

CURRENT LITERATURE.

- I. — *Oriental Religions and their Relation to Universal Religion.* Vol. II. China. By SAMUEL JOHNSON. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co. 1877. pp. xxiv.-975.

THIS is the second volume that belongs to the great undertaking of Mr. Johnson to show the universal nature of religious ideas, their organic evolution from the human structure in all times and nations, and their consequent similarity. The ethnic coloring works no essential modification of essential thought, and is only a superficial distinction, like that of all the unduplicated faces of all individuals: each face has its crotchet of distinction from all the other faces, but they all conspire to set forth mental traits and emotions that are substantially identical.

In Mr. Johnson's Introduction to the first volume, devoted to the Religions of India, he states the purpose of the whole plan, and furnishes the key note. It may be thus briefly reproduced here: A human instinct that has continually sought for and yearned toward the invisible force and creativeness which inspire all Nature; a natural evolution of this instinct, through all varieties of culture and condition, taking on at every stage the precise quality of the culture, and becoming thus an advertisement of the place which mankind then occupies; the natural continuity of this structural development, broken at no point by any alteration of the original impulse, by any interference or afterthought, by any irruption of a force which is not continually in Nature; a native universality which forbids any claim of exclusiveness, of any superior authority save that of culture and ethnic condition, of any notion of a distinctive inspiration; the natural human right of every form of Faith, and therefore an essential injustice in any denominational attitude toward ancient or contemporaneous religions; the advantage of complete toleration that is gained for speculation and practical dealings with the different people of the earth; a law of self-recovery from decayed and degraded epochs, by whose organic stress the instinct for religion saves itself, and assumes new forms, without the artifice of supernatural interventions, but not without the inspiration of a genius for religion, his-

torically and structurally born; the vital test of every religion residing in its capacity to civilize, restrain, elevate, bring forth fruits of righteousness; the duty of the scholar to make all the resources of modern science, of comparative philology, mythology, and physiology, subservient to his fixed idea of the universality and perpetual value of the religious sentiment; finally, the unpoetical and untheological nature of this great work of religious sympathy to which the scholar in these latest times has been called.

How well these exalted purposes were applied to execute the volume upon India the student of religion need not be reminded. But still finer, more exhaustive, more generous and brilliant, has been the work done upon this volume of China. Few books have ever so completely absorbed, and then set forth, the manifold life of a great nation. Not a single topic or interest is left untouched; not only touched, but thoroughly handled, and not by undefended statement: everywhere the authority pursues the opinion, and the student is conscious that all the best books in various languages, the best reviews and communications, have been ransacked to provide for him a sense of security and highest probability.

The book is divided into four sections entitled, Elements, Structures, Sages, Beliefs. Under these heads are included every possible subject which can illustrate the actual China: her labor and science; her education, government, language, literature, history; her different religious epochs and states of thought; her social sentiments, ancestral worship, her ethnic habits and notions; her development of Buddhism, and her philosophy, — all these central subjects are submitted to the most careful treatment.

It may be that at first the reader will suspect the author of too much admiration. We have been so carefully nourished upon the partisan informations of the missionaries, and upon the contempt which makes a part of the return cargo of traders, who know nothing about China except the wretched facts picked up in the slums of Canton and Hong Kong, that we are not prepared to encounter so many refined and noble traits of character, such mental development, such admirable management of the popular and social life, so much curious learning, and such indefatigable scholarship. Least of all is it the common Anglo-Saxon opinion that the average Chinaman believes in the sacredness and possible future of his soul, and that there is divine power above and beyond the visible sky. The book will dissipate many degrading illusions; it will reveal several humbling contrasts with our own Christian methods of business and social life. Its chief value is in its elaborate and minute accumulation of all the facts which show the

similarity of the principles of all religions, and the natural fraternity which reddens the blood underneath the cheeks of nations. It is also a timely contribution to the treatment of the Chinese problem among us, and will undoubtedly lead popular opinion into greater respect for the Chinese character, into a willingness to cultivate closer relations with a people whose sense of honor and capacity eventually to serve the causes of civilization are quite equal to our own. Their vices are the same, but some of them are not yet developed upon so grand a scale of national degradation. It is not wonderful that their virtues are quite like those of all the other people who happen to be alive at present.

