

**CIRCULARS OF
INFORMATION OF THE
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
NO. 1-1877; NO. 2-1878**

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VARIOUS

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OF THE

BUREAU OF EDUCATION.

No. 1-1877.

REPORTS ON THE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION IN CHINA.

WASHINGTON:
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE.
1877.

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LETTER.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
BUREAU OF EDUCATION,
Washington, D. C., June 18, 1877.

SIR: The accompanying paper on education in China, prepared at the request of the late Hon. Benjamin P. Avery, then United States minister resident at Peking, by Rev. William A. P. Martin, LL. D., president of the Imperial College, Peking, a native of the United States, was furnished to this Office some time since through the courtesy of the Hon. Secretary of State. It has not been printed before from want of sufficient means.

The peculiar fitness of the author to make an authoritative statement in regard to education in China will be generally admitted, while the estimate of the value of this paper expressed by Hon. Peter Parker, M. D., for many years resident in that country, and formerly United States commissioner to that government, will be recognized as the verdict of a competent judge.

The subject is one of great and general interest, not only in view of the increase of Chinese immigration to this country, but also as furnishing a basis for intelligent comparison between such widely divergent civilizations as are represented by the two nations. It may be possible to trace in their system of education the causes that have arrested the further development of a people whose civilization dates from such a remote antiquity, and who were once far in advance of western nations in all knowledge of the arts of civilization. The causes of a result so well defined and so general must be worthy our study if we would avoid falling into a similar error, while the means that at so early a period led a whole people to so high a development and held in unity as a nation so many millions during many centuries, are well worth investigation. The evils resultant from a rigid, uniform, and universal system of training may be noted, and similar mistakes avoided.

In striking contrast with this account of the ancient system of education in China will be found the accompanying statement made by one of the two government commissioners in charge of youth who have been sent by that government to this country to be trained in a knowledge of the science and literature of the western nations.

As of general interest to educators, I recommend the publication of the accompanying documents as a circular of information.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN EATON,
Commissioner.

The Hon. the SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

Approved, and publication ordered.

C. SCHURZ,
Secretary.

LETTERS OF HON. BENJ. P. AVERY* AND DR. PETER PARKER
TO THE COMMISSIONER.

LEGATION OF THE UNITED STATES,

Peking, May 28, 1875.

SIR: Before my departure for China, I received from you a request to secure for use by your Bureau an accurate and full statement of the methods of education in China and "the relation of the methods to the failure of their civilization."

On my arrival at Peking, bearing your request in mind, I was confirmed in the opinion entertained before, that to no one else could I apply for the information desired with so much propriety as to Dr. W. A. P. Martin, our fellow countryman, president of the Imperial College for Western Science, at Peking, whose long residence in China, scholarly knowledge of Chinese literature, and familiar acquaintance with native methods of education must be well known to you.

Dr. Martin, at my solicitation, agreed to furnish a paper on the sub-

* The sudden death of Mr. Avery, on the 8th of November, 1875, while minister of the United States at Peking, was mourned as a loss not only to his large circle of personal friends, but to the country which he represented so acceptably.

The following estimate of his character and usefulness is taken from the somewhat extended notice of his death which appeared in the Overland Monthly Magazine for December, 1875. Mr. Avery was formerly the editor of this magazine, and his influence in California was recognized as ever exerted in the direction of the highest culture:

"Mr. Avery was in many respects a remarkable man. He typified the ripest fruitage of our western thought and culture. He was essentially Californian. * * * Perhaps no one person did so much to educate the people of the State in the right direction, to lift the thoughts of men above the sordid interests of the hour and the mean ambitions of personal gain. He embodied in his life and character that spirit of a broader culture, purer morals, and loftier aims which constitutes the basis of all healthy growth. He loved California with an almost idolatrous love, but lamented its hard materialism and strove to make it more worthy of its great destiny; and he was unwearied in his efforts to elevate and refine. The hours that other workers gave to rest and recreation he devoted to the building up of new aesthetic interests and the study of those gentler arts that uplift society and smooth down the sharp angles of our western life. He was one of those rare men who are estimated rather below than above their true value. * * * His capacity for work was marvelous. We cannot recall a journalist, with perhaps the exception of the late Henry J. Raymond, who could write so rapidly yet so pointedly and correctly. His well stored mind poured forth its treasures in a rapid flowing copious stream. He was equally ready in all departments of journalistic activity. * * * He is dead; but the seed of thought and culture he has sown has not fallen on barren ground. His work survives him. The interests he promoted and the institutions he helped to found are living monuments of his beneficent activity."

ject you indicated, which I have just received from his hands and now forward to you through the courtesy of the State Department. I scarcely need add that you will find it alike interesting and valuable. In connection with the subject of Dr. Martin's paper, permit me to call your attention to a dispatch written by S. Wells Williams, then chargé d'affaires at this legation, to the State Department, under date of August 26, 1869, numbered 58, and referring to the enormous difficulties of the Chinese language, whether spoken or written, as one of the principal obstacles to the progress of this people. Dr. Martin touches on this point, but it did not enter into his object to enlarge upon it.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

BENJ. P. AVERY.

HON. JOHN EATON,
Commissioner of Education.

WASHINGTON, March 29, 1876.

SIR: I have perused with care and much interest the paper of Dr. Martin upon the subject of education in China, and regard it as a very able presentation of the past and present state of the various departments of education in the empire.

President Martin enjoys advantages and possesses qualifications (knowledge of the language, literature, laws, and customs of China) surpassed by none for presenting a thorough and accurate knowledge of the subject. Many are the remarkable events of the century just closing; among them, the opening of China and the demolition of her wall of conceit and exclusiveness, more massive than her great northern wall of bricks and cement, stand preëminent. While the astronomer is remapping the heavens and "trapping" in quick succession the hitherto undiscovered planets, and the paleontologist is pursuing his researches in Egypt and Assyria, so the archaeologist, for the first time, is opening to the western world the works of men for centuries in and around the forbidden city of the Celestial Empire, and a university modelled after those of the west has been established and is presided over by an eminent American scholar and sinologue.

The observations respecting the system of literary examinations, dating back more than two thousand years, are of special interest, and the change of base in education indicated by the educational mission to this country is of surpassing importance. The statements that "the government will soon perceive the necessity of supplying its people with the means of higher, broader culture than they can derive from the grammar and rhetoric of their own language;" that efforts for the promotion of education are specially encouraged by enlightened magistrates; that recently over three hundred new schools were reported as opened in one department (county) of the province (state) of Canton, taken in

connection with the Chinese educational mission, (which, according to the statement of Mr. Yung Wing, consists of 115 select Chinese youth pursuing a thorough collegiate and scientific education,) are facts of deepest interest. It is difficult to express or conceive the full influence these youth of rare talent and thorough education according to western standards will exert when, returned to their home, they shall become the educators of their people and coadjutors of the government itself.

Yours, truly,

PETER PARKER.

Hon. JOHN EATON,
Commissioner of Education.

