VIEW OF THE CITY OF AMOY.

Missionary Manuals.

CHRIST OR CONFUCIUS, WHICH?

OR,

The Story of the Amoy Mission.

BY

REV. JOHN MACGOWAN,

MISSIONARY IN AMOY SINCE 1863;
AUTHOR OF "A MANUAL OF THE AMOY COLLOQUIAL," AND "AN ENGLISH AND CHINESE DICTIONARY OF THE AMOY LANGUAGE."

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

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PREFACE

WHEN I commenced writing the story of the Amoy Mission, I determined to confine myself simply to giving an account of the introduction of the Gospel into Amoy and the regions around, and the gradual formation and growth of the Churches there. I have consequently rigorously resisted all temptation to describe the laws and customs of the people, excepting when they were necessary to illustrate and explain my subject. In order to make the book more graphic and lifelike, I have preferred, whenever I could, to describe scenes in which I myself have mingled, and to tell the stories of men with whom I have been personally associated. This has been to me a most delightful task, as it has brought back to my recollection memories of the past, that are amongst the most pleasant in my life.

I should like to have referred to the other two Missionary Societies in Amoy—the American Mission and the English Presbyterian—and to the work that is being carried on by them, but want of space has prevented me. Even as it is, I have had to

leave out all description of Hospital work, and of the growth of Self-support amongst the Amoy Churches, simply because I knew there were imperative reasons why my work should not be extended beyond the present number of pages.

If this book should, in any small degree, help to inspire the hearts of its readers with a more profound sympathy for missionary work, and should lead the Christian Churches to recognise more fully the duty and joy of sending the Gospel to their heathen brethren in China, then, indeed, would my heart's desire be satisfied, and I should be more than repaid for the time and labour I have expended upon it.

J. MACGOWAN.

LONDON, *August 14th*, 1889.

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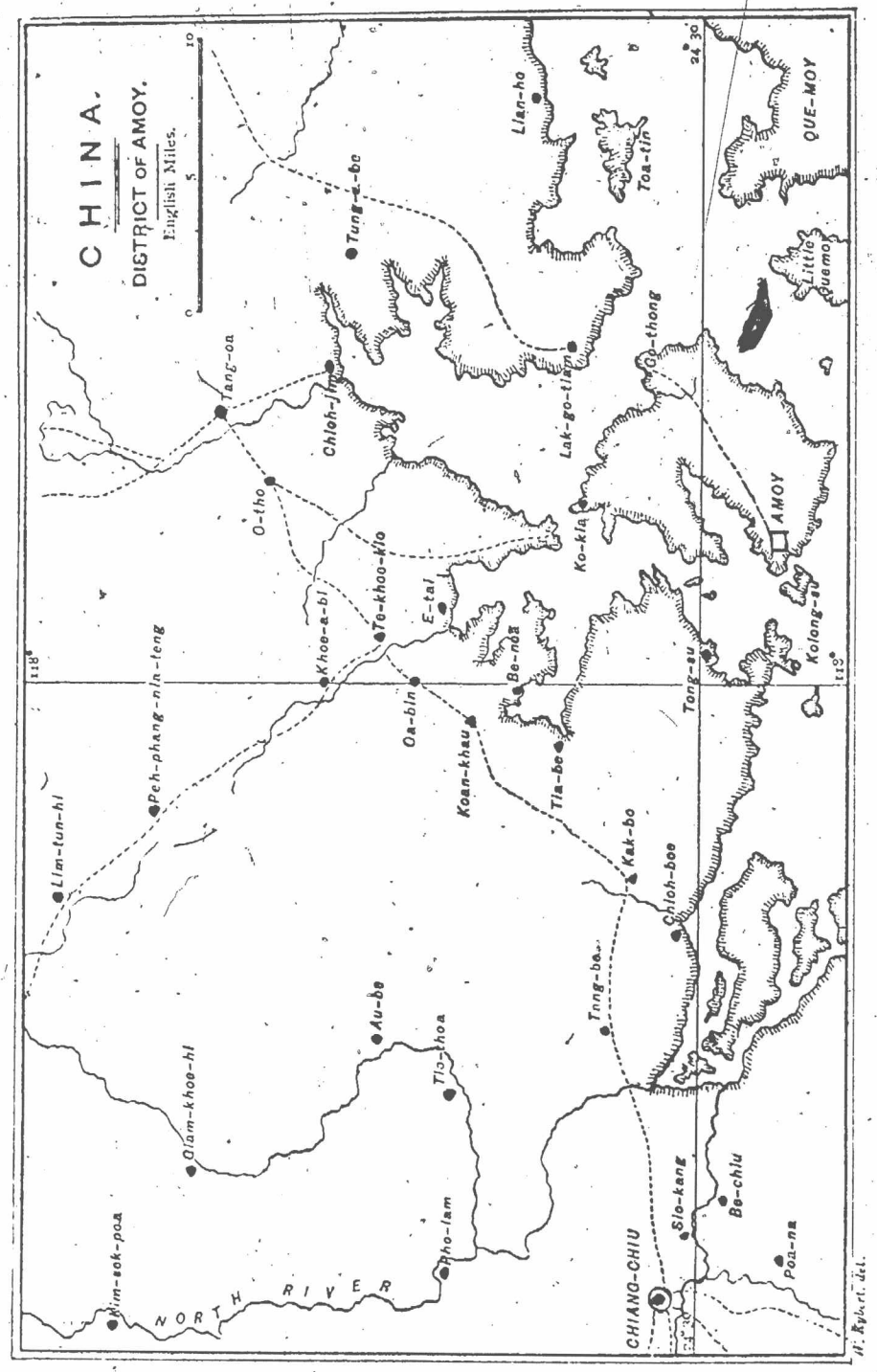


