

THE LEISURE HOUR.

A FAMILY JOURNAL OF INSTRUCTION AND RECREATION.

No. 92.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1853.

PRICE 1d.
STAMPED 2d.



A GENTLEMAN IN DISTRESS.

THE GRAFTON FAMILY.

CHAPTER VIII.—ONWARD!

We must ask our readers to return with us to the date of the Graftons' removal from their lodgings at the Grove, and their disappearance from Isling-
No. 92, 1853.

ton. And as we do not care to make mysteries where there are none, we will explain that the gentleman whom we have known as "the senior partner" had not been altogether unmindful of his promise, and indeed had rather exceeded it, by

this puts me in mind of something he said one day not long before he died, and when I was with him alone: 'Bertie,' he said, 'you'll want to be married some day, perhaps?' I thought it was very odd he should think of that then; and I said, I didn't know, I didn't expect I should. 'Yes, you will, Bertie,' he said, 'if you live to be a man. I dare say you will; I *hope* you will; but remember one thing, Bertie, and promise me one thing.' Of course I said yes. 'Remember then, Bertie,' he said, 'that a man who cannot afford to insure his life, cannot afford to marry; and promise me that your wedding present to your wife, whoever she may be, shall be a life assurance policy.' He did not say any more about it, Lotté; and I did not understand very well what he meant; that knowledge was to come afterwards; but I have never forgotten my promise, and I'll keep it."

LOO-CHOO.

THE Island of Loo-Choo, or Lewchew, or Lekeyo, or Leoo Keoo—for under each of these various designations it is to be found in different maps—lies in about 27 degrees of north latitude and 129 of east longitude, being situated about half way in a north-easterly course between Formosa and Japan. The island, which is almost surrounded by a number of small islets and coral-reefs, is about sixty miles in length, and averages not less than fifteen in breadth. Of its inhabitants, their form of government, their degree of civilization, their manners and customs, their religious ceremonies, and their means of subsistence, nothing certain was known until a very late period. We believe that Captain Basil Hall was the first traveller who favoured the public with any lengthened notice of the Lewchewans; and since his time the journals of other voyagers have contained incidental references to this singular people. It is to be regretted, however, that the reports of Captain Hall and his successors, being based upon hasty impressions, which, from the shortness of their stay in the island, they had not time to correct by repeated observations, are calculated to impart but a very imperfect and erroneous idea of the people they describe; and we are glad of the opportunity of laying before the reader some authenticated facts respecting them—facts replete with interest, and obtained from a source which insures their reliability.

It is now between seven and eight years since a few naval officers formed themselves into a society, and sent out a missionary to act as the apostle of Christianity among the islanders of Loo-Choo, with the hope of eventually succeeding, through his instrumentality, in diffusing Christianity among the secluded and interdicted Japanese, who are, at the distance of some three hundred miles, their northern neighbours. It has been conjectured on good grounds that the Lewchewans are Japanese in their origin, and not, as has been supposed, a colony of Chinese: this conjecture is borne out by the similarity in feature and in language to the inhabitants of Japan, and by the absence of certain customs among them, not to be accounted for on the supposition that they had originally emigrated from China. It was thought that if Japan were

thrown open to the access of Europeans—an event which, from the American expedition to that island, now in progress, is fast assuming a probable aspect—missionaries for the work of Christianization might be found among the native Lewchewans who should embrace the Christian faith, at once prepared and qualified for the work. It was with an ultimate view to this great object that Dr. Bettelheim, a physician, a Hungarian by birth, and a converted Jew, having been despatched by the naval mission to Hong-Kong, sailed from thence in the spring of 1846, and, with his wife, arrived at Loo-Choo in the month of May. Here, however, he met with a series of difficulties and discouragements which neither he nor the society had anticipated: the islanders fully justified their supposed descent from Japan, being, as far as it was in their power to be, as exclusive as the Japanese themselves. No sooner were they aware that it was his intention to take up his permanent residence among them, than they commenced a strategy of annoyance and persecution, which, though not characterized by violence, effectually prevented the success of his mission. They besought him earnestly to leave the island; and, finding that he was neither to be cajoled nor threatened into a departure, they forbade all communication with him, under some terrible penalty; surrounded him with a *cordon* of government spies, who dogged his steps wherever he went; warned off the inhabitants, who fled before him; and virtually confined him to the building, a deserted Buddhist temple, allotted for his residence, all approach to which was guarded by an ever-watchful police. What else they might have done to him, had they not been deterred by fear of the British government, there is no knowing. They were, in fact, themselves in a dilemma—fearing on the one hand to arouse the resentment of the Japanese, their masters, by harbouring a stranger; and on the other, not daring to incur the anger of the British, whose vessels frequently touched at their island, and as often, by the express direction of our foreign secretary, recommended the Doctor to their good offices. Urged by their fears, they petitioned in humiliating terms the British plenipotentiary at Hong-Kong for the summary removal of the missionary, who for four years and a half, without the encouragement of a single friendly face, beyond those of his beleaguered family, held out against them. At the end of that time, however, the bishop of Victoria, Hong-Kong, Dr. George Smith, arrived at Loo-Choo, in the steam-ship "Reynard," for the purpose of demanding an interview with the chief authorities of the island, and endeavouring by means of peaceful remonstrance to place the hardy missionary upon a better footing. It is to the bishop's narrative* of this expedition that we are indebted for the facts now offered to the reader.

