

China as seen by Sir John Bowring.

POPULATION OF THE EMPIRE—STRICT CENSUS REGISTRATION—MORTALITY STATISTICS—POOR LAW SYSTEM—FOOD SUPPLIES—EMIGRATION RETURNS—RIVER NAVIGATION AND INLAND TRADE—AGRICULTURE AND TILLAGE SYSTEM—WHAT THE PEOPLE EAT AND THEIR TASTES AT TABLE—EFFECTS OF THE CIVIL WARS—HOW THE PEOPLE DIE—MARRIAGE—THE ARMY AND NAVY.

[Concluded from page 192.]

Hundreds and thousands of boats crowd the whole coast of China—sometimes acting in communities, sometimes independent and isolated. There is no species of craft by which a fish can be inveigled that is not practised with success in China—every variety of net, from vast seines, embracing miles, to the smallest hand filet in the care of a child. Fishing by night and fishing by day—fishing in moonlight, by torchlight, and in utter darkness—fishing in boats of all sizes—fishing by those who are stationary on the rock by the seaside, and by those who are absent for weeks on the wildest of seas—fishing by cormorants—fishing by divers—fishing with lines, with baskets, by every imaginable decoy and device.

There is no river which is not staked to assist the fisherman in his craft. There is no lake, no pond, which is not crowded with fish. A piece of water is nearly as valuable as a field of fertile land. At daybreak every city is crowded with sellers of live fish, who carry their commodity in buckets of water, saving all they do not sell to be returned to the pond or kept for another day's service. And the lakes and ponds of China not only supply large provisions of fish—they produce considerable quantities of edible roots and seeds, which are largely consumed by the people. Among these the esculent arum, the water chestnut (*scirpus tuberosus*) and the lotus (*nelumbium*) are the most remarkable.

The enormous river population of China, who live only in boats, who are born and educated, who marry, rear their families, and die—who, in a word, begin and end their existence on the water, and never have or dream of any shelter other than the roof, and who seldom tread except on the deck or boards of their sampans—show to what an extent the land is crowded, and how inadequate it is to maintain the cumberers of the soil.

In the city of Canton alone it is estimated that 300,000 persons dwell upon the surface of the river; the boats, sometimes 20 or 30 deep, cover some miles, and have their wants supplied by ambulatory salesmen, who wend their way through every accessible passage. Of this vast population some dwell in decorated river boats used for every purpose of license and festivity—for theatres—for concerts—for feasts—for gambling—for lust—for solitary and social recreations; some craft are employed in conveying goods and passengers, and are in a state of constant activity; others are moored, and their owners are engaged as servants or laborers on shore. Indeed, their pursuits are probably nearly as various as those of the land population.

The immense variety of boats which are found in Chinese waters has never been adequately described. Some are of enormous size, and are used as magazines for salt or rice—others have all domestic accommodations, and are employed for the transfer of whole families, with all their domestic attendants and accommodations from one place to another—some called centipedes, from their being supposed to have 100 rowers, convey with extraordinary rapidity the more valuable cargoes from the inner warehouses to the foreign shipping in the ports—all these from the huge and cumbersome junks, which remind one of Noah's ark, and which represent the rude and coarse constructions of the remotest ages, to the fragile planks upon which a solitary leper hangs upon the outskirts of society—boats of every form and applied to every purpose—exhibit an incalculable amount of population, which may be called amphibious, if not aquatic.

Not only are land and water crowded with Chinese, but many dwell on artificial islands which float upon the lakes—lands with warden's and houses raised upon the rafters which the occupiers have bound together, and on which they cultivate what is needful for the supply of life's daily wants. They have their poultry and their vegetables for use, their flowers and their scrolls for ornament, their household gods for protection and worship.

In all parts of China to which we have access we find not only that every foot of ground is cultivated which is capable of producing anything, but that, from the value of land and the surplus of labor, cultivation is rather that of gardeners than of husbandmen. The sides of hills, in their natural declivity often unavailable, are, by a succession of artificial terraces, turned to profitable account.