CHRIST OR CONFUCIUS, WHICH?

CHAPTER I.

THE GREAT PREPARATION.

THE dawn of the nineteenth century witnessed the first systematic efforts of any of the Protestant Churches of England to give the Gospel to the Chinese. In 1805 the directors of the London Missionary Society decided to send three or four missionaries to Penang, a possession of the English, as a preliminary step to their ultimate settlement in China. This plan was agreed upon, because a great many of the inhabitants were Chinese, and also because it was deemed hopeless to expect that any missionary would then be allowed to take up his residence in China itself. The difficulties, indeed, connected with a mission to that country were considered so insuperable, that the directors never contemplated the possibility of their men being permitted to teach and to preach. The only specific objects they dared to set before themselves were, that the missionaries should learn the Chinese language and translate the Bible into it. What should be done

after these things should be accomplished it was impossible to anticipate.

On January 31st, 1807, the Rev. R. Morrison set out for China by way of America. The original intention of commencing the Mission in Penang was abandoned, through the difficulty of obtaining men. It was considered that as Mr. Morrison was going alone, he might possibly be allowed to remain in Canton until he had mastered the language. Full permission, however, was given him in his letter of instructions to remove to Penang, or to any other place that he saw fit, in case he found it impossible to remain in that city.

He arrived in Canton on September 7th, where he very soon found himself exposed to considerable annoyance and even danger. In 1808, in consequence of disputes between the English and the Chinese, he was compelled to remove more than once to Macao, which was then held by the Portuguese, so that his studies were necessarily very much interrupted. At length, seeing the risk of remaining in China to be very great, he decided to leave for Penang and study the language there. The time for his departure was actually fixed, when, on the 20th of February, he was appointed Chinese interpreter to the East India Company. This gave him an official position that secured the right of residence in China, and at the same time prevented the breaking up of the Mission in that country. The acceptance of such a post was a dangerous one, and with a different man might have meant the shipwreck of the work. With him, however, there was no risk. He had consented to become an official in order that he might the more

effectually carry out the one aim which was the purpose of his life. He could now study without interruption, and, moreover, his official duties gave him such wide opportunities of getting a deeper insight into the language, that he was being continually qualified for the great work of translating the Scriptures into Chinese.

Although public preaching was not allowed, he availed himself of every opportunity for making known the Gospel to those who came within his immediate influence. The Chinese in those early days were not easily moved to become Christians. The utter contempt with which they were accustomed to look down upon the foreigner made them scout the idea that he had anything better to teach them than what they had received from their great sages. China was the land of light and culture and refinement, and had nothing to learn from the outer barbarian. The idea of one of these coming to teach the Chinese was just as ludicrous as though a Zulu were to come to London, and, establishing himself in some prominent position, were to invite the scholar and the scientist to sit at his feet and be instructed by him. Now the conceit and haughty insolence which were marked features in the Chinese character were to be found in a more intensified form amongst the Cantonese, than perhaps in any other part of China. It was therefore particularly unfortunate that the first contact of the missionary with the Chinese empire should have been at Canton. This city was one of the most prominent in the country. There were others that could excel it in the beauty of their natural surroundings, and in the historic memories

