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IMPRESSIONS OF CHINA,

AND

THE PRESENT REVOLUTION:
ITS PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS.

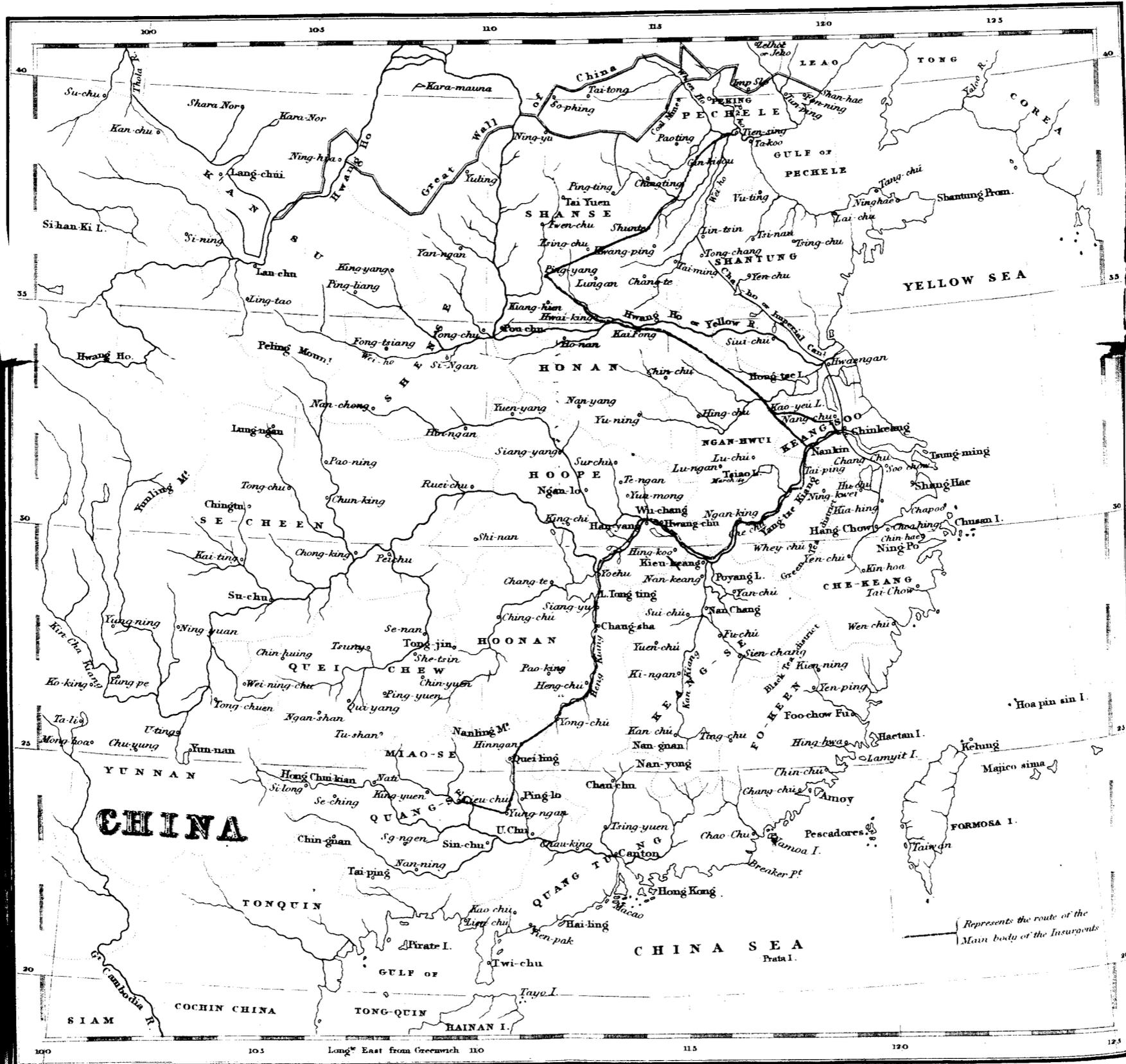
BY CAPT. FISHBOURNE,

COMMANDER OF THE HERMES, ON HER LATE VISIT TO NANKIN.



SEELEY, JACKSON, AND HALLIDAY, FLEET STREET;
AND B. SEELEY, HANOVER STREET.
LONDON: MDCCCLV.

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PREFACE.