Every little bit of soil, though it be only a few feet in length and breadth is turned to account; and not only is the surface of the land thus cared for, but every device is employed for the gathering together of every article that can serve for manure. Scavengers are constantly clearing the streets of the stercoraceous filth; the cloacæ are farmed by speculators in human ordure; the most populous places are often made offensive by the means taken to prevent the precious deposits from being lost.

The fields in China have almost always large earthen ware vessels for the reception of the contributions of the peasant or the traveler. You cannot enter any of their great cities without meeting multitudes of men, women and children conveying liquid manure into the fields and gardens around. The stimulants to production are applied with most untiring industry. In this colony of Hong Kong I scarcely ever ride out without finding some little bit of ground either newly cultivated or clearing for cultivation.

Attention to the soil—not only to make it productive but as much productive as possible—is

inculcated as a political and social duty. One of the most admired sages of China (Yung-chin) says:—"Let there be no uncultivated spot in the country—no unemployed person in the city;" and the fourth maxim of the sacred edict of Kangchi, which is required to be read through the empire on the 1st and 15th day of every moon, in the presence of all the officers of the State, is to the following effect:

"Let husbandry occupy the principal place, and the culture of the mulberry tree, so that there may be sufficient supply of food and clothing."—Shin Nung, the name of one of the most ancient and honored of the Chinese Emperors, means "the Divine Husbandman."

The arts of drawing and irrigating—of preserving, preparing and applying manure in a great variety of shapes, of fertilizing seeds, indeed, all the details of Chinese agriculture, are well deserving of note, and all display evidence of the inadequate proportion which the produce of the soil bears to the demands for the consumption of the people.

The Chinese, again, have no prejudice whatever as regards food; they eat anything and everything from which they can derive nutrition. Dogs, especially puppies, are habitually sold for food; and I have seen in the butchers' shops, large dogs skinned and hanging with their viscera by the side of pigs and goats. Even to rats and mice the Chinese have no objection—neither to the flesh of monkeys and snakes; the sea slug is an aristocratic and costly delicacy which is never wanting, any more than the edible birds' nests, at a feast where honor is intended to be done to the guests.

Unhatched ducks and chickens are a favorite dish. Nor do the early stages of putrefaction create any disgust; rotten eggs are by no means condemned to perdition; fish is the more acceptable when it has a strong fragrance and flavor to give more gusto to the rice.

As the food the Chinese eat is for the most part hard, coarse and of little cost, so their beverages are singularly economical. Drunkenness is a rare vice in China, and fermented spirits or strong drinks are seldom used. Tea may be said to be the national beverage; and though that employed by the multitude does not cost more than from 3d. to 6d. per lb., an infusion of less costly leaves is commonly employed, especially in localities remote from the tea districts.

Both in eating and drinking the Chinese are temperate and satisfied with two daily meals—"the morning rice" at about 10 A. M., and "the evening rice" at 5 P. M. The only repugnance I have observed in China is to the use of milk—an extraordinary prejudice, especially considering the Tartar influences which have been long dominant in the land; but I never saw or heard of butter, cream, milk or whey being introduced at any native Chinese table.

While so many elements of vitality are in a state of activity for the reproduction and sustenance of the human race, there is probably no part of the world in which the harvests of mortality are more sweeping and destructive than in China, producing voids which require no ordinary appliances to fill up. Multitudes perish absolutely from want of means of existence—inundations destroy towns and villages and all their inhabitants; it would not be easy to calculate the loss of life by the typhoons or hurricanes which visit the coasts of China, in which boats and junks are sometimes sacrificed by hundreds and by thousands.

The late civil wars in China must have led to the loss of millions of lives. The sacrifices of human beings by executions alone are frightful. At the moment at which I write it is believed that from 400 to 500 victims fall daily by the hands of the headsman in the province of Kwangtung alone. Reverence for life there is none, as life exists in superfluous abundance. A dead body is an object of so little concern that it is sometimes not thought worth while to remove it from the spot where it purifies on the surface of the earth. Often have I seen a corpse under the table of gamblers; often have I trod over a putrid body at the threshold of a door.