that clustered around them, but it stood pre-eminent as one of the strong cities of the empire. The lofty walls that surrounded it, and the massive gates, through which the teeming crowds passed in and out, had an imposing air of strength that seemed to bid defiance to all the world, and to laugh to scorn any attempt that might be made to capture them. It was one of the wealthiest places in the kingdom. Like other Chinese cities, it had its narrow lanes, where the poorer people lived, and long lines of streets where the smaller shops were opened; but it was conspicuous for the number of its large and extensive business houses, where trade on a large scale was carried on. Here could be found, as hardly anywhere else in the empire, firms where the finest silks and satins, and elegant embroidery of every design, could be procured. Not only articles of native manufacture could be bought, but also those from far-off distant cities, which had been carried over lofty mountains and down great rivers to this famous mart. Here, too, were to be found the most beautiful vases from well-known potteries, painted with the most exquisite colours, the secret of which was known only to their designers, and which has since been lost to the world. Tea warehouses, filled with the fragrant leaf that came from the centre of China, to be shipped away to England, explained in some measure the presence of the English ships that lay anchored in the river. The city was alive and bustling, and had the air of a pressure of business upon it. Men from the region around, and from the far interior provinces, could be seen in its streets. Tea merchants from Hankow, silk merchants from Soochow, makers of the famous

pottery from the Kiangsi province, merchants from distant cities coming to buy and sell, mandarins of all degrees with their retinues, and speaking the different dialects of their far-off homes, so that they were strangers in language amongst the very people they had come to rule, all spoke of the hold that this mighty city had upon remote places in the empire.

PAGODA, GOLDEN ISLAND, HONG-KONG.

The people of Canton were perhaps the most vigorous in the kingdom. Though bred and born within the tropics, and scorched by the great Eastern sun for the greater part of the year, the only effect seems to have been to develop in them an extraordinary amount of mental and physical ability. In their build, they could not compete with those of some of the northern

provinces, but in push and enterprise and business capacity they stood first amongst the men of the eighteen provinces. They were men of daring, too. Their trading junks were accustomed to make considerable voyages along seas where gales are frequent in winter and typhoons in summer. The China Sea, and the Formosa Channel, swarmed with pirate junks manned by Cantonese, and none so terrible and ruthless as they. No force could compete with them, and it has required the naval power of England to rid the seas of these monsters.

The consequence of all this was, that the people of Canton were a proud and haughty race. They felt themselves more than a match for any of their own countrymen, and much more therefore for the barbarian English. Even at the present day, after successive defeats, and the capture and occupation of their city by English troops, the Cantonese still behave with a rudeness and arrogance such as are experienced in no other place where Europeans have been accustomed to reside for any length of time. One can easily understand, therefore, how dreary and depressing the early years of the first missionary's life must have been. Active work, such as is openly carried on to-day, would not have been tolerated, either by the Chinese authorities or by the directors of the East India Company. In patient waiting and strong faith in God, and in the Divine power of the Gospel, he had come to preach; in these alone could he find a comfort for his soul; and by the grace of God he never faltered in his purpose or dreamt of giving up the enterprise as hopeless.

The year 1813 proved to be a memorable one in

the history of the Mission. After six years of solitary labour by Morrison, the Rev. W. Milne arrived in China to become his colleague, and for the few years he was permitted to live did splendid service, the fruits of which remain to the present day. But the great event of the year was the completion of the translation of the New Testament into Chinese. Men who were ignorant of that language had argued that it was impossible to put the wondrous thoughts, and subtle shades of meaning, and the tender and pathetic language of the Bible into those cumbrous Chinese characters. As though God had given a revelation that could never be communicated to fully a fourth of the human race! Men forgot that the Bible is an Oriental book, full of figures and similes, and teeming with illustrations from Nature that can be understood best under an Eastern sky. In coming to China it was nearer its home than it was where dreary winters and leaden skies prevail. The Chinese language is one of the most beautiful in the world in which to enshrine the sacred Scriptures, and there is a flexibility and grace about it, that render it capable of expressing all the tenderness, and pathos, and poetry, and sublime thought of that most wondrous book.

