

FAST AND SURE.

STRONG in the faith of woman
 I lift mine eyes to thine,
 And feel thou art a true man
 To love as fond as mine,
 Fond as the flower that turneth
 To where the sunbeams shine.

What need of words revealing
 All thou dost know full well?
 True love hath no concealing,
 And eyes will secrets tell,
 Love firm as rocks still braving
 Unmoved the ocean's swell.

Within thy hand now laying
 My hand I place secure,
 Nor fear nor doubt betraying;
 My faith is fast and sure—
 Fast as the twining ivy,
 As oaks that storms endure.

Nay, if my pulses flutter,
 'Tis not the throb of fear;
 My lips no word could utter
 Of doubt while thou art near;
 So let my stay be ever
 Thine arm so strong and dear.

Yes—draw me to thee nearer,
 And whispering sweet and low,
 In accents that are dearer
 Than chiming water's flow,
 Tell me the love thou feelest
 No change can ever know.

Oh! thus upon thee leaning,
 As woman ever should,
 Thy heart may learn the meaning
 Of trustful womanhood,
 Leaning on man her weakness,
 With strength to be endued.

JOHN FRANCIS WALLER.

THE ISLAND SUBURB OF FOOCHOW.



ANYWHERE in all the East
 have I found a pleasanter
 and more genial community
 than on this green isle—the
 “foreign settlement” of
 Foochow—where English
 and Scotch, German and
 American residents combine
 to form such a kindly,
 cheery society. France,
 too, was pleasantly represented
 at the Consulate
 and at the Arsenal, but
 the duties of the consul
 cannot be very onerous, as
 French interests at Foochow
 are even smaller than
 at other Chinese ports. At
 Shanghai, France owns five
 mercantile houses, at Canton
 two, at Hong Kong one,
 but in Foochow not one;
 indeed, her footing in this

country is wellnigh as slight
 as that of Russia, which
 only owns seven mercantile
 houses in all China, whereas
 Germany has fifty, and England
 no less than 289! In fact,
 the Frenchman is a variety
 of the foreign barbarian
 which the average Chinaman
 can hardly distinguish as
 a separate nationality,
 only 224 specimens of the
 race having established
 themselves among the
 450,000,000 owners of
 the soil.

Of course, therefore, it is quite impossible for the people in general to discriminate between Frenchmen and any other foreigners, and herein lies a source of danger which may only too probably be turned to account by the *litterati* and small gentry—a class notoriously unprincipled in the display of their abhorrence of foreigners, and who, having small deference to the will of their own rulers, and moreover possessing a wonderful power of appealing to the grossly superstitious fears of the mob, are quite capable of stirring them up to an indiscriminate crusade against the whole lot of Europeans, without any regard for nationality, leaving their rulers to settle the subsequent difficulties at their leisure. So the foreigners—at Foochow in particular—have very good reason for anxiety at the present time.

My own impressions of the district were happily stored ere the thunder of French guns had disturbed the peaceful atmosphere, and when life on the green isle was peculiarly unruffled. Picnics by land and by water were the favourite form of social gathering in this beautiful district, but the usual routine of evening amusements was by no means neglected, and dinner parties and evening assemblies were kept up briskly. Occasionally a company of gentlemen favoured their friends with a Christy Minstrel concert; but the crowning entertainment of the Foochow season was a very amusing entertainment at the French Consulate. Many and wonderful were the costumes which electrified the astonished Chinese coolies, accustomed to see their employers in such very sedate apparel, but now required to carry such very remark-

able transformations. Imagine their astonishment at seeing their grave master appear disguised as Punch, as large as life, and admirably got up, or to know that he was concealed within a gigantic black bottle, or within a tall, six-storeyed pagoda made of cardboard! There were Italian peasants, charity school-girls in mob-caps, and mediæval Britons, French exquisites and Tunisian nobles; but I think that the most amusing characters were the "Twin Baby Brothers," acted by two fair, rather fat, young men, with smooth faces and fresh complexions. They were dressed exactly alike as French babies, in blue turban hats, blue shoes, silver Chinese necklaces, frilled muslin dresses, and pinafores with pockets, one containing a little Punchinello and the other a feeding bottle, which was occasionally replenished from the pail of a pretty milk-maid. These two toddled about, each dragging a ridiculous little cart, and chattering French baby-talk, greatly to the edification of the company.