Our space will not allow us to enter upon the details of the conferences which took place between the embassy and the *poo-ching*, the second, and subsequently with the *tsung-li*, the first, authority of the state. Some of the particulars are sufficiently amusing. The sight of the missionary

* "Lewchew and the Lewchewans; being a Narrative of a Visit to Lewchew, or Loo-Choo, in October, 1850." By George Smith, D.D., Lord Bishop of Victoria. London: T. Hatchard, 187, Piccadilly. 1853.

being hateful to the Lewchewan authorities, he could not be present to act as interpreter; every communication had to be made by the bishop, partly in Latin and partly in Chinese, to his own secretary; the secretary did them into the Peking dialect to the Lewchewan dragoman, who in his turn put them into Loo-Choo for the island mandarins. Notwithstanding this tardy process, and notwithstanding, too, the deceit and the cunning, and the abject complaints and petitions of the mandarins—who would have given their tails to have got rid of the missionary—the business was, after a conference of two days, satisfactorily concluded, and better terms obtained for the devoted exile. The history of the conferences, as given by the good bishop, affords but an indifferent sample of Lewchewan morality. Both the poo-ching and the tsung-li, as well as the lesser authorities by whom they were surrounded, proved to be sad sophisticators, to whom expediency was everything and truth nothing; and they submitted at last with an ill grace to abandon their system of persecution, only when they found that they had no alternative to choose. This grand affair at length settled, the embassy found themselves at liberty to spend a little time in the survey of the island. It is from the notes of the bishop, taken upon this occasion, and from a manuscript confided to him by Dr. Bettelheim, that we are enabled to set before the reader the following brief sketch of the Lewchewan race.

The population of the island is considered to be not more than fifty thousand in the whole. Of these, nearly forty thousand are resident in Napa and Shui-di, the two principal towns, and the rest are scattered over the rural portions of the country. A lofty mountainous ridge runs through the whole length of the land, over which winds a good road in a sinuous course, now approaching the eastern and now the western coast. The island boasts but one river, about forty feet in width, and a number of small mountain-streams, serving for irrigation. Of the real relations subsisting between Loo-Choo, China, and Japan, we are not yet in a condition to pronounce with absolute certainty. There is little doubt, however, that the island was originally peopled by a colony from Japan, and that to China they owe their partial civilization and their literature. It is to Japan that they look for protection in time of need, and there is a garrison of Japanese soldiers quartered at Napa. On the other hand, the schoolmasters of the island are Chinese, the descendants of thirty-six families who migrated from China at the period of the Tartar invasion, about 200 years ago. The only foreign trade of the country is that carried on with Japan, from whence junks to the number of twenty or thirty arrive annually, while a Chinese junk is never known to appear in their port. It is true that one Lewchewan junk is sent annually to China, and every alternate year an additional one: the annual junk is supposed to be a tribute offering paid by virtue of some ancient compact guaranteeing the independent sovereignty of Loo-Choo, and the biennial one a mere payment in return for the education of certain youths, a number of whom are despatched to Foo-Chow, the great emporium of learning, to be indoctrinated in Chinese lore. That Loo-Choo is not, as has been hitherto supposed, a