Morrison himself was deeply impressed with the work he had done. What a comfort and a joy he must have felt as the last sheets were printed, and the Word of God, the revelation of Jesus Christ, was now ready to be distributed amongst the Chinese. He had not been allowed to preach. He had been watched and suspected. Edicts forbidding the Chinese to receive the religion of the foreigners had been issued. "A special express was sent from

Peking for search to be made for persons professing the Christian religion, and old people and country gentlemen were called upon by the Government to give information against such." Anything that was done by him had to be effected as quietly as possible, for any public manifestation would have been attended with danger to himself, and to those who listened to him. Little did those in power dream that he had already completed a work that one day would revolutionize China, and change her customs, and break up the long sleep of ages, and give men thoughts such as no sage had ever taught them. The Word of God was now ready to do a work that no mandarin or royal edict could stop. God's message, selfishly held back by the Christian Church for so many ages, had at last reached China, and men's hearts, there recognising the Divine voice, would ere long respond in loving and loyal service to Him.

The next great event in Morrison's life was the baptism of the first Chinese convert on July 16th, 1814. "At a spring of water," he says, "issuing from the foot of a lofty hill by the seaside, away from human observation, I baptized Tsae-a-ko in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." What a day of rejoicing this must have been! For nearly seven years he had hoped, and longed, and prayed for this very thing. Men had said: You cannot convert the Chinese; and when he saw the arrogance and scorn with which the Chinese scouted the idea of being instructed by a barbarian, he must have had his moments of perplexity and depression. But after years of weary waiting, the Gospel has proved its old

power. And now he receives the firstfruit of that mighty harvest that other labourers will reap in the future.

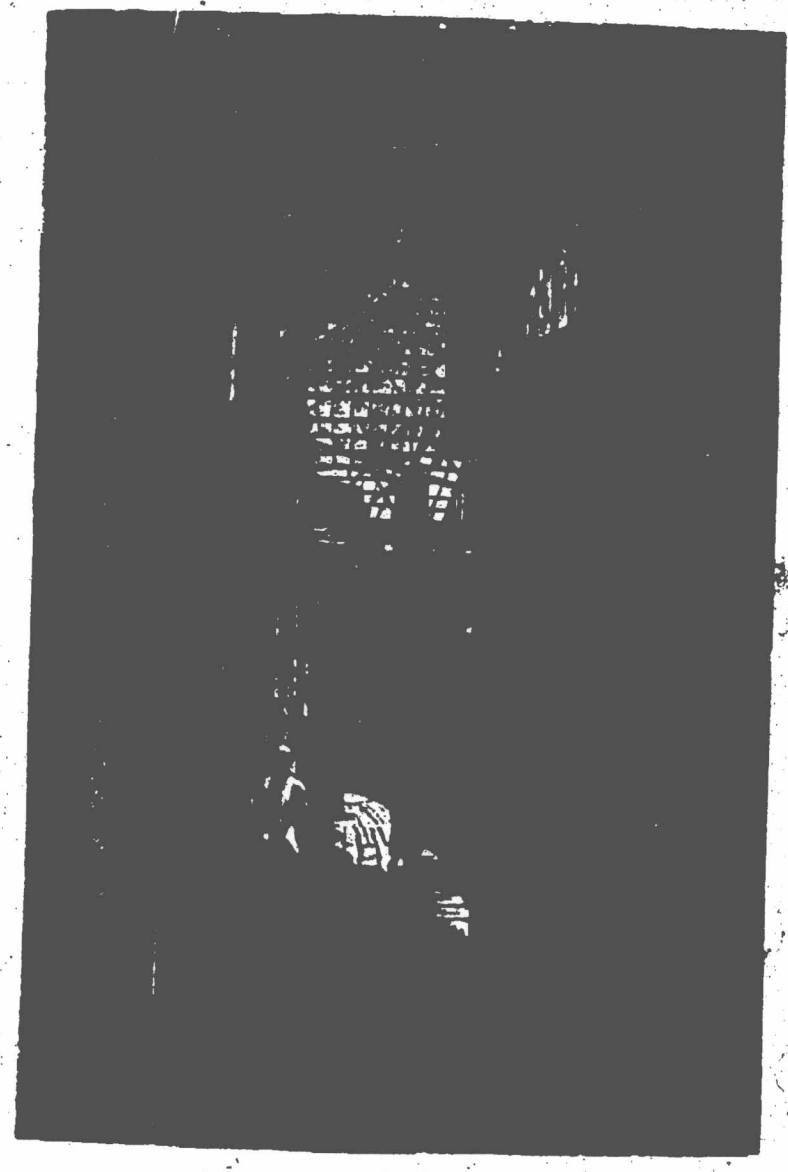
It would be interesting to learn what was the attractive power in Christianity that led this Chinaman to give up his idolatry, and his ancestral worship, and to run the risk of death at the hands of his rulers. Fortunately we have his own written confession, and we are not surprised to find that the one feature of the Gospel that touched his heart was the same that had so mightily taken possession of the mind of Paul, and had become the ruling force in his life, and that was, Christ and Him crucified. He says that "Jesus has made an atonement for us is a message that is full of joy. Language and thought are both inadequate to exhaust the gracious and admirable goodness of this purpose of Jesus. I now believe in Jesus, and rely on His merits to obtain the remission of sin. I have sins and defects, and without faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins I should be eternally miserable." How wonderfully this man speaks of sin, who never knew what the word meant till he heard the Gospel! Christianity had given him a definite conception and sense of the evil that was in his life, and had shown him the way to get rid of it. Confucius had never done this, and no voice from the great temples in the city had ever suggested it. The cross with its Divine story had revealed to him his misery and his salvation, and so his confession centres round Christ who had delivered him.

