

THE CHINESE IN CHINA.

We take the following interesting items from the Chinese letter of the 'Boston Pilot.' It has been said that Australia is the land of contrarieties as compared with Great Britain, but it will be admitted by a perusal of the following that the Flowery Land has far greater claim to the title. Speaking of the many evidences of a high state of civilization, and the unity to be found amongst 400,000,000 of persons with regard to habits, dress, and the wearing of the orthodox pigtail, the writer says:—

But you don't want to hear so much about the matters in which they resemble us as the points in which they differ. I am almost afraid to give a list of Chinese contrarieties, for every traveller has felt bound to enlarge upon this subject. But I suppose no series of letters on that people would be complete without some allusion to them. We'll commence with the baby—for I believe there is evidence to prove that we were all babies once, Chinese as well as foreigners. The puling little creature when born may, if it be a girl, be put to death—drowned—just as we drown a kitten or a puppy, and the little boy's inquiry about his twin sisters, "Which is papa going to keep?" is one often asked by grown people in China. I don't believe that infanticide is at all as common as many writers on China make out, but it exists to a sufficient extent to justify us in speaking of it as a too frequent national crime. At all events, a man's friends congratulate him on the birth of a son, and condole with him on the birth of a daughter. They are very emphatic opponents of "women's rights" out here you see, for they don't always give them the right to live.

QUEER CUSTOMS.

But supposing that the child escapes this "killing no murder" process (it is not murder in China to kill a child), it will probably not be weaned till it is three or four years old. When the mother dandles the little darling she smells its face with her nose instead of kissing it by way of showing affection. When the young lady becomes of marriageable age her attendant bridesmaids (generally the ugliest old women to be found) wear black dresses instead of white. White is the mourning color, and the dead are decked not with the mournful shroud, but with the gayest and brightest coloured clothes procurable. The boy at school turns his back upon the master to repeat his lesson, and learns to write by tracing instead of copying. In playing shuttlecock they use their heels as battledoors, instead of wooden ones. Venerable old gentlemen of four score may be seen playing at marbles and flying kites, while little atoms of humanity with an aspect of preternatural gravity stand looking on. The Chinese keep their hats on when they want to be civil, and shake their own hands instead of their friends when they meet him in the street. (People who object to the "coming man" by the way will appreciate this custom.) We commence our dinners with soup and end with fruit and wine. The Chinese reverse the courses; they think nothing of piling a guest's plate with sweatmeats, jellies, pickled cucumbers, salt fish, and bad eggs all at once; and can't understand why foreigners should object to it. The women too—I am sorry to mention such a piece of rudeness—never dine with the men (because they are not allowed to)—another proof that the doctrine of equality and women's rights is as yet unknown in China. In giving the name the family or surname comes first; thus a man whose family is named Chang, would call himself Chang Fung Woo, not Fung Woo Chang.

CURIOUS CONTRARIETIES.

At the risk of being tedious, I will mention a few more of their curious contrarieties. I could not enumerate them all, for the catalogue is endless. The compass needle is always spoken of as pointing to the South, and the points are named E. W. S. N., instead of N. S. E. W. A horse is mounted on the right instead of the left side, while the knees are raised almost to the chin in riding, instead of grasping the horse's side, so that "spills" are pretty numerous amongst the native cavalry. Their vessels are built flat bottomed and square bowed, instead of with keels and cutwaters; the masts slant forward instead of aft, while they launch a craft sideways instead of end on. The wheel of a barrow is placed in the middle instead of at its end, and in the northern provinces they hoist a sail on the vehicles to keep them along—a custom alluded to, as you will doubtless recollect, by the poet Milton, and which was a matter of dispute between residents in China no longer than three years ago. Chinese boots again have been talked about by all travellers from that country. We think that a quarter inch sole is the correct thing for an evening party; the Chinese rejoices in an inch and a half sole when he wants to make an impression; and so I dare say should we if we had only stone-flagged or mud floors instead of wood and carpet. They don't black boots by the by, but *whiten* them. You mustn't fancy you know that boys stand at the corners of the streets with skins of whitewash at two cents, a brushful, as our shoe-black brigades do. Nothing of the sort; it's all done at home, and very carelessly done, too, generally.

DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

Some of the queerest of the many queer customs are connected with death and the grave. When a person is dying, and given up by the doctor, you would fancy that they tried to make his last hours quiet and peaceful. Nothing of the kind! They send for a band, which make as much noise as its musicians possibly can to scare away the goblin that is coming to take the soul of the dying man. The inconvenience to the patient is quite a secondary consideration, and of course he is frequently killed by this highly proper attention. Scarcely less singular is a custom they have of making people they esteem the present of a coffin. A son of a filial turn of mind will cheer the heart of his ancient parent by a gift of this sort, and the parent will be delighted at the evidence of affection thus given. When a man is very ill, and a doctor is called in, he submits the prescription to the patients, who frequently strike out anything they think too expensive, the patient himself sometimes joining in the effort to abate the bill. Cases have been known where it has been concluded that it would be much better to save the medicine money to buy a handsome coffin—all with the full acquiescence of a dying man. Talking of doctors, I must not omit to mention that those attached to the Court are only paid while the Emperor is well; their salary stops as soon as

he becomes sick, and you may imagine the zeal displayed to amend his imperial health under such circumstances. I'm afraid the profession wouldn't thrive in the United States under such an arrangement. I may wind up this superficial allusion to Chinese contrarieties by mentioning that so determined they are to walk backwards that they say "gee wo!" to a horse to make him stop: instead of putting the candle into the candlestick, they put the candlestick into the candle, the latter having a hole fitting over the pointed end of the former; while finally the native barber is, unlike his western brethren, one of the least talkative of men!