feudal tenure under Chinese supremacy, is evident from the fact that a Chinese stranger cannot show his face with impunity in the island; he no sooner makes his appearance than he is hunted and dogged, pelted and insulted, just like a European. On the other hand, the Japanese have full liberty and equal rights with the natives, among whom they live unmolested, and, if they choose, intermarry and settle. From facts like these it is evident that much misapprehension has hitherto existed in England as to the actual political relations of these eastern islanders; a misapprehension that perhaps might be traced to the fact that the Lewchewan monarchs receive formal investiture in their sovereignty, upon their accession, from a Chinese commissioner, without which they would not consider themselves entitled to the name of king, which empty honour is all they get in return for their annual tribute junk.

At the time of the arrival of the "Reynard" at Napa, there appeared to be an interregnum, the youthful successor to the crown not having yet received the Chinese investiture. The public functionaries of the government are appointed by the Japanese cabinet at Yedo. The first of these is the tsung-li-ta-chin, ostensibly the prime minister of the king of Loo-Choo, but virtually the vice-governor-general of the whole country; and in him is vested the executive power. The second officer in rank and in power is the poo-ching-ta-foo, who exercises a subordinate authority over the southern portion of the island; and the third is the te-fang-quan, the local governor of Napa. Next to these come the *literati*, who form one-fourth of the population, and may be regarded as the idle gentry; their studies are the Confucian classics, in which they undergo examinations, and obtain, when successful, prizes in the shape of government appointments. From this class the public functionaries are selected: they are maintained by the toil of the peasantry and public slaves, and in return they act for the government as spies. The above constitute what may be called the upper classes. The lower classes consist of three distinct castes. The first of these is the *wedae-o-gang*, composed of the public messengers and other menial officers in the service of government, together with the lower class of traders, labourers, and mechanics. When engaged in the public service they receive no reward but their food, but they live in the hope of promotion to the rank above them, an elevation which they often obtain by purchase, or by mechanical skill, or even by improvements in the arts of agriculture. Next below these are the *ha-koo-sho*, who are the peasants or field-labourers: they farm the country at an exorbitant rent, paying to the government, as the lords of the soil, one-half of the produce, in lieu of taxes. The crops thus produced form the principal revenue of the government, and the means of subsistence to the literary class in their indolent abstinence from labour. The lowest class of all are the *oo-bang*, or public slaves, who possess neither civil rights nor personal freedom, and are abjectly subject even to the most capricious commands of the *literati*. These unfortunate serfs lead a life comparable only in wretchedness to that of the African slaves: they are at everybody's beck and bidding, and, receiving only the bare necessaries of life in return for their

services, are politically deprived, not only of freedom, but of the right of acquiring it by purchase, the privilege of possessing property being denied them. Thus, upon one occasion, when some of them had performed a toilsome service for the bishop, and he wished to remunerate them for their trouble, they were afraid to receive the proffered reward, and could not be prevailed upon to run the risk which they would have incurred by accepting it.

The costume of this island population presents a novel picture to the eye of a European. The general body-dress is a loose flowing gown with large sleeves, and a fold or collar extending from the neck down each side of the breast—the men confining this robe by a cotton girdle, and the women leaving it unconfined. Among the women there are no crippled feet, as in China. The material of these dresses is a coarse kind of gray cloth. The lowest classes perform their daily labours in a state of almost perfect nudity—a rag of a few inches square constituting their only apology for clothing. They work generally without shoes, and, judging from the ease with which they run over the hard coral stones of which the roads are formed, the soles of their feet must have attained almost the hardness of a horse's hoof. With the exception of the magistrates and the agents of the government, none of the inhabitants wear any head-dress. The chief peculiarity in their personal appearance is the mode in which the men bind their hair into a top-knot. The crown of the head, to the extent of two or three inches, is shorn and shaven, and into the vacant space the surrounding locks are drawn and plaited into the form of a circular comb. By means of oil and lampblack mixed together, the hair is well greased till it has acquired the necessary lustre and consistency. Two hair-pins of large size are then passed through, one above the other, extending forward and behind a couple of inches each way, and the fore-end of the lower pin is ornamented with a kind of star. The rank of a Lewchewan is ascertained by the metal of his hair-pins—the *literati* and dominant caste wearing ornaments of silver, or some other white metal, while those of the lower classes are uniformly of brass: in this simple difference consists the sole external distinction of rank. The habits of the people are dirty in the extreme, worse even than those of the lower-class Chinese. The women occupy the post of drudges, and in both sexes there is a remarkable absence of anything according with an Englishman's idea of personal cleanliness.