The men and women that have been converted since have all followed in his footsteps. As I listen

to his confession it has a strangely familiar sound to me. I know its language; I can hear the very tones and accents in which it was uttered, for I have baptized hundreds of Christians, and they have all seemed instinctively to adopt this same grand confession of faith.

And so the years went by amid struggles and difficulties. Everything had to be done with the utmost secrecy and caution, lest the Chinese Government should take action against him. He knew that his own countrymen would not stand by him and uphold him in such a case, for the East India Company, having heard that he had translated the New Testament and various tracts into Chinese, sent out an order that his connection with them should be severed, for "they were apprehensive that serious mischief might possibly arise to the British trade in China from these translations."

In the meantime as there was no scope for missionary work in China, missions were commenced in Batavia, Malacca, Penang, and Singapore, amongst the Chinese residing there. One very valuable result of this was that men were being trained in a knowledge of Chinese and of Chinese life that would specially qualify them to be workers in China the very moment that country was opened. And splendid men were some of these, and well adapted for the great work that was to be done by and by; one of the mightiest empires in the world was to be won for Christ. Men of feeble hands, or still feebler hearts, would fail in the enterprise, and so God selected, in this crisis, men of great powers of mind, and of still profounder faith. Such names as Morri-



A STREET IN CANTON.

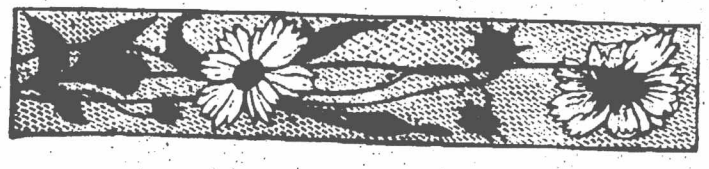
son, Milne, Medhurst, Legge, Stronach and Lockhart, will be imperishably connected with the first preaching of the Gospel in China.

In 1834 Morrison died; Milne had finished his work twelve years before. Soon after his death the mandarins began to enforce more rigidly their regulations against the intercourse of Chinese with foreigners, and also against their belief in Christianity. The little band of Christians were punished by fines and imprisonment, and were released only by the payment of a large sum of money, which Mr. J. Morrison, who had succeeded his father as Chinese Secretary, very generously paid. The Chinese pastor Leang-a-fa, found it expedient under these circumstances to leave China and fly to Malacca. It began to look as though this missionary enterprise were to be a failure. The founder of the work was dead. For twenty-seven years he had given his soul to it, but he was gone now, and those who had been gathered by him, were left to the tender mercies of the heathen. The strong and merciless hand of the law had been laid upon the Christians, and they were scattered as sheep without a shepherd. China, with its ancient civilization and its great sages and teachers, and with its stronger than adamantine walls that were reared so high, as if to keep out the very sounds that might come in from the outside world, will never be evangelized. These strong men, with the mighty forces behind their backs, will never give up the traditions and teachings of their fathers. Christianity will have to retire before such invincible forces. Will it? The time is very near when these walls shall be rent, and Christianity shall stand face

to face with the nation. The appliances are all ready. The Bible has been translated, and men of indomitable faith are waiting, all ready trained for the conflict. No gathering of great armaments has been seen, no clash and sound of weapons being forged in the workshops of the world have been heard, and no assembling of troops witnessed, and yet there have been forces prepared that shall not fail in their conquest of China.