The reader will be surprised at the chapters which relate to the physical and social condition of the Chinese; their faculty for work; their love of systematic processes; their economy, dexterity, ingenuity, æsthetic feeling; their courage, endurance, and prevailing peaceableness. They have been for two or three thousand years the most painstaking of annalists; the historic sense also is not wanting in them, and it includes a conception, held more clearly than by the most famous ancient nations, that events flow, not only from moral causes, or from divine volition, but from natural law, and that the responsibility of all directors of affairs is exacted by the invisible forces of the universe, by that unnamed and inexpressible influence which suffixes certain results to certain causes.

The author does not fail to notice the defective results of Chinese development. For instance, the elements of the nation's industry have been organized into a most remarkable stability and productiveness, but the failing of Chinese labor begins with a mental inability to apply new methods, fresh maxims of science; the ground has been too tenaciously occupied by a race that has lived in isolation and dependence upon traditional formulas, many of which are excellent and have raised the nation to a grade of well-distributed prosperity, and whose popular value is, in fact, the cause of a temporary unwillingness to admit the results of foreign thought. And this withdrawal or shrinking back for refuge into the old methods has been aggravated by political contact with foreign powers,—by the outrage and injustice, for instance, which attended the selfish attempt of England to force her opium traffic upon the people.

This reminds us that an over-curious Chinaman, experimenting with rice, perhaps two thousand years before the Christian era, stumbled, after the extemporaneous fashion of the alchemists, into the discovery of the spirit which is called *Samshoo*, or "the thrice-fired." As soon as its intoxicating properties became a matter of the public attention, as they did, no doubt, quite speedily, the luckless discoverer was ban-

ished. The Chinese government has always endeavored to protect the people from sources of vicious indulgence; it has maintained a delicate and noble moral sense in screening the primitive native preference for abstinence from the effects of fire-water and opium. The oldest temperance address on record was composed in China about eleven hundred and twenty years before that Christian era which still favors the sending of missionaries and opium to a nation that prefers to be temperate even in its spiritual conceptions. These two articles are not always shipped in the same bottom,—a delicate sense of reserve may be maintained in that matter,—but they both manage to get into the country. Mr. Johnson has a chapter showing clearly, with the accompanying evidence, how futile are the efforts of the missionaries among a people that already possesses an excellent working religion. The opium den has been enlarged by her most Christian Majesty of England.

The Chinaman symbolizes his veneration for a deceased parent by burning before the ancestral shrine some paper that represents a monetary value, as if he meant to be understood as tipping the venerable relative for his journey in foreign parts. At the counter of our common sense these imaginary legal-tenders would be protested, but in China there is no danger that filial obedience will be repudiated; they honor and defer to living parents in a way that would surprise a Californian. He measures Chinese emigration by its incapacity to carry on great operations. It would be a civilizing process to transport a committee of hoodlums through the magnificent system of canals which have been perfected in China during two thousand years, while the hoodlum was in his cradle; to show the Committee cursorily the wonderful system of irrigation which is sustained and watched for the support of some hundreds of millions of people. Perhaps then it might be salutary to rub the hoodlum nose against the Great Wall. But we know what the Californian means by great operations. If John Chinaman could make a "corner" in wheat or Erie, or palm off played-out mines as Bonanzas, he would be pronounced eminently fit to become a citizen. Perhaps it is only for lack of time and opportunity that he does not yet acquire all the virtues of a republic. Give him time, then; be ashamed to obstruct his advance toward all the boasted advantages of the country!