In many parts of China there are towers of brick or stone where toothless—principally female—children are thrown by their parents into a hole made in the side of the wall. There are various opinions as to the extent of infanticide in China, but that it is a common practice in many provinces admits of no doubt. One of the most eloquent Chinese writers against infanticide—Kweli Chung Fu—professes to have been specially inspired by "the God of literature" to call upon the Chinese people to refrain from the inhuman practice, and declares that "the God" had filled his house with honors, and given him literary descendants as the recompense for his exertions.

Yet his denunciations scarcely go further than to pronounce it wicked in those to destroy their female children who have the means of bringing them up, and some of his arguments are strange enough:—"To destroy daughters," he says, "is to make war upon heavenly harmony" (in the equal number of the sexes); "the more daughters you drown, the more daughters you will have; and never was it known that the drowning of daughters led to the birth of sons."

He recommends abandoning children to their fate "on the wayside" as preferable to drowning them, and then says:—"There are instances of children so exposed having been nursed and reared by tigers. Where should we have been," he asks, "if our grandmothers and mothers had been drowned in their infancy?" And he quotes two instances of the punishment of mothers who had destroyed their infants, one of whom had a blood-serpent fastened to her thigh, and the other her four extremities turned into cows' feet.

Doubt has been sometimes expressed as to the practice of infanticide in China on any great scale; but abundance of evidence of the extent of the usage may be found in Chinese books. The following is a translation of a decree of the Emperor Kanghi, entitled:—

EDICT PROHIBITING THE DROWNING OF CHILDREN.—When a mother mercilessly plunges beneath the water the tender offspring to which she has given birth, can it be said that it owes its life to her who thus takes away what it has just begun to enjoy. The poverty of the parents, is the cause of this wrongdoing; they have difficulty in earning subsistence for themselves, still less can they pay nurses and undertake all the necessary expenses for their children.

Thus driven to despair, and unwilling to cause the death of two persons to preserve the life of one, it comes to pass that a mother, to save her husband's life, consents to destroy her children. Their natural tenderness suffers, but they at length determine to take this part, thinking themselves at liberty to dispose of the life of their children, in order to prolong their own.

What, then, do they? They cast the unfortunate babe into the current of a river that they may at once lose sight of it and in an instant deprive it of life. You have given me the name of Father of the People. Though I cannot feel for these infants the tenderness of the parents to whom they owe their being I cannot refrain from declaring to you with the most painful feelings that I absolutely forbid such homicides.

The tiger, says one of our books, though it be a tiger, does not rend its own young; towards them it has a feeling breast; and continually cares for them. Poor as you may be, is it possible that you should become the murderers of your own children? It is to show yourselves more unnatural than the very beasts of prey.—*Lettres Edifiantes*, vol. 19, pp. 101-2.

Father Ripa mentions that of abandoned children the Jesuits baptized in Pekin alone not less than 3,000 yearly. I have seen ponds which are the habitual receptacle of female infants, whose bodies lie floating about on their surface.

It is by no means unusual to carry persons in a state of exhaustion a little distance from the cities, to give them a pot of rice, and to leave them to perish of starvation when the little store is exhausted. Life and death in China, beyond any other region, seem in a state of perpetual activity. The habits of the people, their traditions, the teachings of the sages—all give a wonderful impulse to the procreative affections. A childless person is deemed an unhappy, not to say a degraded man.

The Chinese moralists set it down as a law, that if a wife give no children to her husband she is bound by every tie of duty to encourage and to patronize a concubine, through whom his name may be preserved, and provision made that when he leaves the world honors will be done to his manes. One of the most popular of Chinese writers says—

"There are in the world wives who, never having borne boys nor nourished girls, even when the husband has reached the age of forty, prohibit his bringing home a concubine or entertaining a hand-maid for the purpose of continuing his posterity—they look upon such a person with jealous hatred and malignant ill will. Alas! do you not know how fleet is time? Stretch as you may your months and your years, they fly like arrows; and when your husband's animal spirits and vigorous blood shall be exhausted, then, indeed, he can never beget children, and you, his wife will have stopped the ancestral sacrifices, and you will have cut off his generation—then repentance, though you may exhibit it in a hundred ways, will indeed come too late—his property, which you, husband and wife have sought to keep together, will not descend to his children, but be fought for by multitudes of kindred and relations; and you will have injured not only one person—not your husband only—but even yourself; for who shall take charge of your coffin and your tomb? Who shall bury you or offer sacrifices?"

