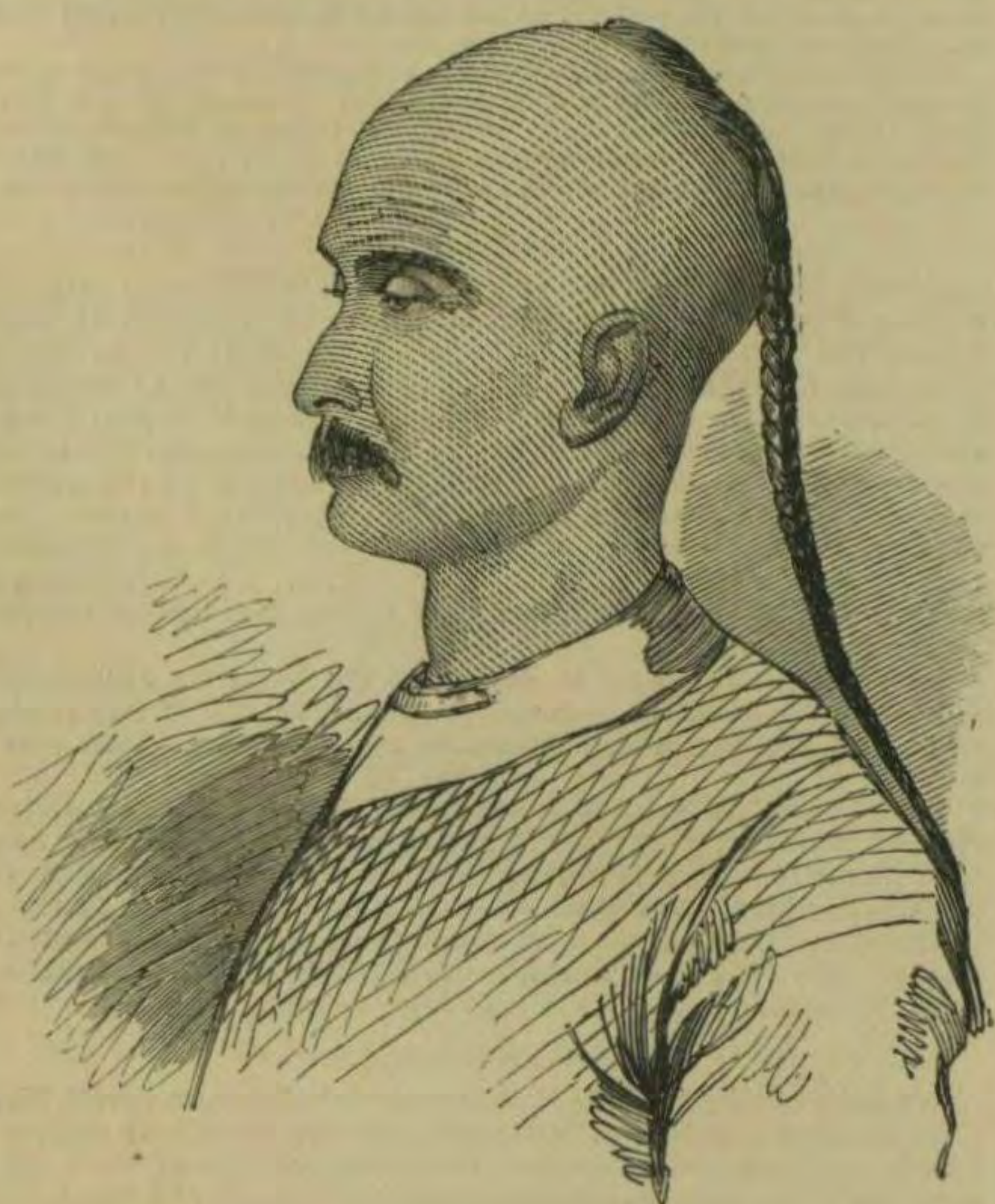


COLONY OF JEWS IN THE CENTRE OF CHINA.

It has long been known that there is a colony of Jews residing at Kae-fing-foo, in the centre of China. The fact was first brought to the knowledge of the European public by the Roman Catholic missionaries during the seventeenth century; since which time, the accounts received regarding them having been so few and meagre, their very existence has been almost doubted. Hebrew letters have been forwarded to them from time to time by various individuals, but have never elicited any reply; and up to the present year the only certain information we have possessed has been from the letters of missionaries. An expedition



CHAOU KIN-CHING.

having been recently set on foot, at the instance of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, the result has been quite as satisfactory as might have been expected. Two Chinese, in the service of the London Missionary Society at Shanghai, were despatched in November last on a mission of inquiry, and have returned, bringing accounts in every respect confirmatory of those who had preceded them and also six small sections of the law written in antique Hebrew, and two Hebrew rituals, all in manuscript. The descendants of the Hebrew race they found; who, although losing many of their ancient characteristics, were still living a distinct people in the middle of the Chinese city, notwithstanding they have in every respect adopted the Chinese dress and mode of living; they are still looked down upon and despised, not only by the privileged sects, but also by the Mohammedans, of whom there are a very large population in the same city. The last rabbi died nearly fifty years ago, and they have never found any one to supply his place. Not one among them can now read Hebrew, although the travellers, being admitted into the most holy place of the synagogue, found thirteen rolls of the law carefully preserved. Their religious service is now given up and the great portion of the people are in extreme poverty. On the return of the two travellers to Shanghai with the above account, it was resolved to despatch them a second time, with a commission to purchase



CHAOU WAN-KWEL.

all or any of the rolls that could be procured; and they were so far successful as to obtain six of them, which are now at Shanghai, and will be shortly forwarded to London for the benefit of biblical scholars. One of these is of considerable antiquity; the others are in excellent condition, written on very thick white sheepskins; each contains 239 columns, varying in width from three to nine inches each. Each roll contains the whole Pentateuch. Besides these rolls, they also brought about forty more sections of the law, five or six being duplicates; about a dozen rituals, some for the daily service, one for the Feast of Purim, one for the day of Atonement, and some others. There is also a genealogical table of the principal families living there, written in Chinese and Hebrew. A Hebrew and Chinese letter, which they had received last year from Mr. Layton, English Consul at Amoy, is also among the papers. Two of the native Israelites also accompanied them to Shanghai, one a literary man, who is now studying Hebrew under one of the missionaries. There is nothing in any of the books that have come to hand that can give any clue to the early history of this people. It is stated on a tablet in their synagogue that they first came to China during the Han dynasty (about the beginning of the Christian era), bringing tribute of coloured cloths from India. Their small books indicate a Persian origin. Nothing has yet been discovered in the Chinese records respecting the sect, but perhaps future research may throw some light on their history.

Annexed are the portraits of the two Israelites. Chaou Wan-kwe aged forty, is a Chinese student, and was a teacher of the children in his sect. Chaou Kin-ching, his brother, is about forty-three, and has a very slender knowledge of letters.