THE writer has less diffidence in submitting this little work to the public, since it was suggested to him by more than one whose opinions he had just reason to value, that he ought to undertake something of the kind ; and also from the consciousness, that in publishing, he sought no mere party or personal ends.

Much occupation upon objects of more pressing interest, and having more urgent claims, has prevented the continuous attention being given to the subject that it deserves. It is hoped this will be deemed a sufficient apology for many of its defects.

The object sought in this work has been fairly to state the question in respect to China's present condition and future prospects, with a view to its obtaining a candid and careful examination, such as the importance of the subject demands ;—to shew that unwise interference can neither be beneficial to us, nor our

commercial interests, and would, it is more than probable, retard the progress of that country towards better things.

It has been said, that the Insurgents are students of Scripture, and anxious for the dissemination of its truths, and each new fact learnt concerning them seems to establish the truth of this statement.

The last work of theirs, received by the "Styx," fully justifies the above, for though it is professedly only a work upon political economy, many of the ideas and sentiments set forth in it are certainly drawn from the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament, and obviously by themselves; and though these do not always agree with our general deductions from the same source, they yet establish a very important point or two;—viz., that they admit the supremacy of Scripture, and are desirous of conforming to its requirements.

Nor can their offerings to the Deity be considered an exception, even though these should be esteemed by some as more than thank-offerings, since the tendency in every age has been towards the material in this respect; in forgetfulness that "God is a Spirit, and that they that worship Him *must* worship Him in spirit." If it be not the special sin of our day and generation,—

"Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
 Odours of Eden, and offerings divine;
 Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
 Myrrh from the forest, and gold from the mine?
 Vainly we offer each ample oblation—
 Vainly with gifts would his favours secure:
 Richer by far is the heart's adoration,
 Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor."

Though their political economy be faulty, they seem to have discovered that selfishness may account for many phenomena, and as a motive of action produce considerable results, and yet be a most unsatisfactory principle of action, incompatible at once with true happiness, and the spirit of the Gospel, and of that kingdom of righteousness they evidently see shadowed forth in prophecy.

Already they anticipate the day, "when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ;" and thence it was they refused to sell coals to the "Styx" and "Rattler;" telling their interpreter and officers, that "they did not understand the rules of the heavenly kingdom:" yet this idea of theirs need not lead to any apprehension of commercial obstacles, for the love of trade, and a sense of its value, is too strong in the minds of the Chinese to be easily eradicated.

In this respect they are more consistent than many who impugn their Christianity.

If we understand aright what they mean to inculcate, there are many and grave errors propagated by them, yet there is hope in the fact that they have not adopted the *spiritual mode of interpretation*, by which anything can be, and is, made, of the statements of holy writ, and under which, an appeal to Scripture is not an end to controversy. The very literalness of interpretation which they have adopted, has perhaps tended to lead them into some of their errors; but it has this advantage, that it shuts no door to a correct reading, and leaves room for a decision on controverted points, by admitting an appeal to the authority of Scripture.

The following extracts will illustrate the foregoing.

“As soon as harvest arrives, every vexillary must see to it, that the five and twenty parishes under his charge have a sufficient supply of food; and what is over and above of the new grain he must deposit in the public granary. This must be done with respect to wheat, pulse, hemp, flax, cloth, silk, fowls, dogs, and money: for the whole empire is the universal property of our Heavenly Father, the great God and Supreme Lord: and when all the people in the empire avoid selfishness, and consecrate everything to the Supreme Lord, then the sovereign will have sufficient to use, and all the families of the empire, in every place, will be

equally provided for, while every individual will be well fed and clothed. This is what our Heavenly Father the Great God and Supreme Lord has especially commanded the true sovereign of the Thae-ping dynasty, with the view of saving the whole world.

“In every circle of five-and-twenty families, the youths must every day go to the church, where the vexillary is to teach them to read the holy books of the Old and New Testaments, as well as the proclamation of the duly-appointed sovereign.

“Every Sabbath the five cinquevirs in the circle must lead the men and women under their charge to the church, where the males and females are to sit in separate rows. On these occasions there will be preaching, thanksgivings, and offerings to our Heavenly Father, the Great God and Supreme Lord.

“All officers and people, both within and without the court, must every Sabbath go to hear the expounding of the holy book, reverently present their offerings, and worship and praise our Heavenly Father, the Great God and universal Lord. Throughout every seven times seven, or forty-nine Sabbaths, the prefects, tribunes, and centurions shall go in turns to the churches belonging to each vexillary under their jurisdiction, and expound the holy book, instruct the people, and examine whether they obey or disobey the