Alas! your orphaned spirit shall pass nights in tears! It is sorrowful to think of. There are some wives who do control their jealousies and allow their husbands to take concubines to themselves; but they do so (ungenerously) as if they were drinking vinegar and eating acids—they beat Betty by way of scolding Belinda—there is no peace in the inner house.

But I beseech you to act as a prudent and virtuous woman. If you have no children, provide with openness and honesty a concubine for your husband. If she bear him children, to you he will owe that the arteries and veins of his ancestral line are continued; his children will honor you as their mother; and will not this comfort you? Give not way to the malignant jealousy of a wicked woman. Prepare not a bitterness which you yourself must swallow."

Generally, however, the wife willingly coincides with the husband in introducing into the household any number of concubines whom he is able to maintain, since she exercises over them an undoubted authority, and the child of a concubine is bound to pay higher respect to the first wife than to its own mother. The Chinese illustrate all the domestic relations by imagery, and are wont to say that, as the husband is the sun and the wife the moon, so the concubines are the planets and the stars of the domestic firmament.

And it has been often truly observed that, although the Chinese may be called sensualists, there is no deification of the grosser sensualities, such as is found in the classical pantheons, and in many of the oriental forms of faith. Tales of the amours of their gods and heroes seldom figure in their historical books or traditional legends. The dresses and external habits of the women in China are invariably modest; and on the whole the social arrangements must be considered friendly to an augmentation of the human race. The domestic affections are strong. Parents are generally fond and proud of their children, and children, obedient to their parents. Order is, indeed, the first law of Confucius—authority and submission the apex and basis of the social pyramid.

The sentiment of dishonor attached to the extinction of a race by the want of descendants through whom the whole line of reverential ser-

vices (which some have called religious worship) rendered to ancestors is to be perpetual, is by no means confined to the privileged classes in China. One of our female servants—a nominal Christian—expressed her earnest desire that her husband should have another wife in her absence, and seemed quite surprised that any one should suppose such an arrangement to be in any respect improper.

The marriage of children is one of the great concerns of families. Scarcely is a child born in the higher ranks or life ere the question of its future espousal becomes a frequent topic of discussion. There is a large body of professional match-makers, whose business it is to put all the preliminary arrangements in train, to settle questions of dowry, to accommodate differences, to report on the pros and cons of suggested alliances.

There being no hereditary honors in China—except those which reckon upwards from the distinguished son to the father, the grandfather, and the whole line of ancestry, which may be ennobled by the literary or martial genius of a descendant—the distinctions of caste are unknown, and a successful student even of the lowest origin would be deemed a fit match for the most opulent and distinguished female in the community.

The severe laws which prohibit marriages within certain degrees of affinity (they do not, however, interdict it with a deceased wife's sister) tend to make marriages more prolific, and to produce a healthier race of children. So strong is the objection to the marriage of blood relations that a man and woman of the same Sing or family name cannot lawfully wed.

Soldiers and sailors are in no respect prevented from marrying. I expect there is, from the number of male emigrants—from the greater loss of men by the various accidents of life, and their abstraction in many circumstances from intercourse with women—a greater disproportion between the sexes, tending naturally to the lower appreciation of woman; but corresponding statistics, are wanting in this, as indeed in every other portion of the field of inquiry.

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TO ADVERTISERS.—Advertisements to insure insertion in the current number must be handed in on Monday.

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NOTICE.

The members of the Priests' Quorum in G. S. L. City will meet in the 14th Ward School house the 1st Sunday in every month at 4 o'clock, by order of the President of said Quorum.

LEWIS WRIGHT, President.