On the following day the colony reminded itself of home customs by getting up a most orthodox flower-show for the encouragement of all the gardeners, to say nothing of amateur competition, and very beautiful flowers and vegetables were thus collected. I confess that to me the most interesting event of the afternoon was one which was not in the official programme, namely, meeting an immense procession of the townsfolk, who had gone some distance to welcome a successful student on his return from one of the great annual examinations in Chinese classics and Confucian fossils, a knowledge of which is deemed so important that the same men return to Canton or Peking year after year, till they are grey-headed, in the hope of attaining the literary honours which are a necessary passport to official employment. So the town which sends a successful candidate glories in its distinguished citizen, and the multitude go forth to meet him with cymbals and gongs, and all manner of ear-tortures and many gaudy banners, and carry him home in a chair adorned with boughs of feathery bamboo and scarlet flags. I saw a great Examination Hall in Foochow itself, but I believe this man had won his laurels at head-quarters.

I think that, in times of peace, life here gains greatly in interest from the fact that there is no line of demarcation between foreigners and natives, as is the case in ports where there is a "Foreign Concession." Here the "barbarians" have been allowed to build their comfortable two-storeyed houses on the crest of the grassy hills, round whose base cluster the busy native streets. Consequently, we obtain many glimpses of native customs without even leaving the cool shade of the wide verandahs. Certainly most of these processions and ceremonies are such as have reference to the dead, for in this land, where ancestral worship permeates all things, and where every action of the living must be subservient to the supposed will of the dead, the ancestral graves are naturally centres of interest; and though these are scattered in every direction all over the land, in every pleasant sunny spot, they are especially numerous on this green isle,

and the hills are dotted in every direction with large stone graves, built in the form of a great horse-shoe—a shape which seems to convey some idea of good luck. Many of these are overshadowed by noble groups of old fir-trees, and some are really picturesque objects. One on the steep hill-side is shaped like a gigantic trefoil—three horse-shoes combined; another lying on the plain below is the tomb of a great mandarin, and is guarded by a regiment of strange beasts and human figures carved in stone. In some places the bank has been broken, cut away to allow for better paths, and thus exposes to view large jars, containing the bones of men who have died at a distance, and whose remains have thus been brought home to be laid near kindred dust, that the spirits may know where to come to receive their share of the offerings duly made by their descendants.

In the valley, just at the foot of the grassy hills, there is a very curious place known as the City of the Dead. I have seen a larger one at Canton, but this is on the same principle, only that one great roof covers the whole of this establishment, whereas the other is really like a City of the Living, laid out in a labyrinth of streets of small houses. Here, too, there are innumerable small houses, in each of which rest from one to three large coffins, waiting for the day which the soothsayers shall declare to be lucky for the burial—a day which is deferred just so long as money can be extracted from the survivors. Each coffin is sheltered from the outer door (and, consequently, from the ingress of spirits!) by a large screen, in front of which stands an altar, with the usual altar vessels for flowers, lights, and incense. Those for the dead are chiefly of the very coarsest green pottery. Large, gaily-dressed figures, all of paper, guard the four corners of the room, silk or paper lanterns hang from the roof, and some have very showy state umbrellas, all made of paper, gilt and coloured. Some have horses, others a complete apparatus for opium-smoking, but all are of paper or pasteboard, so there is no fear of thieves breaking into this silent city, to molest the fine old Buddhist priest who remains here in charge of the place. This City of the Dead has what I may call suburbs of wretched outhouses, where poor neglected coffins are placed. Relatives, weary of paying house-rent for many successive years, have at last stopped payment, and the coffins have been removed to these sheds, there to await permission from the authorities for their burial at some spot on the surrounding hills.

From my post of observation on the verandah I have watched some very curious funeral ceremonies, especially during a festival answering to All Souls' Day, when the whole population turn out, and go forth all over the country to visit their ancestral graves, which are scattered about in the most promiscuous fashion, on such spots as the soothsayers have declared to be especially pleasing to the dead. Each family carries offerings of food on many trays: roast ducks, a pig roasted whole, rich cakes, and all manner of sweetmeats and sweet rice wine. These are the realities of which, happily for their descendants, the dead cannot partake, so after they have been