Coming now to the social characteristics of the people, it is natural to say a few words in the first place upon their personal appearance. There is an old saying in Europe that "The tailor makes the man." In China we may almost say "The barber makes the man;" for the difference between an unshaved and a properly shaved Chinaman is absolutely ludicrous. Everybody knows that he shaves the top of his head and wears a pigtail. They don't like that word at all. I may observe—they call it a pientzu or "queue;" but many people don't know why they do so. Long hair worn just as we wear it, without a parting, was the fashion in all China until two hundred years ago, when the new fashion was introduced by the Mantchoo dynasty on its taking possession of the throne. Two centuries have reconciled the natives of China to this badge of allegiance, and at the present time, more than ever, it has become the distinction between "royals" and "rebels."

THE USE OF THE PIGTAIL.

The only conceivable use I have been able to see for the pigtails is the aid they afford to the police in catching a thief. At Hong Kong you will sometimes see a stalwart coloured policeman with half-a-dozen culprits, each with the end of his "tail" in the policeman's hands, wending their sorrowful way to the magistrate's court. It is very difficult to get away when a good strong turn of the tail is taken; and a sudden pull will throw the owner on his back in the most charming manner; so they don't always show fight. A very common thieves' trick is to plait fish-hooks and needles into the tail, so that the first one that catches hold of it is a great deal more anxious to drop his prize than to secure him. Bad characters have their tails cut off in gaol, though they always affix a false one the moment they are out of prison. Guardians of the peace are frequently "sold" by this, the appendage remaining in the seizer's hands, while the slenderly attached owner bolts as fast as he can.

THE IRISHMEN OF LONDON.

The London 'Daily Telegraph' recently said: "There are more Irishmen in London than in Dublin; and consequently in the districts of the town affected by the lower class of immigrants, such as the Commercial Road in the East Drury Lane, and its offshoots of back slums, the Dials, and up and about Marylebone, there was more than usual animation on Saturday night, in preparation for the national festival. It used to be the custom with Pat to drown the shamrock on Patrick's eve—that is to say, to get glorious, in deference to the saint who banished the toads and snakes from the bogs of Ireland. A happier habit of self-respect is coming on, thanks to the exertions of some of the Catholic clergy of London. A few years ago a system was introduced by those gentlemen to accept a spray of shamrock, around the stem of which was twisted the following words:—'The Truce of God. Three hundred days' Indulgence. I promise, in honor of St. Patrick, to abstain from intoxicating liquors (except at meal times) from twelve o'clock at noon the 16th of March, till twelve o'clock at noon the 18th of March, and I offer this act of mortification for the good of my soul, and to avert the anger of God, so justly deserved on account of the prevalence of the sin of drunkenness.' The pretty name chosen for this novel form of pledge was borrowed from mediæval times of almost continuous warfare, when a Truce, during which it was not lawful to shed blood, was imposed by the Church from Curfew, on Saturday to Monday morning. Grace to this truce of God, the 17th of March, of recent years, is scarcely noticeable in the addition of charges to the police sheet of the following day; and honest, hard-working Paddy is learning to enjoy himself in the present without laying up a store of headaches for the future."

OXFORD CONVERTS.

A CORRESPONDENT wrote lately as follows to the 'Rock':—"The attention of your readers has not yet, I think, been called to the fact that five members of this university have turned Papists during the last twelvemonths—three of them members of the so-called English Church Union, and all five of them, I believe, members of Mr. Noel's congregation at St. Barnabas's, whose curate, Mr. Moore, went over to Rome some time since. These converts are, H. M. Browne, New College; J. C. Dunn, B.A., New College; G. H. French, Balliol; C. D. Williamson, University; A. N. C. MacCall, Magdalen. A Romish chapel of large size and considerable architectural pretensions is in course of erection in St. Giles's. As there is already a chapel in St. Clement's sufficiently capacious to hold the few Papists in the place and neighbourhood, it is plain that—in *nostros fabricata est machina muros*, and a most dangerous engine of proselytism it will be. Dr. Manning will, no doubt, figure from time to time in the pulpit, and crowds of undergraduates will go to hear him. Meanwhile he will have in Mr. Noel a most effective pioneer; and young men in the habit of attending St. Barnabas's church will find little difference between his teaching and the cardinal's."

A sixteen-year-old son of an ex-Mayor of Nashua bids fair to equal the Belgian giant in stature, being six feet and two inches in height, and still growing. Another youth, the son of an ex-United States Senator, formerly resident of Nashua, is only thirteen, and measures five feet eleven inches.