Among their popular amusements, the Lewchewans have no dramatic performances, such as exist in China, no jugglers, no improvising romancists. Although their modes and habits of life are simple, they are far from being virtuous: lying, fraud, and theft prevail among the common people to a deplorable extent, and entail no shame upon the convicted offender. The higher classes are polite and refined in manners, but are yet as vicious in morals as their inferiors. The prevalence of a system of oppression has the effect of debasing both the oppressor and the oppressed: a surer proof of this could not be adduced than is found in the position of their women. The Lewchewan wife, while she bears more than her share of menial labour, has no compensating privileges. Marriages

are arranged by relations, without a previous interview of the principals in the nuptial contract; and, if subsequently there happen to be no offspring, the wife may be sent back to her parents or family, and a successor is provided in her stead, whom a similar lot may await. Sometimes, when her family is too poor to receive her, and provide for her subsistence, a rich husband builds a little apartment or hut on the edge of his premises, in which one or more divorced wives are doomed to live apart in loneliness and degradation. The missionary knew one man who had divorced four wives in succession, when the fifth bore him a child, and remained as the mistress of the household. The women are never allowed to eat in the presence of the other sex.

But though their marriage customs are so degrading, their funeral observances are in many respects praiseworthy, and might in some degree be imitated with advantage nearer home. Thus they do not bury their dead in their cities, but in a burial-ground apart, and devoted exclusively to purposes of sepulture. "In the evening," says the bishop, "I took a walk among the tombs on a promontory overlooking the sea. Not even in China had I ever seen so vast a number of tombs constructed of so expensive and durable a form. They formed a mazy labyrinth of well-constructed masonry; and, like a number of streets intersecting each other in an irregular direction, these houses of the dead, in neatness, solidity, and extent, rivalled the abodes of the living. A wall on each side, from twelve to twenty feet in length, and eight in height, formed the little outer court. Opposite to the entrance was a little door leading into the vault, dug out of the rising ground, and extending several feet within, the portion behind sloping upwards, and being rounded off, so that the whole inclosure presented the form of an omega (Ω). The large sums which must have been expended on these tombs would appear inconsistent with the universal prevalence of deep poverty among the inhabitants. These family mausoleums are the resort of the people in the evening. They are said to spend much of their time at the tombs, and make periodical offerings to the spirits of their departed ancestors. They present offerings of eatables, and, when the materials of a feast have remained a certain time, that the ghosts may consume the subtle ethereal portions of the meat, the grosser material particles are taken away, and are feasted upon by the living at their own homes."

The religion, or rather the popular superstition of the country is Buddhism, which, blended with the maxims of Confucius, forms the same kind of compound between political ethics and gross idolatry as that which exerts its influence over the popular mind in China. The bonzes, however, or Buddhist priests, enjoy in Loo-Choo some degree of respect, which, as is well known, is not the case in China. Here it is a common occurrence for respectable families to dedicate a son to the profession of the priesthood, as one which in no way detracts from their social standing. They have many temples for the purposes of worship, in which strangers are at liberty to enter if they choose. At the commencement of the new year they devote a whole month to feasting and idleness. They adopt the Chinese custom of setting apart altars

for burning useless fragments of written papers, in order to prevent the desecration of literature by treading it irreverently under foot. An evidence of a very prevailing superstition which meets the eye in passing through the streets, is the presence of a great number of little images placed in a little opening or chimney in the tiled roofs of their houses, which are intended as charms and preservatives from conflagration. Sometimes they make a model of a house, and solemnly consume it by fire, in order to appease the divinity supposed to preside over that element, and to avert such a domestic calamity.

