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Review: Chinese Life and Character

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ASIA.

CHINESE LIFE AND CHARACTER.

'Changing China.' By the Rev. Lord William Gascoyne-Cecil, assisted by Lady Florence Cecil. London: Jas. Nisbet & Co. 1910. *Sketch-map and Illustrations*. 10s. 6d. net.

This is not a geographical work, but it is one that travellers might do well to peruse and study, for it contains a fund of information regarding the opinions, customs, idiosyncrasies, and modern life of one of the oldest nations of the world. Considering the vast extent of the country, the surprising variations of climate and racial and ethical characteristics, nothing is more misleading than to attempt to generalize about China and its people. The only way to understand them is to accumulate trustworthy data from competent judges, and from these to deduce general conclusions. But to arrive at this stage, the observer must be keen-sighted and unprejudiced, and have traversed a wide area of country. In regard to the last point, the author appears to have visited Peking, Shanghai, Changsha, Nanking, and Hankow, five important but widely distant centres, while in his interviews and discussions with numerous high officials, gentry, and literati, he seems to have invariably treated them with a pleasing consideration and sympathy. Hence we are presented with a far more reasonable and interesting picture of the native mind and even native prejudices than we gather from some other well-known works. Of course, the general trend of the chapters is social and philosophical rather than material. We regret that several of the most striking and characteristic stories are too long and otherwise unsuitable for quotation in a geographical magazine, but it may be remarked of them generally that they certainly tend to prove the enormous—nay, almost insuperable—difficulties that beset all efforts to assimilate East and West.

'Persia in Revolution.' By J. M. Hone and P. L. Dickinson. (Dublin: Maunsel; London: Fisher Unwin. 1910. Pp. xiv., 218. *Map and Illustrations*. 5s. net.) The title sets the main theme, but the book develops it, to say truth, rather incoherently, and imaginary conversations between the Shah and the revolutionaries, done into colloquial English, are not particularly illuminating. But if one gathers nothing very definite as to the causes, effects, or proceedings of the revolution, at least the authors saw Persia under peculiar conditions, and these, together with the country travelled, they describe clearly and in a reasonable manner. They covered no little-known ground in the empire, and provide perhaps their most interesting matter in the last two chapters, which deal with Georgia. The map has the peculiar demerit of wrong orientation.

'Cook's Handbook for Tourists to Peking,' etc. (London: Simpkin Marshall, and Thos. Cook. 1910. Pp. 116. *Maps and Illustrations*.) This convenient little guide covers, besides Peking, the chief towns on the Gulf of Pe-chilili, and Mukden. It is clearly printed and the information is well chosen. There is a Chinese (Pekinese) vocabulary.

'In Lotus-Land Japan.' By H. G. Ponting. (London: Macmillan. 1910. Pp. xvi., 395. *Illustrations*. 21s.) The disadvantage of a fanciful title like this is that it so often connotes a valueless type of book, whereas Mr. Ponting's is the opposite. For the text he does not claim any distinction, and in truth it is at times rather diffuse, though he describes familiar scenes in Japan much more closely and accurately than many another writer. But from Mr. Ponting as a photographer we know what to expect, and he does not disappoint us. His photography is superb, and the process-engraver has ably seconded him. In