

tolerated in China ; and knowledge, including, as a matter of course, a thorough acquaintance with the arts by which men live, is at a premium there. However unacquainted with what most ennobles man, the Chinese cannot be left ignorant of how—to use their own homely phrase—“ men are to get their rice.” Were the case otherwise, they would of necessity have to eat one another ; and so in this vast nation, still in some respects a semibarbarous one, a certain measure of education is universal ; and its cheap literature, notwithstanding its block-printing and its difficult character, is the most immense in the world. And, on a similar principle, the growing population of Britain will force upon the country the question of an adequate education for the people. It is difficult to overpeople any nation with a taught and industrious race of men. China is not overpeopled with its three hundred millions. Ireland, that has not half the number of inhabitants to the square mile, and the Highlands of Scotland, that have not the one-fortieth part the number to the square mile, are, on the contrary, greatly overpeopled ; and the difference consists mainly in this, that whereas the Chinese have, with all their many faults, been taught how to “ get their rice,” the poor Highlanders and the Irish have not. But, in this special department at least, the extreme limits of the “ let-alone system ” have been well-nigh reached ; and the next half-century will see knowledge more largely spread abroad, as a matter of necessity in which the very existence of the nation is involved, than any former age of the world. The time has at length come when “ many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.”

But though knowledge during the last half-century *did* greatly increase, so that there are now single periodicals that possess a larger circle of readers than composed in the previous half-century, according to the estimate of Burke, the whole reading public of Great Britain, there is another, and,