In August 29th, 1842, by treaty with the Chinese emperor, Hong-Kong was ceded to the English, and Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai became open ports, where men of every nation might freely reside. Our missionaries, who had been eagerly looking for this, at once hastened to enter China, and Hong-Kong and Shanghai were occupied as mission centres, whilst two years afterwards the wondrous work, whose story will be told in the following pages, was commenced at Amoy.

The weary years of waiting are ended. The dawn has come at last. The shadows are beginning to tremble before the coming day, and soon along the coast, and far away into the interior, across its plains and among its mountains and valleys, shall the light flash, till the darkness shall have vanished, and Christ come to claim the kingdom for His own.



CHAPTER II.

AMOY AND ITS PEOPLE.

THE island of Amoy is on the southern coast of China, about three hundred miles to the north-east of Hong-Kong. It is about thirty miles in circumference, and is beautifully situated in the midst of a very extensive bay. Seaward, it is protected by a chain of islands, the largest and most important of which is about the size of Amoy, and is called Quemoy, or "The Golden Gate." This acts as a natural breakwater, and prevents the heavy seas that are raised by storms and typhoons from rolling into the bay and injuring the shipping that lies anchored there.

On the south the bay is bounded by a low range of mountains, from the midst of which rises abruptly Lam-tai-bu, the "Great Southern Warrior." This is the most beautiful sight in the whole of the landscape, for there is a never-ending charm in its varying moods, as seen in storm or sunshine. In fine weather its summit is bathed in great floods of light, and it stands out clearly against the sky as it looks down upon the blue waters of the bay, which dance and sparkle beneath the rays of the great eastern sun. When bad weather is coming on, dense masses of cloud, tumultuous and agitated, as if clinging to it for protection, gather round its head and far down its sides, and then the waters of the bay, dark with the shadows

cast upon them, seem to be in sympathy with them, as though they feared the coming gale.

To the west and north the scenery is very grand and rugged. It seems to consist entirely of hills and mountains, for the plains and valleys that lie at their feet, and that contain cities and villages and great market towns, are hidden from our view till we come upon them. The hills have grouped themselves into all kinds of imaginable shapes. Over the lower grounds can be seen the peaks that tower above the rest; whilst one range of mountains rises above another, till the distant background seems to be resting against the sky.

The city of Amoy is a walled town of the third degree in rank. As compared with the great cities of the empire, such as Canton, Suchow, or Hang-chow, it is a very small and insignificant place. It is a dull, semi-respectable town, and all the business and life and energy that the Chinese are capable of are concentrated in the immense suburbs that have absorbed nearly all the wealth and trade of the port. These are very finely and picturesquely situated. They stretch along the shore of the beautiful bay, which is lighted up daily with almost perpetual sunlight.

The harbour is diversified by junks and sailing vessels, and all kinds of steamers on their way north or south; whilst one ship that flies the white flag of England shows that one of our men-of-war has come from our far-off home to guard and protect us if needs be.

The scene before us is a busy one. The steamers, with great noise and clatter, and with a rapidity that

the Chinese coolies do not relish, are discharging their cargoes. They are in a hurry to be off, and, moreover, all this incessant rush and activity are but in keeping with the restless and untiring energy of the Englishman. Close beside them is a huge junk hoisting its great mat sail, to the slow, monotonous song of the sailors. This song, which might have been composed in the days of Confucius, has not yet caught the spirit of the nineteenth century. There is no inspiration about it, nor anything to warm the men's hearts and cause them to pull the sail up to the masthead with a rush. A little farther on a number of sailors are standing on the bow of another junk beating gongs. They begin with measured strokes, and end with a few given quickly and with great energy. They are welcoming a junk that is coming in with flowing sail from sea, and they are expressing the gladness of themselves and their shipmates that they have passed safely through all the perils of the deep. Passage boats of all sizes and descriptions are coming in from the country districts laden with passengers, small boats plying for hire from the shore to the shipping dot the bay, and see! here is a boat's crew from the man-of-war, and Jack, with his easy, saucy air, seems as much at home as though he were crossing the Solent.

