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*"TEN YEARS TRAVELS." **

IN these days of flying trips and scrambling note-books painstaking travellers meet a good deal of discouragement when they return home with accumulated experiences. Readers of travels are being spoiled for everything but the freshness of superficial impressions, and are apt to do but little justice to deliberate research and reflection. We are inclined to fear that Mr. Thompson's most interesting volume may supply an illustration of the truth of this. He has been busy for ten years in gathering his materials; he has wandered in districts and among cities that have been seldom or never visited by Europeans; he has amassed much new information and corrected many errors; he has endured hardship and even very considerable risk. He seems to be a good linguist and philologist; he is a botanist; he is evidently a man of the world, with the faculty of making his way among foreigners; he travelled as an artist and photographer, and his book is freely illustrated with the fruits of his artistic labours. Yet, with so much that should make it popular, we doubt whether it will be so; for Mr. Thompson has been a good deal anticipated, and, indeed, has partly anticipated himself. He has already published a larger work on China and its people, of which this present one is in some measure a reproduction. Then Cambodia and those famous temples at Nakhon Wat so unfamiliar to the English public until the other day, have been brought before them in an admirably illustrated volume, and its author's visit must have been subsequent to that of Mr. Thompson. In another instance Mr. Thompson's own photographs have been coolly appropriated—without acknowledgment, too—by a lady who certainly enjoyed exceptional opportunities of informing herself as to Siam and its society; while the very comprehensiveness of his subjects, the amount of ground they cover, and the time and care devoted to them have all contributed to crowd his pages, until, with all its intrinsic value and interest, his solid volume is less easy reading than we could have wished.

We may say that its subject is chiefly the Chinamen, in and out of their own country. Of late years, as we know, there has been a rapidly growing exodus from the Flowery Land. Even in utterly uncongenial climates and among races actively antipathetical, the Chinese immigrants, in spite of their vices, have made good their footing in the labour markets, thanks to their virtues of industry and frugality. But they are overflowing the countries adjacent to their own, among populations that are somewhat akin to them in blood and habits of life. In Indo-China and the Malay Peninsula the Chinese not only till the ground and reclaim the wilderness under the direction of European colonists, but they have settled in great numbers in the towns. They turn their hands to anything; and many of them who have amassed a little capital have been directing their attention to commercial pursuits. Once started, there is no stopping them. They lose nothing by neglecting business, very seldom venture rashly, never throw away a chance. Parsimonious as they are during their early struggles, they have both the will and the heart to spend when they begin to prosper. On one occasion Mr. Thompson was surprised to see a Chinaman, who had been obsequiously doing service at his counter, step into a handsome carriage of his own that whirled him away to his villa in the neighbourhood. Men of this sort have a decided advantage over Europeans. The air suits them; they escape the languor that paralyzes the energies of their rivals; they naturally dispense with the pernicious luxuries that Europeans grow dependent on by way of stimulant. They increase and multiply and bring up families about them. It is probable that they will have a great deal to say to the future of those artificially fostered colonies and semi-barbarous kingdoms, and they might make their position stronger still were it not for one amiable weakness. They suffer severely from homesickness. Like the French in Algeria, they feel like pilgrims in the country of their tem-

porary adoption. When a well-to-do Chinaman falls sick, his first thought is to have his corpse safely consigned to the soil of his fathers, and during his lifetime a perpetual contest goes on between the pleasures of acquisition abroad and the longing for tranquil enjoyment at home. When he has got together a decent competency, he will leave a country of law and absolute security for the land of his birth, although he knows that in China he must pay down a large sum to begin with on the speculation that he may be allowed to enjoy the rest.