There are supposed to be about a thousand horses existing on the island; it was in vain, however, that the bishop, and captain Cracroft of the "Reynard," endeavoured to hire some for their use; their demand being met by the unblushing assertion that there were but two or three in the country, although the crew of a French vessel which had touched there some time before had been accommodated with fifty. They are strangers, however, to the luxury of a carriage, the only substitute for which among them is the "kagoo," a vehicle but one remove above the contrivances of savage life. It is described as a mere box, about two feet and a half in height, slightly roofed at the top, and open at the sides, with the exception of a little loose blind, used at will. This primitive machine is borne on the shoulders of two men, one before and the other behind, who run along, with the weight suspended diagonally forward, at an uneasy pace resembling a jog-trot, and at the rate of about five miles an hour. The traveller enters at the side, and has to squat or sit in Turkish fashion on the bottom of the vehicle, occasionally grasping the pole above to prevent being shaken out into the road, and generally clasping his knees with his hands close to his chin.

The productions of the island, upon which its commerce must be founded, appear to be copper, sulphur, and an extraordinary variety of fruits, many of which are found growing wild, and are consequently of an inferior kind. The bulk of the labouring classes is composed of agriculturists, fishermen, and mechanics; the last-mentioned being employed in great numbers in the art of turning wood, and overlaying it with that peculiar varnish which forms lacquered ware or japan-work, in which employment the women also assist. There are but few good shops, in which the articles for sale are chiefly paper, clothing, tea, rice, and sweetmeats. Most of their traffic is carried on by barter, the island being destitute of a metallic currency of its own, and only importing stamped ingots from Japan for the special exigency of the Chinese tribute. They cultivate the sugar-cane to a considerable extent; and the export of sugar, and a distilled spirit of great strength, called sakee, forms an important branch of their commerce. They grow tobacco in large quantities, the whole population being addicted to its use; and they cultivate the cotton-plant sufficiently to provide the coarse kind of cloth of which the native dress is composed. Indigo is also grown upon the island; and salt is manufactured by evaporating the seawater in pools or pits along the coast.

The language of the Lewchewans, as spoken, is a mere dialect of the Japanese, but it is doubtful

whether they employ the Japanese system of writing. They read Japanese, and a number of the Japanese lyrics are preserved in the traditions of the people; but they have no native literature, and no writer of the humblest pretensions to authorship has ever appeared among them. The studies of the native scholars are limited to the Confucian classics, and consist more in an apparently mechanical repetition of sounds than in any mental appreciation of the sentiments expressed. Though enjoying a reputation for quickness and shrewdness, the people are generally of an indolent cast of mind, their natural powers being debased by sensual habits and a perverted education.

Thus much for a sketch of Loo-Choo and the Lewchewans. The good bishop's mission to the island, as we have already hinted, was successful in procuring better treatment for the forlorn missionary. After the conferences were satisfactorily concluded, the tsung-li and a number of subordinate mandarins accepted an invitation to the "Reynard," where they were most hospitably received and honourably treated, and where they reciprocated the courtesies of Dr. Bettelheim, the missionary, to whom they were introduced. The great tsung-li unfortunately forgot his dignity when a salute was fired in his honour: at the first discharge, he started, jumped from his seat, and threw himself prostrate on the deck in terror. Some valuable presents, however, reassured him, and he and his party retired well pleased with the consideration shown them.

From information lately come to hand, we learn that her Majesty's ship "Sphinx" paid a visit to Loo-Choo in February, 1852, bearing a communication from Lord Palmerston to the authorities of the place, and commissioned to make inquiry as to the position and treatment of the missionary. This visit was in every respect satisfactory; the authorities expressing the most friendly feeling towards the Doctor, and the Doctor on his part reporting that since the visit of the "Reynard," in October, 1850, his position has been much improved, and that his medical labours among the inhabitants had been eminently successful during the prevalence of the small-pox. Thus it would seem that the perseverance and good sense which has characterized this Christian attempt upon Loo-Choo from the commencement is so far crowned with success, inasmuch as it has established a precedent for attempting at least the introduction of Christianity in a dependency of Japan. Under God's blessing, greater results may be expected soon to follow.

THINGS WORTH REMEMBERING.

WE must be always so in God's fear as never to be out of it.

Those that truly fear God need not fear man; and those that are afraid of the least sin, need not be afraid of the greatest trouble.

If thou fear God and walk in his ways, whatever befalls thee, good shall be brought out of it; it shall be well with thee while thou livest, better when thou diest, and best of all in eternity.

The best evidence of our fearing God, is our being willing to serve and honour him with that which is dearest to us, and to part with all to him, or for him.

In vain do we pretend to fear God, if we do not make conscience of our duty to him.