A CHINESE FUNERAL.

A Graphic Description of a Chinese Funeral by Our Own Correspondent.

PEKING, CHINA, Feb. 12, 1885.

The three great events of a persons life are said, to be their birth, marriage and death. I believe it is so with the Chinese. Considering these events, I prefer to speak of the latter. In other words I will speak of a Chinese funeral. How well I shall be able to describe this I am not prepared to say, for if you could imagine one's feeling at sight of such performances, you would not wonder if he failed in giving all the minutiæ. The funeral services do not take place until at least from three to five days after the demise, during which time preparations are being made for the grand send off of the spirit. If the house is small it is made longer, or perhaps higher, by bamboo poles, applied in the way of scaffolding. These are covered by matting so as to make as many rooms as desireable. When completed it makes a very neat appearance. In one room the coffin stands surrounded by all of their curious objects, the idispensible incense on all occasions. Besides other things there stands a large cart and horse, life size, and all the things which the spirit will need to make a good appearance in the new world, (these are all made of paper), and then when the spirit returns the night of the third day these are all burned in front of the house, amid all manner of ceremonies. The spirit having received the send off the funeral will follow in a few days. In the absence of hearses the preparations are much more imposing. Here the body is carried to its resting place in a catafalque, which are of various sizes. I have seen some which were in the following proportions, viz: Two crimson poles, each about 30 feet long and six inches in diameter, surmounted by a sort of pavilion, rich in colors and ornaments of black, red, and gilt, which gives it rather a grand appearance. This was borne by 64 men, 16 at either corner, it being so arranged by the addition of small poles that they walk in fours, and thus are enabled to walk very gracefully along. The mourners usually follow behind in sedan chairs, on wheelbarrows or on foot. The entire performance is like other countries and depends upon how well off the subject of the occasion was, or how much is friends cared to lavish upon him for his journey to the happier flower garden beyond the setting sun. In many cases the friends do not accompany the deceased to his resting place, but contract with the priests to secure for him a lucky abiding place, also to provide as many mourners a will give respect and solemnity to the occasion, and they act as masters of ceremonies in a way that will drive many to tears. If a good round price has been paid, the ceremonies are much more impressive. As they march through the streets there are two coolies with drums, and two with gongs, and about every ten steps they apply their stuffed clubs with such violent desperation that the living stand aghast, and you almost think a thunderbolt has cracked your ears. Then comes a hoard of standard bearers with banners and sycee to assist the priests in carrying out his respects in behalf of the friends of the deceased. The mourners are professionals and employed on all occasions to wail, howl, and wring their hands and handkerchiefs (which are said to have been previously dipped in a basin of water.) The mourners are dressed in white whilst all the coolies are uniformed in such a style as to make one smile at the ridiculousness of such proceedings. At the crossing of each street the coolies stop to rest, as their burden is very heavy and they become weary. Here the priest drops upon his knees and with head upon the ground he remains so until some paper sycee is burned around him. In many instances the priest claims that the dragon has followed him and has possession of that man's soul, and will not release him without some of the genuine sycee, which means money, and thus the poor heathen is again robbed of his money which he so much stands in need of, by giving it to those wicked priests who so wickedly deceive them. But no sooner has the money been placed in the hands of the priest than the dragon is satisfied and gone, and the procession moves on as evidence that the dragon is pacified. Sycee is the name of the coin of this country. It is a chip or block of silver or gold and is cast in the shape of a Chinese lady's shoe, and are in length from one to thirty inches, and way from 1 to 300 ounces. Thus upon funeral occasions the sycee that is buried is only picture money bought for the occasion, and after pleading with Joss for his blessing they chuck down to him this worthless stuff, thus actully cheating him out of his blessing. But to the priests must come down the actual coin. Imagine my feelings at sight of my first Chinese funeral when I heard the squeaking and squealing bugles, thunderings of those gongs, and saw the piles of burning paper, mockery of money, with the moans and wails of women filling the air with terror. Could any one whose heart was less than adamant look upon such a scene as this without being moved to pity and express sighs, and even drop tears of sincerity beyond question? You stand aghast at each sound, and linger to catch the mournful wail as it approaches you. The inanimate remains of a dear father or mother have already passed, encased in the usual manner complimentary upon such occasions. You can not but believe that the elderly woman robed in a snow white garb, while her face is drawn in to all kinds of contortions of grief is otherwise than the wife of the household, the mother of those young ladies who follow in that solemn train, on wheelbarrows, broken hearted and lonely at the death of that parental adviser, to their last resting place. Their sensitive cries and grief were all in keeping with their mother. Imagine my surprise, if you can, when a friend told me that those mourners were not friends, but that they were only professionals employed and paid for the occasion. And thus it is that the third and last event of man is celebrated in this celestial kingdom, and one after another they are carried to their resting place outside the city, for no one is ever buried inside the city wall. This wall is 60 feet high, 50 feet thick at its base and 30 at the top. There are numerous roadways reaching to the top from the inside so it is a fine place to go to walk and to see all over the city and country around, a description of which might be of interest but as time will not admit I will reserve that for some future time. With good health and prospects I remain your friend L. D. DENNEY.

