemed it so remarkable by reason of its contrast to modes in vogue elsewhere, that he addressed a communication on the subject to the Washington Government. In China there is absolutely no tax on personalty, and only one tax on land. The system of raising funds for the needs of the Government has been brought to its present shape in the course of many centuries, and operates in a very simple way. Take Pekin, the capital, which, in respect of taxation, is typical of Chinese cities generally. Inside the city there is no tax whatever on land, house, or personal property. Goods brought through the gates of the town pay a "Likin" tax, a

sort of octroi duty, but are exempt afterwards. The only impost paid in connection with real property is the duty on transfer from one party to another. When a change of property is registered before the registrar at the magistrates "Ya-men," the purchaser receives a "red deed," for which he pays 10 per cent, of the value of property transferred to him. But even this exaction is not uniform, since it is said it can be reduced, or even evaded altogether by official influence. And, further, a transfer can be made by "white deed" without any payment whatever, but the property stands in the original owner's name, so that it resembles rather a mortgage than sale outright. The only contributions besides this levied in the city are the pawnbrokers' license-fees of about £12 10s. per annum, wine-dealers' licenses about £12 a year, and other shops according to size. Pedlars pay nothing, carters and donkey drivers a fifth of 1 per cent. on their fares, which goes to the police for repairing roads and lighting the streets. But this is really an official "squeeze" rather than a tax properly so called. The fact remains that in the capital, as in all Chinese cities, the bulk of the people pay not axes whatever. The "man who owns his house and his lot, and his implements of labour, enjoys his earnings without toll or deduction" of any kind. The British ratepayer will probably be inclined to envy the position, in this respect, of the Chinese townsmen.

In the provinces, in the "Fu" or Prefecture, the bulk of the residents are similarly exempt from taxation. The case of the Prefecture of "Shuntien-fu," in which Pekin is situated, is typical of the rural districts under direct departmental control. The only direct contribution such districts make to the imperial Exchequer is in the form of a land tax paid to the provincial or departmental magistrates. But this land tax is far from being levied on land or house property of every kind. It is entirely and solely levied upon arable land, all other real property being exempt. And even on arable land the tax is not always alike, but is strictly proportioned to its quality and producing power, so as to render its incidence fair and equitable to those engaged in any of the many branches of husbandry followed by the Chinese. The land is carefully surveyed by special officers appointed for the purpose from time to time, and returned as good or inferor in quality, high or low in situation, and the tax apportioned according to the crop-producing capabilities gauged in this way. It varies thus from 6d. to 6s. an acre Beyond this impost on land, the rural and provincial cultivators pay nothing whatever in the shape of taxes. Outside the capital, Pekin,

Chinese who are not "bannermen," that is, liable to military service, may be called out when deemed needful to repair roads, and convey chairs when the Emperor visits the locality, or other high functionaries of state travel through the country—but for a mere trifle exemptions can be secured. In other parts of China, the people have to help in shipping the annual tribute of rice and salt. In these cases the locality sends the quota of men needful, all liable to the service subscribing to pay the labourers so engaged. But the land tax for the whole empire reaches only, as the figures given at the outset show, the comparatively insignificant total of about £2,500,000 so that its incidence can scarcely weigh heavily upon the native agricultural interest. Beyond this amount, the revenue of the empire is derived exclusively from the salt monoply, the "Likin," maritime and inland customs, and the proceeds of the sale of honours and dignities. To this absence of taxation of the body of the people it is, perhaps, only fair to ascribe the permanence of the Celestial government and the general tranquillity and contentment of the Chinese race; and many will, no doubt, agree with the United States Minister at Pekin that the lesson of taxation the Celestials teach might be profitably studied by more than one of the states in the so-called civilised world.