NARRATIVE

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OF

THE EARL OF ELGIN'S MISSION

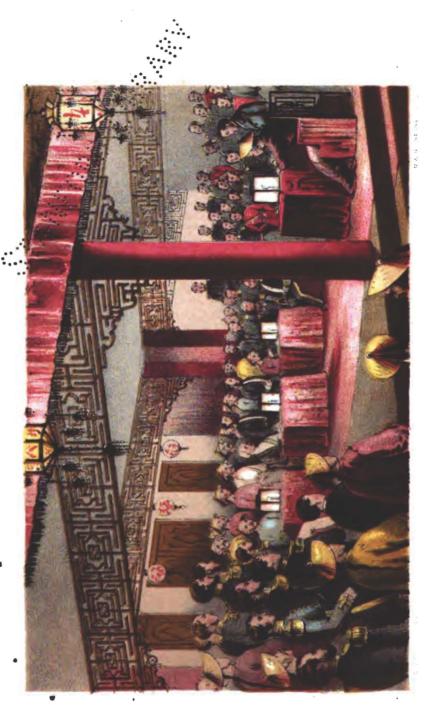
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CHINA AND JAPAN

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THE EARL OF ELGIN'S MISSION TO CHINA AND JAPAN

IN THE YEARS 1857, '58, '59.

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LAURENCE QLIPHANT

PRIVATE SECRETARY TO LORD ELGIN

Author of the "Russian Shores of the Black Sea," &c.

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WITH HULSTRATIONS FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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YAASEL GROBMATS

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In the following pages I have endeavoured to give a history of the proceedings of the Special Mission to China and Japan, which extended over a period of two years. It has been thrown into the shape of a personal narrative, in the hope that it would convey, in a more amusing and readable form, the record of our experiences in those Empires.

Events have recently transpired in China which are deeply to be regretted, although they may possibly invest this work with an interest that it might not else have deserved. The untoward character of those events and the serious consequences which they will probably entail, seemed to warrant my entering at greater length than I should otherwise have done into details, more especially connected with the policy which Lord Elgin thought it expedient to adopt, and the difficulties with which he had to contend at the mouth of the Peiho.

The description I have given of Japan may very possibly be found to be somewhat at variance with the accounts

which we may continue to receive from that Empire. It is nevertheless in accordance with the results of our observation, and, I trust, conveys truthfully the impressions we were led to form of that country during our short residence in its capital. The circumstances under which we visited it were, perhaps, calculated to present to us the bright rather than the gloomy side of the picture. Our imaginations had not been excited by the glowing descriptions of former visitors, and our most sanguine anticipations consequently fell far short of the pleasing reality. We met with frankness and courtesy where we expected suspicion and reserve. In a country noted for its jealous distrust of foreigners, we enjoyed an entire immunity from all restrictions upon our per-We were prepared for a diplomatic consonal liberty. test with a government rigid in its adherence to a traditional policy of exclusiveness. A fortnight sufficed to enable us to conclude a Treaty with it upon a most liberal basis. We had just passed a year in China, and all comparisons made with that Empire were in favour of Japan.

That certain special reasons may have operated to render our reception at Yedo altogether exceptional, and to secure our diplomatic success, is very possible. It was only natural to suppose that, when those reasons had ceased to exist, those who followed us should experience a very different treatment.

In the accounts furnished by strangers of little-known countries, much depends upon the medium through which their observations are made-much also upon their capacity and knowledge of the world. Thus the diplomatist who expects to find the Japanese guided by the moral code of Western nations—desirous of giving effect to the stipulations of a treaty which they only accepted as an inevitable necessity, and anxious to increase their intercourse with a race which has been held for upwards of two centuries in aversion and abhorrence-will probably describe them in a manner calculated to reflect less on their intelligence than his own. So, the merchant who expresses indignation and disgust at the reluctance of the Government to assist him in his commercial enterprises,—at its peculiar notions of political economy, and at the ignorance betrayed by his customers, of all mercantile transactions on a grand scale, is certainly not likely to succeed in establishing a large "connection." While a gentleman whose previous range of observation has been limited, on arriving in Japan from England, may be surprised at finding that it differs in some respects, in a social point of view, from his own country, and that the same articles of diet are not universally used by the human family, in all quarters of the globe.

It is, however, most desirable that a new country should be presented in all its aspects—and it is only

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just to ourselves to state, that the impressions we received during the brief period of our stay in Yedo are thoroughly borne out by the experiences of the Dutch, whose knowledge of the Japanese has extended over a period of two centuries and a half; as well as confirmed by those Americans who have resided for some years in the country. Meantime, we may hope for the most beneficial results from the Embassy which is about to be despatched by the Japanese Government to the nations of the West.

The very talented and truthful drawings, of which I have been permitted by Lord Elgin to avail myself, were presented to his Lordship by Mr Bedwell, R.N., who accompanied the Mission to Japan in the yacht Emperor.

I am indebted to Mr Jocelyn for several admirable photographs of the principal Chinese officials with whom we came in contact. My thanks are also due to Dr Saunders, for the Meteorological Register with which he kindly furnished me.

ATHENÆUM CLUB, 15th Dec. 1859.

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