

brotherhood of men of letters; at the best he speaks to but a small audience, amuses rarely, excites sometimes without intention hopes that are delusive, and requires always, in order that he may be fairly understood, a degree of patience it is vain to expect from the multitude. To these difficulties others are added belonging to the work he accomplishes. The most original writers on science are destroyed constantly by the magnitude and overpowering character of the work they have written, and by the practical results that spring from the work. In other literature the book produced lives as the book, and the learner from it, age after age, must go back to the fountain head to drink and drink; in science literature the book sinks into the fact it proclaims, and the fact remains the exclusive master of the field. A striking example of this flashes across my mind at the present moment. Every reading man and woman knows that in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the book of Shakespeare's plays had its origin, and nearly everyone who has read the book (and who has not?) remembers the curious saying in it, 'I'll put a girdle round the world in forty minutes.' But how many are there who have read another great book of that same reign, entitled 'De Magnete;' or are aware that at the time when Shakespeare was writing his now-familiar phrases, the author of the book on the Magnet, the Queen's physician, one William Gilbert, when his daily toils of waiting upon the sick were over, was working with his smith in the laboratory at his furnace, needle, and compass, was writing up for the first time the word 'Electricity,' and was actually forging the beginnings of the very instruments that now, in less than forty seconds, put the girdle round the globe? Again, writers on science are lost sometimes in the blaze of their own success. They raise wonder by what they do, and fall beneath it. All knowledge newly born is miracle, but by-and-by, as the knowledge becomes familiar, the miracle ceases. In this way advances in science become part of our lives, while the men who write them down cease to us. When the Leyden jar was first described, Europe was mentally as well as physically convulsed with the thing; now a Leyden jar is a common object—we all know it; but how few know of Mr. Cuneus, who first described this instrument of science? The whole civilised world is cognisant in this day that communication from one part of the world to the other, by telegraph, is almost child's play; but how many have seen or heard of Mr. Cavallo's original Essay on Electricity as a means of communicating intelligence to places distant from each other? There is nothing more commonplace, in our day, than to know that a living human being can be placed in gentle sleep, and, while in blissful oblivion, can have performed on him what were once the tortures of the surgeon's art; but how few have heard or seen Sir Humphry Davy's paper announcing to mankind this grand beneficence! These are some of the difficulties of writers on science; and yet there is another I must name, be it ever so lightly. I refer to the desperate struggles of the man of science who has nothing but science to carry him on in life. None but such as are placed as I am, practising as physicians in the metropolis of the world, and admitted at the same time, as men of science, into some knowledge of the subject upon which I now speak, can form a conception of the almost hopelessness of the position of the pure scholar of science. On this I say no more. I would awaken but not weary your sympathy . . . much of the difficulty these writers have had to bear I recognise with admiration, as their truest glory; and I see that hope for better worldly prospects is near. A profession of science is no doubt organising. The world is at last asking men of science to employ themselves in teaching the world; and the teachers, bending to the labour, are, in their turn, willing to suspect that they are but as children, or at best youths, in the race after knowledge. This is most hopeful; and it is hopeful

also to find that men who claim to be conservators of a knowledge that was matured when science was unborn, are listening now to our scholars with an attentive ear, and are beginning to accept that the Lord of Nature, whether he reveal himself to the ancient law-giver in the burning bush that was not consumed, or to the modern astronomer in the burning glory of the omnipotent sun, is one and the same Lord. Thus there is hope, I may say certainly, in the future for the literature of science; for its poetry, its parables, its facts, nay, even for its religion."

FEARFUL EARTHQUAKE IN CHINA

THE American Minister in China, General Lowe, has just forwarded to the Secretary of State at Washington the following account of the fearful earthquake which occurred in the Bathang, in the province of Szchuen, on the 11th of April, which he has had translated from the report of the Chinese Governor General of the province in which it occurred:—"Bathang lies on a very elevated spot beyond the province about 200 miles west of Li-Tang, and about thirty post stations from the district town of Ta-t sien, on the high road to Thibet. About eleven o'clock on the morning of the 11th of April, the earth at Bathang trembled so violently that the government offices, temples, granaries, stone houses, storehouses, and fortifications, with all the common dwellings and the temple of Ting-lin, were at once overthrown and ruined; the only exception was the hall in the temple grounds, called Ta-Chao, which stood unharmed in its isolation. A few of the troops and people escaped, but most of the inmates were crushed and killed under the falling timber and stone. Flames also suddenly burst out in four places, which strong winds drove about until the heavens were darkened with the smoke, and their roaring was mingled with the lamentations of the distressed people. On the 16th the flames were beaten down, but the rumbling noises were still heard under ground like distant thunder, as the earth rocked and rolled like a ship in a storm. The multiplied miseries of the afflicted inhabitants were increased by a thousand fears, but in about ten days matters began to grow quiet, and the motion of the earth to cease. The grain collector at Bathang says that for several days before the earthquake the water had overflowed the dykes, but after that the earth cracked in many places, and black, foetid water spurted out in a furious manner. If one poked the earth the spurting instantly followed, just as is the case with the salt wells and fire wells in the eastern part of the province; and this explains how it happened that fire followed the earthquake in Bathang. As nearly as can be ascertained there were destroyed two large temples, the offices of the collector of grain tax, the local magistrates' offices, the Ting-lin temple, and nearly 700 fathoms of wall around it, and 351 rooms in all inside; six smaller temples, numbering 221 rooms, besides 1849 rooms and houses of the common people. The number of people killed by the crash, including the soldiers, was 2,298, among whom were the local magistrate and his second in office. The earthquake extended from Bathang eastward to Pang-Chahemuth, westward to Nan-Tun, on the south to Lintsah-shih, and on the north to the salt wells to Atimtoz, a circuit of over 400 miles. It occurred simultaneously over the whole of this region. In some places steep hills split and sunk into deep chasms, in others mounds on level plains became precipitous cliffs, and the roads and highways were rendered impassable by obstructions. The people were beggared and scattered like autumn leaves, and this calamity to the people of Bathang and the vicinity was really one of the most distressing and destructive that has ever occurred in China."