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AND
SUPREME COURT & CONSULAR GAZETTE.

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Miscellaneous Intelligence.

LATEST MAIL DATES.			
England, Dec. 12	Hankow, Feb. 1		
Pan Francisco, " 18	Yokohama, Jan. 21		
Hongkong, Jan. 27	Nagasaki, " 26		
Tientsin, " 29	Foochow, " 29		

Latest Mail dates in England, from China.
Hongkong, Nov. 6
Shanghai, Oct. 31

BIRTHS.

On the 29th January, the wife of V. ZACHARAE, M.D., of a son, still-born.
At Chefoo, on January 11th 1874, the wife of WILLIAM BROWN, M.B., of a daughter.
On the 6th Dec., at 27, Dunstanville-terrace, Falmouth, the wife of G. J. W. COWIE, of Shanghai, of a daughter.

MARRIAGES.

On the 7th instant, at the British Legation, Yokohama, by the Rev. W. B. Wright, M.A., EDWIN WHEELER, Esq., to MARY, second daughter of G. L. MOORE, Esq., Belfast.

On the 28th Oct., at Northwood Church, Isle of Wight, by the Rev. Charles E. Seaman, M.A., WALTER LINCOLN ODKELL, of Foochow, China, to Agnes Alice (Bunny), fourth daughter of THOMAS PARKER MEW, of West Cowes, Isle of Wight.

DEATHS.

At Shanghai, on Saturday the 31st January 1874, GEORGE WHITTINGHAM CAINE, son of the late Colonel Caine, aged 41.

At Yokohama, on the 7th instant, of inflammation of the lungs, FRANÇOIS REVEST, aged 43 years.

At Blackheath, Kent, SARAH PEAKE BARNES, widow of the late Wm. Geo. BARNES, Esq. of Shirley, Hants, aged 71 years. (By telegram.)

At Edinburgh, on 5th December 1873, GEORGE SIMPSON, late Merchant, Shanghai, aged 44 years. Friends in China will please accept this intimation. 12 o

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The North-China Herald.

IMPARTIAL, NOT NEUTRAL.

SHANGHAI, THURSDAY, FEB. 5, 1874.

RETROSPECT OF 1873.

Japan. The almost feverish movement of Japan is in strong contrast to the stolid conservatism of China; and we fear the feeling generally expressed is true—that one strains forwards as much too hard as the other holds back. Great and useful progress has been made; improved means of communication and appliances for developing the resources of the country have been anxiously adopted; a new and more handy coinage has been instituted, to suit the requirements of foreign intercourse; efforts have been made to organise the national finances; embassies have been sent to the nations with which Japan has foreign relations—all necessary steps in the new career on which the country has embarked, and deserving of all praise. But not content with these enlightened and comprehensive measures, the Government has descended to a course of social legislation as unnecessary as foolish, and as irritating as unnecessary. It is not by sudden edict that national customs and modes of thought can be changed, but by gradual persuasion and example. And it says much for the strength of the Government, and the docility and submissiveness of the

people, that edicts interfering with food, clothes, hair, furniture, and fifty other details of daily life, have passed without exciting violent opposition and uprising.

Uprisings there have been—caused, however, generally by more solid grievances. The projects of conscription; the change in the method of taxation from a contribution in kind to a money tax on the estimated value of land; the unsettlement of religious questions; the taxation of fisheries, and other measures excited riots of greater or less extent, in districts which one or other of these measures affected. The change in the calendar, the destruction of trees around sacred edifices, the slaughter of cattle, the removal of woods from the possession of the peasants to that of Government, and many minor complaints were also urged. The opposition seems to have come almost invariably from the agricultural classes, who are always the most conservative in every land; and their emotion at the virtual denationalisation of their country which the Government seemed to have undertaken, is not only not surprising but will excite some sympathy. Foreign visitors to Japan universally regret this destruction of national landmarks, this violent effacement of customs and conditions of life which were quaint, interesting and often picturesque. It was possible to introduce the principles which have made Western nations wealthy and enlightened, without rushing into a hurried external imitation. At the same time, the anxiety to emulate people whom they saw and acknowledged to be superior, speaks well for the pride and energy of the nation, and augurs well for its future. We see no reason why future generations should not perfect the new civilisation as cleverly as their ancestors had perfected the old.

It is a noteworthy feature, and argues well for the strength of the Government in its present career, that the Samourai class were almost always found on its side in the various collisions. Only in one or two instances—notably that of the Fukuoka riots near Nagasaki—did they take cause with the insurgents. Yet it was from this class—turbulent from the nature of their profession, and likely to be irritated by the change in their condition—that serious danger might have been reasonably apprehended. The Commercial classes have all along

been favourable to the new regime; and the Government seem also to command the sympathy of the great majority of the Daimios. For good or for evil then, we may assume that Japan is irretrievably launched on her new career; she has cut finally loose from old traditions, and committed herself and her future fortunes to the influence of new ideas, customs and teachings.