A Positivist's Review of Present Conditions.

There is everywhere a revival of the spirit of national aggrandizement and imperial ambition. Under the now avowed head of the great German dictator, the nations of Europe are running a race to extend their borders by conquest and annexation among the weak and uncivilized. There is to-day a scramble for Africa, as there was formerly a scramble for Asia; and the scramble in Asia, or in Polynesia, is only less urgent for the moment, in that the rivalry is just now the keenest in Africa. But in Asia, in Africa, in Polynesia, the strong nations of Europe are struggling to found empires by violence, fraud, or aggression.

Three distinct wars are being waged in the East, and in Africa alone our soldiers and our Government are asserting the rule of the sword in the North, on the East, in the center, on the South, and on the West at the same time. Five years ago we were told that for England at least there was to be some lull in this career of blood and ambition. It was only, we see, a party cry, a device to upset a government. There has been no lull, no pause in the scramble for empire. The empire swells year by year; year by year fresh wars break out; year by year the burden of empire increases whether Disraeli or Gladstone, Liberal or Conservative, are the actual wielders of power. The agents of the aggression, the critics, have changed sides; the Jingoes of yesterday are the grumblers of to-day, and the peaceful patriots of yesterday are the Jingoes of to-day.

The empire and its appendages are even vaster in 1885 than in 1880; its responsibilities are greater; its risks and perplexities deeper; its enemies stronger and more threatening. And in the midst of this crisis those who condemn this policy are fewer; their protests come few and faint. The Christian sects can see nothing unrighteous in Mr. Gladstone; the Liberal caucuses stifle any murmur of discontent, and force those who spoke out against Zulu, Afghan, and Transvaal wars to justify, by the tyrant's plea of necessity, the massacre of Egyptian fellahs and the extermination of Arab patriots. Those who mouthed most loudly about Jingoism are now the foremost in their appeals to national vanity. And the parasites of the parasites of our great Liberal statesman can make such hubbub in his utter absence of a policy that they drive him by sheer clamor from one adventure into another. For nearly four years now we have continuously protested against the policy pursued in Egypt.

Year after year we have told Mr. Gladstone that it was blackening his whole career and covering our country with shame. There is a monotony about our protests. But, when there is a monotony in evil doing, there must alike be monotony in remonstrance. We complain that the blood and treasure of this nation should be used in order to flay the peasantry of the Nile, in the interest of usurers and speculators. We complain that we practically annex a people whom we will not govern and cannot benefit. We are boldly for what in the slang of the day is called "scuttling" out of Egypt. We think the robber and the oppressor should scuttle as quickly as possible—that he is certain to scuttle some day. We complain of massacring an innocent people merely to give our traders and money dealers larger or safer markets. We complain of all the campaigns and battles as wanton, useless, and unjust massacres. We especially condemn the war in the Soudan as wanton and unjust even in the avowal of the very Ministers who are urging it. The defender of Khartoum was a man of heroic qualities and beautiful nature; but the cause of civilization is not served by launching among savages a sort of Pentateuch knight errant. And we seriously complain that the policy of a great country in a great issue of right and wrong should be determined by schoolboy shouting over the feats of our English Garibaldi.—*Frederick Harrison, in the Fortnightly Review.*

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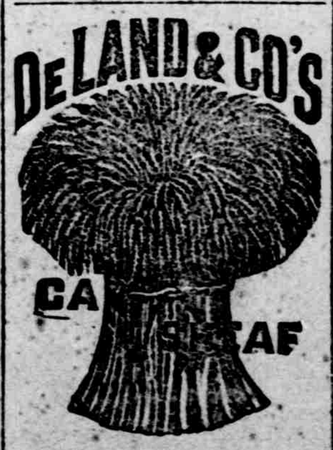

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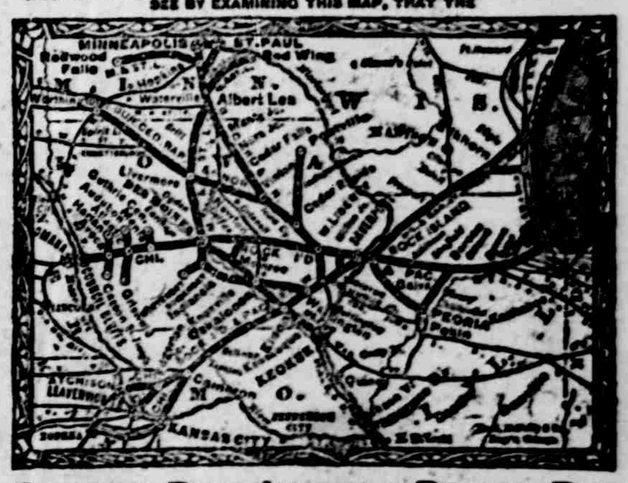

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