The town is a thoroughly typical one, and from it we can, in a large measure, judge what is the character of nearly every other one in the country. To enable the reader to get an idea of what it is like, I shall take him through one of the principal streets, and let him see some of the scenes that may be constantly witnessed in it. This street,

being an important one, is wider than the generality, but even it is not more than about fourteen feet; but as most of the shops have projecting counters, on which goods are displayed, the really available space for the public is often not more than from eight to ten feet. The crowd in this street is always dense; and were it not that it is usually good-natured, and careful in following the rule of the road, there would be fierce collisions and stoppage of the traffic. Such narrow streets, where so much of human life has to pass in such close contact the livelong day, would never suit the people of the west, where men are high-spirited and easily take offence, and where the exigencies of life make it difficult for them to brook delay.

But it is not the people only that pass along these narrow arteries. Everything that the necessities of the town require has to be conveyed along them. As we are sauntering quietly along with the crowd, a faint shout is heard in the distance, which grows louder and still more loud as it approaches us. We discover that it proceeds from four men who are carrying an immense bale of Manchester cottons on bamboo poles, the ends of which rest on their shoulders. Their cries are to warn the people to get out of the way, and speedily this must be done, for they come along at a swinging trot, and a blow from the ends of the poles, or from the heavy bale might prove a serious matter to the person struck. The crowd good-naturedly opens up a way to let them pass, whilst we hurriedly flatten ourselves against a fruit-stall. The men swing by us with a shout, and are almost instantly lost in the human tide in which

they are engulphed, but their voices can still be heard in the distance, long after they have disappeared from sight.

PEOPLE OF AMOY.

We now come to a part of the road that is slightly wider than the rest. At the side of it is a man seated at a small table, on which are laid materials for

writing. Two ink-slabs, one for black and the other for red ink, are placed in order before him. He is a man of about fifty years of age, with large spectacles on his nose, and he assumes a learned look, as though he would try and persuade the public that he belongs to the literary class. He is wanting, however, in that invisible something that marks the true scholar, and consequently no one is deceived by him. He is a broken-down tradesman perhaps, or a ne'er-do-weel who had been partially educated when he was young, but who had not character enough to go on with his studies. He is now picking up a very precarious living by writing letters for the very poor and uneducated classes of society. But let us draw near, for a woman has just come up to his table, evidently on business, and custom will allow us to stand by and listen to what she has to say. The letter-writer has now assumed a learned look, and he peers over the spectacles at her with an air of profound thought, as she tells him what she wishes him to write about. She wants him to write a letter to her son, who has gone abroad, and has not written to her for a very long time. She then tells a long story of how good her son was as a boy, how filial he was, and with what affection he used to treat her. The mother's heart is full, and her eyes glisten as she speaks of those happy days, and the virtues of her son. Then her voice changes, and a cloud comes over her face as she proceeds to tell how evil companions got hold of him and worked his ruin. He gave up his work, became a gambler, and then an opium smoker, and finally left the country in the hope of turning over a new leaf, and of finding a fortune

that could not be got in Amoy. She tells her story with great dramatic effect. At one time her eyes are filled with tears, as the painful memories are recalled, then her features assume a stern and angry appearance, as she recounts the wiles by which her son was led astray. Then her face brightens as she speaks of her hopes that her son may yet repent, and come back to her home to be a comfort to her. The people who have gathered round the table, attracted by our presence, listen sympathetically. They nod their heads and look pleased when she speaks of her once happy home, and they utter very strong, unclassical language when she describes some particular individual whose influence had been the ruin of her son. The letter-writer listens quietly, but with a dignified manner, as the tragic story is being rehearsed. He is human, however, for, as we watch him, we see that his feelings get the better of his reserve, and looks of pity, and anon of indignation, steal over his face, as the woman acts out this most piteous story of her life. After she has concluded he proceeds to write the letter. The paper is soon covered with strange hieroglyphics in perpendicular columns, written with black ink. Then the stops are all put in with red ink, and important sentences underlined with the same, and finally it is read over to her to see whether it contains all she desired to say. It is then folded up and addressed, and for all this he receives the modest sum of one penny.

Again we saunter on. We pass by opium shops, always dingy and dark looking, as though they feared the light of day, and silk shops, and idol carvers, and fruiterers, and eating houses, where groups of hungry