In making these changes, the Government have incurred heavy outlay which will tax severely, for some time to come, the resources of the State. One great financial burden is the annuities to the Daimios who were dispossessed of their lands by the revolution, and to the samurai whose claims on their lords were taken over together with the possessions of the latter. And we learn with interest, from the *Japan Mail*, that the object of the new loan of £2,400,000 contracted by the Government last year in London, was to extinguish these annuities by payments of ready money. "The claims were of a very burdensome nature, and, being claims in perpetuity, threatened to be a permanent charge, having the two-fold ill effect of a constant drain on the exchequer, and of retaining in idleness a large class of men, often of a superior order of intelligence, whose incomes, thus paid, sufficed only to maintain them in their accustomed position, but were insufficient to enable them to enter into mercantile or agricultural pursuits. In proposing, therefore, to extinguish these claims by the payment of a sum of ready money representing only a few years' purchase of their incomes, and to create an industrious out of an idle class, the Government made a move of great wisdom; and when it is further remembered that the high rate of interest in this country, varying as it does from a minimum of 12 per cent per annum to three per cent per month, renders the redemption of a perpetual annuity for a few years' purchase of its amount a very feasible operation, the wisdom of applying money borrowed at 7½ per cent for this purpose is obvious." It is expected in fact to extinguish the hereditary incomes by the payment of six years, and life incomes by the payment of four years of their annual amount—half to be paid in cash and half in government bonds bearing 8 per cent interest. The wisdom of the operation on the part of Government is obvious; its fairness to the pensioners is another question. But the *Mail* seems to think they are satisfied, being tired of inactivity, and lacking resources to enter on commercial enterprise which the payment of this capital sum will supply.

The hostility to Christianity has relaxed during the year; and the survivors of those Christians who had been deported from Nagasaki were allowed, last spring, to return to their homes. This implies a cessation of persecution; and it is evidently difficult for the Government to

go farther, in face of the strong national dislike to a religion which in former days has caused so much trouble and suffering.

We have already referred, in our sketch of Chinese politics, to the successful mission of Soyeshima to Peking, and to the favourable circumstances under which that minister had audience of the young Emperor. It is singular that the very success of his embassy led to his own fall from ministerial power. A chief object of his mission was to secure the punishment, by the Chinese Government, of those Formosans who had massacred the crews of certain Loochooan vessels which fate had cast upon the shore of Formosa. It was also whispered that he had instructions to confer with the Chinese Ministers for Foreign Affairs upon the unsatisfactory condition of the relations between Japan and Corea, and to ascertain the probable action of China in the event of an unfriendly solution of the questions pending between those two countries. What transpired on the latter subject is not clearly known, but it is believed that the Peking Government either promised itself to take action, or delegated to the Japanese Envoy full power, so far as it was concerned, to punish the Formosans for their misconduct. On his return to Japan, Soyeshima seems to have advocated a warlike policy in both directions—against both Formosa and Corea; but serious differences of opinion on the subject arose amongst Japanese statesmen, and eventually the ministry of which Soyeshima was a member broke up. Terashima, late Minister at London, succeeded him as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Iwakura, the head of the late wandering Embassy to the West, took office as Prime Minister. The question, however, seems by no means yet settled. The feeling of the country is in favour of war with Corea; and the great Satsuma clan is said to be gravely dissatisfied with the present policy. Corea has been in the last degree insolent of late, in her bearing towards Japan, and the sudden retirement of Shimadzu Saburo from a post which he held at Yeddo, is regarded as significant of irritation at the refusal of Government to sanction an expedition for its punishment. A recent attempt to assassinate Iwakura is attributed to the same feeling of hostility to his peace policy.

It is said that the Japanese have been greatly disappointed that the late Embassy did not succeed in persuading Western Nations to abandon the extra-territoriality clauses in their treaties. This, says the *Japan Mail*, is the darling project of Japanese statesmen and the highest pinnacle of Japanese ambition. "They had made elaborate preparations for the task it would entail. They had engaged lawyers to expound a great foreign code, jurists to adapt it to their national economy, and translators to render it into their language.

They know how much the development of their internal resources depends on the employment of foreign capital, skill and knowledge, and they were anxious to utilize these. But they could not do so, or thought they could not, unless, or until, they could themselves adjust such differences as might arise between themselves and those they were anxious to employ; and the refusal of this power was to the last degree unpalatable to them." Obviously, however, with all their progress, the Japanese are far yet from having established a system of laws or legal procedure offering sufficient guarantees for the equitable administration of justice, to induce foreigners to abandon this important provision.

A notable feature in Court life has been the frequent appearance in public of the Mikado and his Consort—a step which it was feared at first, even by foreigners, would tend to break down the more or less mythical respect felt by Eastern Nations for Sovereigns who have always screened themselves in the depths of a palace and surrounded themselves with a halo of semi-divinity. No ill effect seems, however, to have followed the change of practice. The Sovereigns have been everywhere greeted with loyalty and respect.

The arrival of an envoy from Peru, to discuss the *Maria Luz* question and to negotiate a treaty with Japan, resulted in the reference of the former question to the arbitration of Russia. The Governor of Macao also visited Yeddo towards the close of the year, and had audiences of the Mikado.

We have, we believe, now glanced at the most prominent features in the active whirl of Japanese politics during the past twelve months. It would be well if the country would now give itself breathing time, for a space, while the progress entered on during the past few years is consolidated, and the people have time to become in some measure familiarised with the changes so rapidly forced upon them.

Summary of News.

The English mail of the 12th December arrived on the 30th ulto.

A mail leaves for Europe to-morrow by the *M. M. str. Ava*.

The following Reuter's telegrams have been received during the week.

Great meetings have been held at St. James' and Exeter Hall, sympathising with the German Emperor in his conflict with his Ultramontane Government.

The struggle between Bismarck and Ultramontanism is increasing in bitterness.

Germany has warned France and Belgium that it is their duty to repress the attacks of the Ultramontane press and clergy.

A telegram confirms the news that Livingstone died at Lobisa. Cameron awaits the body and brings it to Zanzibar, where it is expected to arrive in February.

Gladstone, in addressing his constituents, justified the Dissolution; Disraeli having previously declined offer (office) with present Parliament. He intends the total repeal of the Income Tax.