

# NOTES AND QUERIES: ON CHINA AND JAPAN.

A MONTHLY MEDIUM OF INTER-COMMUNICATION

FOR

PROFESSIONAL AND LITERARY MEN, MISSIONARIES AND  
RESIDENTS IN THE EAST GENERALLY, ETC.

EDITED BY N. B. DENNY.

VOL. 2, No. 1.] HONGKONG, JANUARY, 1868.

{ Price \$6  
per annum.

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## Notes.

### FIRE BRIGADES IN CANTON.

Such foreigners as have been present at large fires in Canton cannot but have observed not only the comparative rapidity with which they were extinguished, but also the remarkable system and order exhibited in the manner of performing that apparently difficult task. As Canton has been the first city in China to adopt the European style of fire-extinguishing apparatus, and has long disused the simple bucket of water system prevailing in most other parts of the Empire, it may not be uninteresting to some of the foreign residents in this part of the world to learn something of the organization of the fire brigades which abound in that city, and the services of which cannot be too highly praised. It is difficult to ascertain the exact date of the adoption by the Cantonese of the European fire-engine, but tradition asserts that they were so struck

with the simplicity and usefulness of those in the East India Company's Factory that they at once saw the advantage of having similar means of suppressing fires in their crowded city, where fires during the winter are almost of weekly occurrence. Be this tradition correct or not, it is a fact that fire engines have been for some time in use in Canton, and that several manufactories of them exist there, whence they are sent to the larger cities of the Kwangtung province, and probably to the other provinces also.

The Cantonese system of working their engines is remarkably simple and effective. Let us imagine that a ward or street has no means of extinguishing the fires that occur in it, and that the inhabitants resolve that they shall not only be able to protect their own property, but to give assistance in the saving of houses in any other quarter, however distant—(which assistance is always readily and cheerfully granted.) A meeting of the principal inhabitants is convened at the district or street temple (such buildings being used as town halls where all municipal business is transacted); measures are taken for the purchase of a fire engine, and to provide funds for keeping it permanently in good order, and for paying gratuities to the firemen. This latter object is easily effected, as on the principal festival days, contributions are given. The management of the funds is entrusted to the chief inhabitants in rotation or to one of the temple priests delegated by them. To secure firemen and others for the working of the engine, lots are generally drawn, the shops thus selected having to provide the necessary number of men to form a fire brigade. In some cases, however, volunteers are simply called for. No matter how the men are found, to each of them is assigned a particular duty after having been asked what post he thinks himself qualified to fill. Some merchant guilds possess engines of their own, in which case they are kept in the guildhalls; and even rich private individuals are said, now and then, to purchase and place engines at the disposal of the public. When an engine is

enduring prosperity than she has ever before enjoyed. May that glorious period soon be ushered in!

M. J. KNOWLTON.

Ningpo, May 8, 1868.

[It may possibly appear to a large proportion of the readers of *N. & Q.* a matter for regret that the compiler of so much valuable statistical information regarding the Chinese as has been brought together in the above paper should depart from the record of facts to indulge in a denunciation of the use of opium,—which, however immoral the practice of resorting to the use of narcotics may be, is now commonly admitted to be one of the least harmful among the means of intoxication prevalent in one form or another in every land. As, however, it would be unjust to Mr Knowlton to suppress any portion of his contribution, it is inserted in full, with this disclaimer of participation, editorially, in the views he appears to entertain on this subject.—ED.]

### Queries.

**HEREDITARY GENIUS.**—I should be greatly obliged to such of your readers as would obtain for me from their Chinese literate friends, trustworthy information as to whether the history of public competition in China, tends to shew that certain families are eminently endowed with scholastic ability. I speak especially of the highest order of talent, as tested by those examinations; whether or when it has happened that the foremost place of the year, the *Chuang Yuan*, as I am informed it is called, has been won by brothers, by father and son, by grandfather and grandson, by uncle and nephew, or by cousins,—the three latter being reckoned either on the paternal or maternal side. I am assured that although the Chinese examinations at the present day are reputed unfair they have not invariably been subject to suspicion; on the contrary, that during the numerous centuries over which the history of these examinations extends, there have been many golden periods, when they were conducted with perfect pureness and when the foremost distinctions fell to the ablest scholars. It would therefore be of considerable moment, in answering my queries, to append some remarks that would indicate the real merits of those successful candidates that were related together.

