

SECRET SOCIETIES IN CHINA.

The *Overland China Mail* gives from the report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Penang riots of 1867, and a work by Mr. Gustave Schlegel, a Chinese interpreter in the service of the Dutch Government, an interesting account of the working of secret societies in the Celestial empire. It appears that toward the close of the seventeenth century a conspiracy against the newly formed Manchow sovereignty of China was set on foot by some Buddhist monks, and that the secret societies which have since flourished in China or the Straits possessions have found it convenient to assert a direct affiliation with this original brotherhood. Few political plots in China are wholly free, indeed, from the participation of members of the Buddhist clergy, whose idle lives and mastery of superstitious formulas render them extremely prone to engage in illegal enterprises of this description. Poor and unemployed scholars—the pest of the Chinese body politic—form another important constituent of seditious brotherhoods; and between the two, an unlimited supply of mystic symbolism and of pedantic verbiage becomes available for concealing the real objects of such associations under a fantastic and alluring garb. Thus it is found that the oaths, passwords, catechisms, and manifestoes of the secret societies existing at the present day in the Straits settlements uniformly allege, as their pervading design, a combination for the purpose of overthrowing the present dynasty in China and restoring the glorious house of Ming. Scores upon scores of pages of tedious verbiage, such as only the dull pedantry of a Chinese would have the patience to invent, may be seen in Mr. Schlegel's work, in which the changes are constantly rung on this one idea; yet nothing is further from the minds of the actually initiated than any political commotion in their native land. To them it matters little who sits on the Chinese throne; nine-tenths of them, in all probability, repeat these wearisome formulas with no inkling of their meaning; but in a political conspiracy one watchword is as good as another, and "Heaven protect the Ming" is accordingly perpetuated among a body of men whose principal aim it is to evade the action of British or Dutch courts of justice.

The Penang Commissioners found no less than four secret societies to be flourishing in that island, two of which were composed of Chinese and two of Malay and Kling (natives of India) members. Each of the latter associations appears to have allied itself with one of the Chinese societies, and the consequence was that, when a quarrel which had long been brewing between members of two of the rival leagues burst out in July, 1867, the entire native population of the island became speedily involved in an internecine warfare. The minute inquiry instituted by the Commissioners at sittings which lasted throughout a period of nearly twelve months elicited the mass of valuable information comprised in the published evidence, and particularly in the voluminous documents forming the appendix to their report lately published. In these last-named papers particulars relating to the constitution of the secret leagues are given which correspond in every material point with Mr. Schlegel's revelations; and by their assistance we are enabled to lift the mask from these seditious leagues, and to discover beneath their flowery professions of patriotism the vulgar machinery of rapine, smuggling, and murder. Among the "instructions for members" translated in the appendix to the Penang report, we find that Rule X. lays down as a law of brotherhood that "if the members of our society commit any crime they will be provided with the means to make their escape, and they must not be allowed to be captured and punished. If when trying to make their escape they apply to some of the elders for aid, and such elders neglect to afford them such aid, and they be captured in consequence of such neglect, then the guilt of such delinquent elders will be unpardonable." Again, Rule VIII. provides that, "if outsiders commit any wrong to the members of our society, the Congsee will inquire into it, and if the fact be proved then we will go forward and fight them with all our might, so that others will not laugh us to scorn." In Mr. Schlegel's translation, the regulations he found in force in Java are given in seventy-two articles, being three times more numerous than those of the Penang Society, but the groundwork in both cases is the same. Both proclaim combination for mutual defence and defiance to the rest of the world as the real object of the society; and it is amusing to note that, notwithstanding the monstrous array of rubbish about the glorious Ming dynasty which appears in the ceremonial of the society, its framers have not condescended to incorporate even a pretence at political objects in the business-like regulations they have drawn up.

The *China Mail* adds that the disclosures made in this report are not destitute of interest for Australian Governments. From Brisbane to Adelaide there are Chinese gathered in townships, and scattered in the country, in commercial cities and in mining districts, among whom the traditions and ceremonies of brotherhood are preserved. It will be no disadvantage to the Australian police if they learn the secret signs and watchwords described in the report of the Penang Commissioners. The same remark will apply to California, where the Chinese are probably more numerous than in the southern colonies of Great Britain.

