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. E. BENNY.

VOL. 2, NO. 1.] HONGKONG, JANUARY, 1868. [Price 5s.
(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 organiza-
tion 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
engines that they immediately adopted them.
The Chinese have always been noted for
their love of innovation and their desire to
have the best, and it is not unlikely that the
idea of the European fire-engine came to
them from the East India Company's Factory
in Canton, where fire-fighting apparatus is
used. The Cantonese have always been
referred to as a people who are quick to
adopt innovations, and this is evident in
the case of the fire-engine. The Chinese
are a people who are quick to adopt innova-
tions, and this is evident in the case of the
fire-engine. The Chinese have always been
referred to as a people who are quick to
accept new ideas, and this is evident in the
case of the fire-engine.
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. d. 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 show that certain families, traditionally entitled to 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 Cheung 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 fairness and when the foremost distinctions fell to the utmost scholars. It would there fore 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 to genealogy. 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 Cheung 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 more or less to themselves become scholars. Lastly, are there any maxims or precepts 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 queries at considerable length; greater than could be expected to find a place in the columns of your excellent periodical.

FRANCIS GALTON.

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

GEODETICAL 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, as it is noticed 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 bayas 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 Fukien, have afforded no support to this conclusion, and the geological notes on other parts of China, as far north as Shanghái, 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 licence, so far at least as the southern part of China, from Hainan to the Yang-tzé, is included in his remarks above quoted.

Canton.

THEOS. SAMPSON.

Aug., 1868. NOTES.

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 year 14 to 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 Ping Ti, Prince of Peace?—mentioned by the Emperor in his Chronology of the Chinese empire. It may have been frequently explained, but I have not yet seen a satisfactory solution of the strange coincidence.

L. K. CHI.

Inquirers.

ANTI-MARRIAGE ASSOCIATIONS.—I heard that in some part of the Province of Kwang-tung, and I think in the Dungting, a custom exists among the married girls of forming associations, the members of which each member is pledged to remain unmarried and to contribute mutual aid if need be, to each other's support. Is any foundation for this story, and if so, can any reader of N. d. Q. throw any light on the subject and constitution of these associations? Do the members leave their husbands? The idea is so much opposed to the ordinary notions of the Chinese (true) the voluntary rejection of the matrimonial state must be prompted by some particular local circumstances.

GROWTH OF "HAIR" ON THE SHORES OF THE SEA.—The history of the Ming Dynasty, under the first year of the reign of Sung TI (1426), the following statement is recorded: "The linear measure for the length of a foot is &; in this statement, the character for foot, 丈, translates literally: "At the Capital the point produced hairs a foot and more in length. What is the meaning of this statement? Have we sought in vain among Chinese intelligible explanation.

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

L. K. CHI.

Fochow, 8th August, 1868.

The former account of Penang, and writing a Chinese book respecting early intercourse between Foreigners and the Chinese for the information of friends, I venture to compile all possible information from the papers at my disposal and it is my wish to give the book a future as I possibly can.