Mr. Johnson notices, and frequently recurs to, the Chinese maxim of the "Middle Path, the Mean," as explanatory of the position and practices of the people, and of the fact that propriety, and not progress, is at last the ruling motive. It distributes the popular life among a great horde of maxims; it is continually balancing, lest the life be

thrown into some antithesis of the practical and the ideal ; it tends to ignore the ideal tendency in favor of the material results of centuries of performance. This appears in the Chinese philosophy as the dualism of the Yang and the Yin. Yang is motive, or initial force ; Yin is that which receives and completes. The antithesis becomes a polarity which creates and sustains all things, and balances all opposites, heaven and earth, the higher and the lower, motion and rest, male and female. The coalition of Yang and Yin into a mean is a constant process of creation. But the author shows quite conclusively that to call the people of China materialistic, in their mental habits or religious tendency, is to misrepresent them. For they believe in the promise and potency of matter, and they have been stating for a thousand years or more, even more distinctly than Prof. Tyndall might be inclined to do, that without mind there is no matter, without matter no mind ; and that both frame an identical creativeness which has evolved all existing things. The Chinese were the earliest Darwinians, so far as they have conceived and stated the idea of a regular succession of natural forms, types of being, and an unbroken process of development. On this interesting point the author brings together important and unexpected evidence.

The volume is so rich in every direction, so replete with surprises of information and deduction, that the reader will not know how to prefer one section to another. The chapters devoted to external relations, government, education, language, are just as minutely filled out as those upon poetry, literature, history, and the ethnic type. A critic would be obliged to exhaust his whole space with merely cataloguing the objects of value which the author puts on show. Perhaps the sections which treat of the different systems of religious belief, and of the schemes of philosophy, or methods of viewing Nature, which underlie them, will attract the greatest interest. Here it is that the author's metaphysical ability and generous mental observation serve his purpose admirably. One is tempted to think that the last word has been said upon Confucius, Mencius, and their various followers. The proofs of a Chinese Theism are clearly made. The narratives of the advent and development of Buddhism into this country of patriarchalism and ancestral religions, of the missionary efforts, and of the early travelers and explorers from the West, are full of novel matter racy presented.

Over this great range of subjects ; this condensation of numerous authorities ; this passage across to all the aspects of the Chinese life, — there reigns an absolute clearness of style, a buoyancy of treatment and of transition. The reader leaves one section, expecting to find that it has been a favorite one with the author, and treated exception-

ally well. But he is floated across to the next upon such a happy ease of statement, such a light superiority to the change of subject and material, that the bulk of the volume cannot daunt, and there is not one topic whose presentation can disappoint. The moral elements which have gone into the making of this book ; the patience, the conscience in consulting authorities and strictly guarding the statements which are derived ; the sincerity and tolerance ; the dread of partisanship ; the love of every just and noble thing ; the sense for the genuine constituents of every religion, — all these are as conspicuous as they are effective. They conspire with a style as transparent as the heart of the writer to furnish us with one of the most important books of this generation. The style is even jocund ; it plays, like a Chinese ball-match, and does not touch the ground. The book must have been a labor of love, kept for years at home, cherished in the long seclusion with delight, and bidden to come forth with pride.

J. W.

2. — *Paper Money, the Money of Civilization. An issue by the State, and a legal tender in payment of taxes.* By JAMES HARVEY. London : Provost & Co., 36 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden. 1877. pp. 247.

IN a book having the words Paper Money printed in large letters on its title, we might naturally expect to find the various kinds of paper money didactically defined, classified, and discussed. Of paper money I would say we might reckon five kinds : Representative, Speculative, Absolute, Fraudulent, Undefined.

1. Representative paper, which is what Lysander Spooner advocates, simply amounts to a title-deed of an individual article of property existing somewhere, or of a definite share in that property. As there is no valuable thing in the world—gold, silver, land, houses, furniture, canals, ships, cattle—that cannot be represented by such paper, and as commercial activity never can reach such a degree as to require more things to be exchanged at one time than actually exist, the only obstacle to the natural supply of the world with such a currency, absolutely sound, and issued by the public or by private parties in the exact measure of the requirements in large or small bills quotable in a free market, is found in the present legislative prohibitions.

2. Speculative paper is paper not representing a thing which exists, nor even a future thing actually included in its causes, as prospective