John Chinaman as a Humorist.

By HELENA VON POSECK,

Author of "Thekla's Decision," "Adrift in Naples," "On Board a Chinese Houseboat."

WESTERNERS in general are not wont to give much credit to John Chinaman for the faculty of humour. They are apt to imagine him a stolid, dry-as-dust sort of individual into whose wooden cranium no gleam of fun can ever penetrate. But those who have lived and conversed with him on somewhat intimate terms know better: they know that a keen sense of the ridiculous and a thorough enjoyment of a joke enter largely into his composition, grave and stolid though he may appear to outsiders.

A few of the humorous tales current among the Chinese may serve to illustrate this somewhat unappreciated feature in their character.

A One-Sided Bargain.

ONCE upon a time two friends started wine-making in partnership. "How shall we arrange matters?" asked Friend Number One at the outset. "Oh!" said Friend Number Two, "you can provide the rice*, and I will provide the water." "That won't do," said Number One, to whom these terms appeared, to say the least of it, somewhat one-sided. "That will be all right," replied the other, "When the wine is made, you can give back the water to me, and I will give you back your rice."

Many a sly hit at avarice and stinginess is embodied by the Chinese in a merry tale, as witness the two following.

A Compromise.

A RICH man once said to an individual remarkable for his covetousness: "If you will let me kill you, I will give you a thousand taels." The proposal was a very perplexing one; the offer of such a large sum of money was well-nigh irresistible, but, on the other hand, of what use would it be to a dead man? After a few moments' cogitation, our friend hit upon a capital *via media*. "Let it be this way," he said. "*Half* kill me, and give me five hundred taels."

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* The "wine" referred to is a spirit distilled from grain.

The Niggardly Householder.

A CERTAIN man was so mean that he never by any chance entertained visitors. One day his servant took a number of basins and plates to the riverside to wash them. "Has your master invited guests to his house to-day?" asked the neighbours, on seeing such an unwonted display of crockery. But the servant made answer, "You need not think that my master will invite any guests till Doomsday*." The master happened to overhear this speech, and on his servant's return, reproved him, saying: "Why did you tell them on what day I was going to invite guests?"

The Hasty Man and the Slow Man.

Two men were sitting together by a stove, one of whom was remarkable for the excitability of his disposition, the other for his extreme slowness. By-and-by the slow man perceived that the clothes of the other, having come in contact with the fire, were smouldering. Accordingly, after a due amount of hesitation, he addressed him thus. "I have a word to say to you, but, if I say it, I am afraid of exciting you; yet, if I don't say it, I am afraid it will be to your disadvantage; will it be best for me to say it, or not to say it?" "What is it?" asked the other, sharply, in reply to this preamble. "I have seen your clothes burning for a long time," placidly replied the slow man. Up jumped the hasty man in a great hurry. "Why didn't you tell me before?" he said angrily. "People say you are hasty," remarked the quiet man; "indeed, they are not wrong."

If we may judge by the tone of the two stories which I will next transcribe, silversmiths bear a poor character for honesty, while tailors do not come far behind.

A Good Way out of the Difficulty.

A FATHER once consulted a "suan-mingtih," or fortune-teller, about the destiny of his little son. "Will he live to grow up?" he anxiously asked. "Your son will grow up," replied the fortune-teller, "but his destiny is to be a thief." The father was in no wise disconcerted. "All I want is for him to grow up," he said, "then I will apprentice him to a silversmith." "Why will you do that?" asked the astonished fortune-teller "What day is there," was the reply, "on which a silversmith does not steal a little of his customers' silver?"

The Three Sons-in-Law.

ONCE upon a time there was a man who had three sons-in-law. The eldest daughter's husband was a silversmith, and the husband of the second a tailor, but the husband of the youngest wasted all his time in amusements. His father-in-law at last grew angry, and reproved him. "Look at my eldest son-in-law," he said. "He earns money, and supports his family. Whenever he wants to keep back a few 'ch'ien'† of

* Literally, "till the last day."