Yet except to those to whom associations endear it, the Celestial Empire is anything but attractive, and to any one who has habituated himself to a more civilized and assured existence, we should say the state of society there must be something intolerable. Mr. Thompson has anything but a prejudice against the people, yet he tells us that they have learned very little notwithstanding our well-meant attempts at bombarding them into intelligence and sympathy. They have taken kindly to our military tastes, and have established an arsenal or two, with some workshops of war-material that are not discreditable to their imitative powers. They can boast of some statesmen who are apparently enlightened, although it is hard indeed to plumb the intellect or get at the real manner of thinking of Chinese who are high in office. But the general ignorance is as dense as ever, the prejudice as inveterate, the fanaticism as unreasoning. Their terror has guaranteed to Europeans a certain security in the great centres of population towards the coasts; while in the more remote districts inland the people are stolidly good-humoured, unless their susceptibilities are excited. But in the one case and the other the stranger treads on volcanic ground. If those who know us best are afraid of us, they generally hate us as well. When Mr. Thompson visited the ruins of the Imperial Summer Palace near Peking, he discovered how bitter were the feelings generated by that deed of destruction. The peasants and villagers, who are little acquainted with the "foreign devils," are comparatively indifferent; but were their ignorance to be enlightened by the fanatical teachers of their religion, they might rise in a moment with one consent; and it must be remembered that the Chinese are regardless of their lives and reckless even of immediate consequences. A bad state of feeling exists in great measure for those of their countrymen who have been making fortunes away from home. The rich new comers are a prey for the grasping officials and objects of dislike and envy to the people about them. And even the way of living in China must seem rude and comfortless to them, however it may have been gilded by old recollections. Roads, for the most part, there may be said to be none, and the seas and rivers, which are the great highways of traffic, swarm with pirates. The inns are few and filthy. The great city of Peking is the shadow of its former self. Sham guns bristle along the antiquated fortifications. Rows of showy shops are supported chiefly by the spendthrift lavishness of speculating and extortionate officials. On the other hand, the squalor and misery are excessive. In the winter naked beggars are found lying dead under the gateways; carts go round regularly to collect the corpses of infants too young to make it worth while to bury them with ceremony—a terrible convenience in a land where female infanticide is so rife. The troop and guards of the Emperor herd in "acres of hovels," and "filth seems to be deposited like tribute before the very palace gates." The streets, deeply buried in dust or mud, are choked with a double line of traffic; occasionally they are obstructed altogether by hoardings, and they are always skirted by ditches or sewers, where fatal accidents are far from uncommon. Still, the municipal authorities show so far a sense of shame that when the Emperor does go beyond his palace an attempt is made at cleansing the Augean stable, and even booths and stalls that are practically permanent erections are cleared out of the way for the time being. Yet the Governor of the capital is the famous Prince Kurg, an uncle of the reigning monarch, "a man esteemed by all who know him, quick in apprehension, comparatively liberal in his views, and regarded by some as the head of that small party of politicians who favour progress in China."

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in Mr. Thompson's volume is that devoted to his visit to Formosa. It is more than 200 years since the Chinese made the island too hot for the Dutch traders, but now the European firms on the mainland are again beginning to establish branches there. The infant settlement is at the port of Takow. At the capital, Tai-wan-fu, twenty-five miles distant, the remains of the Dutch forts are still to be seen. Tai-wan-fu is sufficiently thriving, having a population of 75,000. And the interior of the country is well worth seeing, although the travelling is often very difficult. The mountain scenery is magnificent, and Mr. Thompson gives us some idea of it in one of the best bits of description in his book:—"At one place a mountain stream leaping out of some dark chasm tumbled in foam over the rocks and was lost again in the forest; and everywhere around us we could see that the same Power who clothed the mountains with a mantle of evergreen verdure, embroidered by the sunset with purple and gold, had not left the minutest fissure in the rocks without some special grace of its own. There, too, in flowers, ferns, and mosses we found a modest world of microscopic beauty. The grandeur of this region during the wet season must baffle description. Then a thousand cataracts, veiled in vapour and adorned with rainbow hues, leap from the mountain sides, roaring and tumbling in their downward course to the broad river." As for the aboriginal tribes, Mr. Thompson found them simple and hospitable, manly and independent if rude in their bearing, and with small affection for their Chinese masters. The Japanese, as he thinks, would find little difficulty in gaining over these formidable allies, thereby establishing an effectual thorn in the sides of their Celestial enemies. And we are inclined to trust his impressions, for he seems to be careful in coming to conclusions, and certainly he spared no pains in informing himself either directly or at secondhand. In short, his book gives us the idea that it is thoroughly trustworthy, and undoubtedly he has added a good deal to our knowledge of the countries in which he made his ten years' sojourn.

* "Ten Years' Travels, Adventures, and Residence Abroad. The Straits of Malacca, Indo-China, and China." By J. Thompson, F.R.G.S. (London: Sampson Low and Co. 1875.)