Again, I would ask, are any of the foremost rank of classical authors in China, whether poets or historians, members of the same family within the degrees I have indicated above, or are any of them related in

the same close manner with men who have attained the honor of the *Chuang Yuan*? Are there any Chinese families who at some period of their history, have included during several generations, men eminent for their literary abilities? In all these cases I should be very glad to receive information concerning the relationships on the female side, for I believe it is usual for Chinese scholars to ally themselves with the daughters of scholars. Lastly, are there any maxims or proverbs among the Chinese, relating to the hereditary transmission of intellectual ability or of stupidity, and if so, do they point to its transmission through either parent in preference to the other?

I give my address, as it is possible that some of your readers may be inclined to reply to my enquiries at considerable length, greater than could be expected to find a place in the columns of your excellent periodical.

FRANCIS GALTON.

42, Rutland Gate, London,  
June 24, 1868.

**GEOLOGICAL CHANGE ON THE COASTS OF CHINA AND JAPAN.**—The following from the *Athenæum* has been quoted in several newspapers.

“Geological change appears to be more rapid, or more obvious, along the coasts of China and Japan and the country to the northwards than in other parts of the world. The changes that have taken place within the memory of man are almost incredible. The land is elevated, and gains on the sea. Mr Bickmore, an American traveller, has made careful observations from Canton up to the mouth of the Amoor river, and his general conclusion is, that the facts, taken in connection with the dry beds of friths and bays along the Siberian borders of the Arctic Ocean, and the remnant of the old gulf that once washed the eastern flank of the Ural, enable the geologist to form an idea of the large increase of the Asiatic Continent within a comparatively recent period.”

Is Mr Bickmore's conclusion borne out by other geological observers? My own observations in Hainan, Kwangtung and Fukkien, have afforded no support to this conclusion, and the geological notes on other parts of China, as far north as Shanghai, which have from time to time been published in this country, likewise tend to suggest that the “American traveller” has in the present case availed of traveller's license, so far at least as the southern part of China, from Hainan to the Yang-tsz, is included in his remarks above quoted.

Canton.

THEOS. SAMPSON.

**THE REIGN OF PING TI.**—Can any of your readers tell me whether any satisfactory explanation has ever been given of the “remarkable coincidence in the reign of the 12th Emperor (of the Han Dynasty) who ascended the throne in the year of Immanuel's advent, and after a reign of five years received the title of 平帝 (Ping Ti, Prince of Peace)—mentioned by Charoff in his Chronology of the Chinese? It may have been frequently explained before, but I have not yet seen a satisfactory solution of the strange coincidence.

Hongkong.

INQUIRER.

**ANTI-MARRIAGE ASSOCIATIONS.**—I have heard that in some part of the Province of Kwang-tung, and I think in the District called Shun-teh, a custom exists among married girls of forming associations, in which each member is pledged to remain unmarried and to contribute mutually to each other's support. Is there any foundation for this story, and if so, any reader of *N. & Q.* throw any light on the subject and constitution of these associations? Do the members leave their native abodes? The idea is so much opposed to the ordinary notions of the Chinese (and true) the voluntary rejection of the marital state must be prompted by some peculiar local circumstances.

**GROWTH OF “HAIR” ON THE SOLE OF THE FOOT.**—The History of the Ming Dynasty, under the first year of the reign of Siian Teh (1426) the following statement is recorded: 京師地生毛長尺餘 (i.e., to translate rightly): “At the Capital the sole of the foot produced hairs a foot and more in length. What is the meaning of this statement? Have sought in vain among Chinese for an intelligible explanation.”

**ORIGIN OF DRAGON BOATS.**—It is amusing to see the Chinese pulling their Dragon Boats (扒龍船) on the 5th day of every 5th moon. Can any of the readers of *Notes and Queries* inform me the origin and introduction and origin of the custom existing in China?

L. K. CHU.

Foochow, 8th August, 1868.

**THE FORMER ACCOUNT OF PENANG.**—I am writing a Chinese book respecting the early intercourse between Foreigners and the Chinese for the information of my friends, I venture to compile all possible information from the papers at my disposal, and it is my wish to give the book as resting a feature as I possibly can.