†The tenth part of an ounce.

silver he can do so. Then my second son-in-law, being a tailor, can easily appropriate a few feet of his customers' cloth, if he wishes. *You* alone have nothing to do." The "ne'er-do-weel" had his answer ready. "I will go out to-morrow," he replied, and buy some keys." "What will you buy keys for?" "I will take the keys to rich men's houses, and open their doors, and then, if I want to take a few thousands of silver, I can. I don't think much of your few 'ch'ien' of silver and few feet of cloth. *I* can get several thousands of silver." "If you do such a thing you will be a thief," the father made reply in a tone of virtuous indignation. "Aren't *they* thieves then?" asked the son-in-law.

But if tradesmen do not escape the lash of John Chinaman's sarcasm, he also has a few sharp blows for the incompetence of professional men.

Another Version of "Ne Sutor Ultra Crepidam."

A SOLDIER was once wounded by an arrow. When the battle was over, and he had returned to the camp, he sent for a surgeon. The surgeon "came, saw, and conquered." "Not difficult! not difficult!" he confidently exclaimed, as soon as he beheld the wound, in which the arrow was still fixed, and producing a large pair of scissors he cut off the shaft, leaving the head firmly imbedded in the flesh. Then he demanded his fee. But, strange to say, his patient was not satisfied with this masterly operation. "That outside part is of no consequence," he remonstrated; "the important thing is for you to heal the *inside*." "I am a '*wai*-k'o'—an outside-doctor," (or surgeon) —was the reply; "so I heal outside matters, and nothing else. You must call in a '*li*-k'o' —an inside-doctor (or physician)—for the rest. How can you expect me to attend to internal ailments?" Our friend, the surgeon, could certainly not be accused of being a "Jack-of-all-trades;" whether the latter half of the proverb might not be applied to him is a matter of opinion.

The Unappreciated Harpist.

THERE was once a professional harpist who prided himself considerably upon his musical skill but who, unfortunately, could not get other people to regard it in the same light. On one occasion, finding a table standing in the street, he leaned his harp upon it, and began to play, in the hope of attracting an audience, and pocketing certain tangible proofs of their appreciation. A group of people soon collected around him, but, alas! a very short space of time sufficed to disperse them. One man, however, remained; the gratified musician played on and on for his benefit, and at length gave utterance to his feelings on this wise. "Many people don't appreciate my music, but I am glad to see that there is *one* man who values it." Oh, the cruelty of that man's reply! "I'm waiting for the table," he said, "because it is mine; if it had not been for that, I would have gone long ago."

The Essentials of a Good Portrait.

An old gentleman once went to an artist to have his portrait painted. A wary old gentleman he seems to have been, after the genuine Chinese pattern, for he stipulated beforehand that he would only pay for the portrait if it resembled him. "All right," said the painter, "if it is not like you, I don't want any money,"

When the finishing touches had been put to the picture the artist called in a passer-by, and asked him whether he thought it like the original. The man looked at the old gentleman, looked at the portrait, and then pronounced his verdict. "The clothes are like his," he said. A second passer-by was appealed to. "The cap and shoes are like," he said, gravely. Some people are never satisfied, and this old gentleman seems to have been one of them. "The clothes, hat and shoes don't matter so much," he said. "Is the rest of it like me?" The two referees replied unhesitatingly, "The rest isn't a scrap like you." The sequel is involved in mystery, but we are left to surmise that the unfortunate artist had his labour for nothing.

Our next tale would seem to show that the Chinese schoolboy can take up his master sharply enough upon occasion, though, as a rule, he does not require as much keeping in order as his livelier and more independent Western contemporary.

A Schoolboy's Repartee.

Once upon a time there was a schoolmaster who often went to sleep during school-hours. In view of the example set them, it is not to be wondered at that his scholars sometimes did the same for, as the Chinese proverb says, "If the upper beams are not straight, the lower beams will be crooked." But if this "upper beam" awoke from his sweet slumbers to find any of the "lower beams" sleeping, he, of course, reproved them and would, by no means, countenance such an unseemly proceeding. On one occasion a youngster was bold enough to ask, "If you won't let us sleep, sir, why do you sleep yourself?" "When *I* sleep," pompously replied the pedagogue, "I dream that I go to visit Tso Kong" (Tso Kong was a sage, about whom Confucius is said to have often dreamed). The next day the same boy fell asleep again. The master awoke him with a blow, asking sternly, "Why do you go to sleep?" "I, too, have been to visit Tso Kong," was the ready reply. "You say you have seen Tso Kong," said the schoolmaster, hoping to put an extinguisher on the irrepressible youth; "What was he like?" But the pupil's crushing answer was, "Tso Kong said, '*I have not seen your master.*'"

As is generally known, the Chinese possess splendid memories, memory being the one great faculty cultivated by their system of education almost to the exclusion of the reasoning powers. But there are exceptions to every rule; a forgetful man may be found even in China, and that his mistakes and misfortunes afford great amusement to his compatriots will be seen from the following story, which I present in a somewhat abridged form.