duly laid out upon the grave, and a religious service has been read by one of the party from the ritual for the dead, these good things are replaced on the trays, and carried home again for the family festival. But the dead are supposed to need many things in the far country—clothes, horses, furniture, houses, writing materials: whatever is conducive to comfort here, must be transmitted from earth to the spirit-world by the simple process of burning. Fortunately, it is not necessary to burn real articles—paper or pasteboard imitations will do as well, so thousands of persons are employed solely in the manufacture of these objects, while thousands more devote their whole lives to coating paper with tinfoil, to be made into shoe-shaped ingots of silver, and imitation dollars, and the semblance of other coins, especially strings of countless cash, all of which are destined for burnt-offerings to propitiate the dead. For it need not follow that affection prompts all this immense annual expenditure in honouring the dead. It is generally the result of most slavish fear—the grossest bondage of superstition—for every Chinaman believes in the power of the dead to avenge neglect by causing all manner of evil to the living; so trouble of every description, disease, failure in business, loss of sons, and all other conceivable afflictions, are due to the curse of the malevolent dead, to whom he may not be even distantly related. The avenging spirit is very probably some neglected beggar, who has been allowed to live and die unpitied, but who, after death, becomes a power of evil, whom no sane man dares to neglect!

Once in ten years a great festival is held in the city of Foochow for the consolation of the dead. The principal temples are fitted up with rows of booths for the sale of every sort of thing which the dead can be supposed to require—hats and garments, boots and shoes, spectacles and fans, horses and houses, sugar-plums, furniture, gold and silver money, but above all opium, with pipes all ready for smoking—these and many more, all made of paper and cardboard, are devoutly offered to the dead. In the temple courtyard is placed a terrible image of the Lord of Hell, and groups of his victims are represented in the act of receiving gifts from their pitying relations still on earth. The festival continues for seven consecutive days, during which all manner of religious processions parade the streets, and the tall pagodas are illuminated every night. The Buddhists and Taouists unite their forces to make a more showy procession, and the image of Buddha and of Laou-tsze, the founders of the two faiths, are carried in highly decorated chairs, escorted by their respective priests—the Buddhists in their yellow robes, scarlet mantles, and shaven heads; the Taouists in robes of gold-brocaded green satin, with their hair plaited and rolled up, and fastened by a peculiarly-shaped tortoiseshell comb.

At the close of the festival all the pasteboard shops and their miscellaneous contents are heaped together to form a vast bonfire, the smoke of which finds its way through the "gates of hell" (or rather, "purgatory," and there, I suppose, all the acceptable gifts of the

pious donors assume a spiritual form suited to the spirit-world.

Like everything else in this strange country, the funeral processions are quaint in the extreme. One day I watched a very grand one. The chief mourners were women, who wore white dresses; the men wore a rough sort of blouse of sackcloth, with a white sash round the waist. Every one present wore some piece of white, in lieu of our crape. First came the bearers of large white paper lanterns, which are always picturesque objects; then a band of musicians dressed in white, and making a horribly discordant noise with drums and gongs, to drive away evil spirits; then came men carrying trays of cakes and other good things for the funeral feast. These were followed by more musicians, apparently trying to drown the noise of the first lot. These wore common blue clothes. After them came coolies carrying pigs roasted whole, kids, and various other savoury meats, set out on trays. Then followed a highly decorated sedan-chair, in which was carried the tablet of the deceased, with tapers burning before it. Behind the tablet came a group of men dressed in red, carrying a large red flag, with inscription in golden characters. Next came the coffin, very handsome and solid, formed of four large boards, rounded on the upper side, and about four inches thick. These are called "longevity boards." Their value is a matter of great interest and importance. I am told that the price of a coffin ranges from £5 to £500, and that dutiful sons will stint themselves for years in order to present their parents with really handsome coffins—cheerful birthday presents, which thenceforward form part of the household furniture. When the procession reached the lucky spot which had been selected for the grave, the coffin was deposited on the ground, on which the mourners beat their heads, wailing most bitterly, while two yellow-robed priests performed some religious ceremony; then incense was burnt, and a multitude of crackers were fired, to terrify the demons who might be present. The coffin was then laid in its place, while wailing and cries of lamentation rent the air. When the grave had been filled in, more crackers were fired by a multitude of delighted small boys, with shaven scalps and long pig-tails; incense-sticks were lighted and stuck in bamboos, and so planted round the grave. The feast was spread, and left for awhile, that the hungry dead might regale themselves on its essence.

Far more pathetic than this rich noisy funeral was one which followed soon after. It was that of a very poor woman; her coffin was carried only by four coolies, and the sole mourner was a tiny child, with a white covering (in token of mourning) over its usual blue dress. The child was accompanied by a man, who taught it how to burn the joss-papers and incense-sticks, and to light the lanterns, and to lay out the offerings of food. It was a long ceremony, for the grave had been dug in the wrong place, and some men came up and remonstrated, so the poor little child was left sitting alone beside the coffin while a new grave was prepared.