and easily submitting to rule; the Papuans are highly excitable, boisterous in manner, free of speech and gesture, and impatient of all restraint. Finally, the Malays, despite the bad reputation they have acquired, treat strangers with civility and hospitality, while the Papuans, in New Guinea at any rate, massacre any chance visitor without ceremony. After all that one has heard of the treachery and bloodthirstiness of the Malays, it is not a little surprising to find that Mr. Wallace is able, after a lengthened experience, to give them a very different character. He went, almost unattended, from island to island; he lived for months among their savage inhabitants, his life in their hands and at their disposal; and he felt, on the whole, rather more secure than in the streets of London. Indeed, if we do not misinterpret his concluding reflections, he would draw a comparison between the morals of an Englishman and a Malay not very flattering to the former. From the characteristics of the Malay and Papuan races their future destinies may be augured. The Malays accept foreign domination, and thrive and multiply under it. The island of Java, favoured by every gift of nature, is also the scene of one of the greatest triumphs of colonization. The population increased between 1826 and 1850 from 5,500,000 to 9,500,000, and in 1865 amounted to more than 14,000,000, showing an increase of 50 per cent. in fifteen years. The average number of inhabitants to the square mile in 1865 was 368, or "just double that of the populous and fertile Bengal Presidency as given in Thornton's 'Gazetteer of India,' and fully one-third more than that of Great Britain and Ireland at the last census." On the other hand the Papuan race, superior physically to the Malay, seems doomed to extinction from its unwillingness to harmonize with any foreign element. The great island of New Guinea is practically closed to foreigners by the merciless and ineradicable hostility of the natives, and when the necessities of the world require its colonization, every inch of ground will be contested and defended to the uttermost. The Malay content to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, may survive; but the warlike Papuan, "who will not submit to national slavery or to domestic servitude, must disappear before the white man as surely as do the wolf and the tiger."

But we must not forget that ethnology was not the main object of Mr. Wallace's travels. The Malay Archipelago is not only comparatively new ground to a traveller, but is also an extraordinary field for the naturalist, more especially for the entomologist. Mr. Wallace is an enthusiastic entomologist—without enthusiasm no one would bring himself to handle insects of grotesque and repulsive appearance, and of unpleasant powers of biting and stinging. But when a man can sincerely congratulate himself on the discovery of a "superb bug" in his sleeping apartment, his enthusiasm can no longer be called in question. And as is often the case when people have no fear, every creeping thing seemed to know and respect Mr. Wallace. Enormous spiders, with great hairy bodies, lurked in the folds of his bed curtains and stared at him; centipedes sheltered themselves under his pillow; millipedes, more attentive still, would get into his hair; playful scorpions, with tails lifted up on high, used to pop out of his boxes and from under his boards, and gambol round him like a body guard; yet after living twelve years in the tropics, he was never once bitten or stung. Only the irrepressible ants gave him moments of trouble and annoyance. Out of six kinds of ants of unwearied industry and insatiable appetite five will devour everything not isolated by water, and the sixth can swim. As soon as Mr. Wallace arrived at a house his friends the ants arrived also. At Dorey, in New Guinea, they visited him in large numbers, built a nest just over his head, and constructed numerous tunnels down every post in order to facilitate more intimate communications. They carried off the insects he was preparing from under his nose, they tore them off the cards on which he had gummied them, and devoured them, insects first and cards afterwards. They swarmed over his hands and face and his body, and when he put up his work and went to bed they went to bed with him. Yet, says Mr. Wallace, placidly, these were by no means a voracious kind of ants. They were rather ascetics in their nature; but then, good heavens! what must a really voracious ant be? Some idea of the multiplicity of insect life in these regions may be gathered from the fact that in one order alone, the Longicorn beetles, Mr. Wallace collected specimens of a thousand species, of which nine hundred were previously undescribed, and new to European cabinets. On a space of cleared forest in Borneo covering only a single square mile, he collected in a few months 2,000 distinct kinds of beetles, and on twenty-six consecutive nights he caught 1,386 moths, about two-thirds of which were distinct species. Butterflies also abounded, but the more brilliant kinds were not everyday prizes, and so great was Mr. Wallace's excitement on first securing a specimen of the ornithoptera or birdwinged butterfly, whose gorgeous colouring of velvety black and fiery orange is of unique beauty, that on taking it out of his net and opening its glorious wings, his heart began to beat violently, the blood rushed to his head, and, he says, "I felt much more like fainting than I have done when in apprehension of sudden death." And similar sensations affected him at a later period of his travels, on capturing a specimen of the "ornithoptera poseidon," with wings seven inches across, of glossy black and brilliant green, a golden body, and crimson breast.

The title-page reminds us that Mr. Wallace gives special prominence to his experiences with the orang utan and the bird of paradise. The great man-like ape (*Simia Satyrus*) is found only in certain districts of Borneo and Sumatra. It is an animal of prodigious strength, but perfectly harmless except when attacked. It lives almost entirely on fruits, and does not avoid the presence of man. It was desirable, perhaps, to secure a few specimens, otherwise Mr. Wallace, whose instincts are scientific rather than sportsmanlike, would no doubt have been glad to have been saved from inflicting unnecessary torture on so inoffensive an animal. The mias, as the natives call the orang utan, is exceedingly tenacious of life, and Mr. Wallace is evidently not a first-class shot; consequently we read, with no satisfaction but rather with disgust, of one which remained alive and struggled to retain his position on a sheltered branch after both legs were broken, one hip joint and the root of the spine were

