

CHINA

AND

THE CHINESE:

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF

THE COUNTRY AND ITS INHABITANTS; ITS CIVILIZATION AND
FORM OF GOVERNMENT; ITS RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL INSTI-
TUTIONS; ITS INTERCOURSE WITH OTHER NATIONS;

AND ITS

PRESENT CONDITION AND PROSPECTS.

BY THE REV. JOHN L. NEVIUS,

TEN YEARS A MISSIONARY IN CHINA.

WITH A MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

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District of New York.

TO MY WIFE,
HELEN S. COAN NEVIUS,
EVER MY MOST
JUDICIOUS COUNSELLOR AND EFFICIENT HELPER

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED.

P R E F A C E.

OUR new relations with China, her practical nearness to us, and more especially the late visit of the Chinese Embassy, have served to awaken a new interest in that Empire. Seldom have two parties been suddenly brought together, who had before so thoroughly misunderstood each other as have we and the Chinese. I have been asked by intelligent scholars in China—"Do you have schools in your country?" When they discover that we, whom they have been accustomed to regard as barbarians, give evidence of some degree of mental culture, and are acquainted with their language and literature, the question naturally arises in their minds—"Do they obtain their education in China; or may they not have schools in their own country?" When told that institutions of learning are common with us, the inference is very apt to be—"Then the people of your honorable nation are also acquainted with the books of Confucius;" supposing that wherever throughout the world there are schools, the text-books must of course be the Chinese Classics, as few of them have a conception of a system of instruction derived from any other source.

This ignorance of other countries is truly remarkable; but hardly more so than that which exists among Western nations with reference to the Chinese. I have been asked by educated men in the United States—"Are not the

Chinese a remarkably dull and uninteresting people? Are they susceptible of feelings of affection and gratitude? Are you able to develop their intellectual and moral perceptions; and have any of them really become true and reliable Christians?"

The erroneous views which we mutually entertain of each other are due to a want of reliable information; and this want has resulted from our wide separation, and our infrequent and imperfect intercourse.

Now that China—which we have heretofore thought of as situated in the extreme East, and shut off from us by the intervening nations of Europe and Asia—has become our next neighbor on the West, it is very important that we become better acquainted with its inhabitants, and that we and they should cultivate that mutual respect and sympathy which ought to characterize two great nations whose interests and destinies are in the future to be so closely united.

To promote this desirable end is the principal object of this book; and if it should in any good degree subserve so important a purpose it will require no apology for its publication.

It has been my design to give a general description of China and the Chinese, rather than detailed information on particular subjects, having special reference to the religious condition and wants of the people, and the character and results of the labors of missionaries.

While making occasional use of other works on China, I have depended, for the most part, on my own observations and experiences during ten years of familiar intercourse with all classes of the people, and in different parts of the Empire.

Most of the contents of the chapters relating to the prevalent religions and superstitions are taken from letters