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EXECUTIONS IN CHINA.

I saw no executions in China, but they are very frequent, and occasionally very cruel. About a year before I arrived in the country, the town of Shanghai had been occupied by the rebels, and held for a considerable time against the Imperial forces. When the place was taken, about five per cent. of the captives were reserved to be tortured, and all the remainder were executed in a peculiarly Chinese style. Their tails were tied to a bamboo supported above the head, and the neck was then neatly cut through by one stroke of a sword, the body falling to the ground, and the head remaining suspended in a convenient position for subsequent collection. Many thousands of persons were thus disposed of, and their heads packed in baskets, to be exhibited in public situations. I saw two or three over the gates of the city. The Chinese, like other Oriental nations, seem to show great indifference to pain, and even death; whether inflicted by or upon themselves. Suicides are common, from the slightest motives; and the legal punishments are of frightful severity. Another proof of this, to us, inexplicable peculiarity is the well-known fact that vicarious punishment is recognised by the Chinese law, and that substitutes may be hired to undergo every legal penalty, even death itself. An additional fact, corroborating this view, is, that great pirates and robbers have been frequently known to surrender themselves for trial, when a large reward had been offered for their apprehension; in order that their families might be rendered comfortable for life by the price of their blood. This singular obuseness to bodily suffering is found, more or less, among all Orientals. The most fearful tortures will rarely extract an avowal of guilt, or the betrayal of a confederate. Captain Marryat tells a story of a Malay, whom he caught, when on service in the Eastern seas. The captain was nearly sure that his captive possessed certain information which he wished to obtain, and finding all bribery and gentle means unavailing to make him speak, finally threatened him with death, and ordered a file of marines to be got ready for the purpose. The man was not in the least disturbed, but requested leave to finish a cigar which he was smoking; and permission being given, he sat down in a port for the purpose. In a few minutes, however, he threw his cigar away, though but half consumed, complaining that it did not draw well, and at once began to make preparations for his own death, by binding up his long-hair in a knot, on the top of his head, and unwrapping the dhotee, a long cloth worn about the loins. Folding his dhotee, and laying it on the deck to catch his blood, he knelt down, and waited with perfect unconcern for the fatal stroke. Captain Marryat, finding that even this means was ineffectual in overcoming the obstinacy of his prisoner, was unwilling to take life unnecessarily, and had him sent ashore, after giving him some slight presents, in admiration of his pluck.