completely shattered, and too bullets were flattened in his neck and jaws; and of another which "began climbing a tree with considerable facility," after a bullet had entered the lower part of the abdomen and completely traversed the body, fracturing the first cervical vertebra, and remaining flattened in his tongue. We are glad to get over these scenes of bungling butchery, and come to Mr. Wallace's humane attempt to educate a young mias. This little thing lived for three months in his possession, and appears to have required much the same attentions as an infant. When handled or nursed it would be quiet, but when laid down by itself it would begin to cry like a child. Mr. Wallace made a cradle for it, and washed it morning and night, and dried it with a towel, and combed and brushed its hair, all these operations giving it exceeding pleasure. He likewise fed it with a spoon, and if the food was not quite to its liking it would get into a tremendous passion; but if it was approved of, it would lick its lips and exhibit its satisfaction by the most singular grimaces. "When left dirty, or hungry, or otherwise neglected, it would scream violently till attended to. If no one was in the house, or its cries were not attended to, it would be quiet after a little while, but the moment it heard a footstep would begin again harder than ever." Want of its natural food and the unaccustomed confinement soon caused the little creature to pine away, and thus Mr. Wallace was prevented from completing its education. Of the eighteen species of birds of paradise at present described, one of which was discovered by Mr. Wallace himself, fourteen are known to inhabit New Guinea, and only a few of these have been seen alive by Europeans. The skins are prepared by the natives in the interior and sent to the coast, but at present it is impossible to penetrate into the regions which these exquisite birds inhabit. Five separate voyages did Mr. Wallace undertake, each occupying the greater part of a year in its execution, in search of birds of paradise; yet in all that time he was only able to obtain specimens of five out of the fourteen species belonging to the New Guinea district. Readers have only to look at his glowing accounts to understand his ardent desire to obtain specimens of these wonderful birds, "whose exquisite beauty of form and colour and strange developments of plumage are calculated to excite the wonder and admiration of the most civilized and the most intellectual of mankind, and to furnish inexhaustible materials for study to the naturalist and for speculation to the philosopher." But one can scarcely help smiling at Mr. Wallace's plaintive regrets that such lovely creatures should live and die in dark gloomy forests, unknown and unseen, "with no intelligent eye to gaze upon their loveliness; to all appearance a wanton waste of beauty." If the bird of paradise could understand the bearings of the case he might take a different view of the question. If he could know that after the intelligent eye had gazed on his loveliness sufficiently, the intelligent hand would be forthwith raised to take his life, and that the penalty for being too beautiful would be certain death, he would probably prefer to remain in his present obscurity, and live out the length of days allotted to him by nature.

But, apart from the birds of paradise, Mr. Wallace's journeys must have been successful enough to satisfy his most sanguine expectations. Nor does he appear to have experienced much hardship or privation. Almost everywhere he went he was well received, and he cruised about from island to island, sometimes in a sailing boat, sometimes in a native prau, with an immunity from danger remarkable in those pirate-haunted waters. Occasionally he got a lift in a Dutch steamer, and in the dietary scale is as liberal on all of them as on that which conveyed him from Macassar to Banda and Amboyna, they must be desirable conveyances for tourists of large appetite. At 6 A.M. cups of tea and coffee were served. From seven to eight there was a light breakfast of tea, eggs, sardines, &c. The "et cetera" is suggestive. At ten, Madeira gin and bitters were served as a whet for the substantial eleven o'clock breakfast, which differed only from dinner in the absence of soup—a distinction, in fact, without a difference. At three P.M. more tea and coffee; at five, bitters "et cetera," at half-past six, a good dinner with beer and claret; at eight more tea and coffee. "Between whiles beer and soda-water are supplied when called for, so there is no lack of little gastronomical excitements to while away the tedium of a sea voyage." Mr. Wallace is accurate in his remark that these arrangements "are somewhat different from those on board English steamers." Moreover, the Dutch seem to have communicated to the native populations under their control a knowledge of the truth that if a man does not eat neither can he work. Mr. Wallace was entertained in Celebes by a native chief whose father wore nothing but a strip of bark, and lived in a hut raised on poles and decorated with human heads. "The dinner was excellent. Fowls cooked in various ways; wild pig roasted, stewed, and fried; a fricassee of bats; potatoes, rice, and other vegetables; all served on good china, with finger glasses and fine napkins, and abundance of good claret and beer, seemed to me rather curious at the table of a native chief on the mountains of Celebes." But, in truth, throughout his wanderings, Mr. Wallace seems to have had something more than average good luck, and, as far as we can judge, he deserved it by exhibiting a regard for the prejudices and peculiarities of those among whom he sojourned that won their confidence and their co-operation. He has compressed into two moderately sized volumes the record of the events and discoveries of twelve years, and we can truly say that there is not a word wasted. Indeed, if anything, there is too little description of scenery; and, considering that the Malayan islands have not yet been "done" by professional bookmakers, we would have welcomed more extended details on this head. It is, of course, the duty of a reviewer to find fault somewhere, so we will complain of Mr. Wallace's dislike to the useful and unoffending comma, and will assure him that the eye is distressed with such sentences as that about the "strength lightness smoothness straightness roundness and hollowness" of the bamboo. But in exchange we will thank him for having made his most interesting and most valuable volumes additionally useful to readers by the insertion of those often-omitted items, good maps and good indices.