A Treacherous Memory.

A MAN who had a very poor memory took an axe and went to a wood to cut down bamboos. On reaching the wood he suddenly felt very unwell, and threw down his axe. By-and-by the attack passed off, and he prepared for his work, but was pulled up by a distressing thought. "There now!" he said to himself, "I came to chop down trees, and forgot to bring an axe with me." What was to be done? At this moment he happened to look down, and discovered an axe lying on the ground at his feet, but failed to remember that it was his own. "This truly is heaven fulfilling man's wishes!" he delightedly exclaimed, as he picked it up. He then cut down as many bamboos as he wanted and carried them, together with the treasured axe, in the direction of home. Presently he came to some cottages, but by this time he had forgotten which was his own. A woman was standing at the door of one of them, and when she saw him staring stupidly around him she began to rate him in no measured terms on the subject of his bad memory. The poor man was utterly dumb-foundered. "It seems to me, ma'am, that I know your face," he said, deprecatingly, "but I have not offended you; why, then, do you abuse me like this?" The worthy dame was his own wife, but he had forgotten what she looked like.

His Master's Bones.

THERE was once a youth, who was greatly addicted to the pleasures of the table. He was so greedy that he always ate up all the meat that was set before him, leaving nothing for his servant but the bones. One day the servant said to him: "I hope that you, sir, will live to be a hundred years old, and I a year longer than you." "Why do you wish that?" demanded the young master. "Because, if I die after you, master, I can gather up your bones."

A Grateful Guest.

A WEALTHY old man of charitable disposition, on looking out of his door one winter's evening, saw a poor wretch standing shivering in the snow. Filled with pity for his destitute condition, he called him in, fed and clothed him, and put him up for the night. The next two days it still snowed hard, so he gave the poor man shelter and food till the weather cleared on the third morning. When about to leave, the guest said to his benefactor, "Please lend me your kitchen chopper." It was handed to him, though doubtless not without surprise at the strangeness of the request. But he soon explained himself. "I have troubled you for three days," he said, "and I have no means of repaying you but by killing myself." "That must not be! that must not be!" his host exclaimed in horror. "If you die, I shall have to spend at least twelve taels in burying you. And then suppose people should take it into their heads to say that I had killed you, I should be taken before the magistrate, and have to spend no end of money." This was

exactly the point to which the poor man had wished to bring him. "I don't want you to spend a lot of money," he said. "Only give me the twelve taels that my funeral would cost you if I died in your house, and that will do." The good old man grew very angry, and the dispute was threatening to become serious, when some neighbours, hearing loud voices, came upon the scene with the object of mediating, according to the usual custom in the Celestial Empire, where everything, from a wedding to a quarrel, requires a go-between. The neighbours proposed a compromise, and advised the rich man to give the poor man six taels instead of twelve. He found there was nothing for it but to submit, and handed over the six taels, but could not refrain from giving a parting thrust to his ungrateful guest together with the money. "You man without a conscience!" he cried—"to treat me like this after the way in which I have treated you!" "You say I have no conscience," returned the other, mortified at the reduction by six taels of the sum he had hoped to pocket, "*I* say *you* have no conscience. I have slept three nights in your house, and you charge me two taels a night for the accommodation."

Note.—The Western reader will probably think that the rich old man of our story was extremely foolish to be so terrified by a threat which would obviously never be carried out. But it is a common thing for a Chinese to commit suicide in the house of a person who has offended him, in order to spite him by making him pay the funeral expenses and, perhaps, also a fine for having been the cause of the suicide.

Chinese Anecdotes.

By Helena von Poseck.

How the Cruel Cook was Punished.

The following story inculcating the lesson of kindness to dumb animals (a lesson surely sadly needed in the Celestial Empire) may be of interest to members of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, as shewing the way in which Chinese moral reformers seek to move the hearts of the masses.

Once upon a time, so the story runs, there was a man who earned his living by selling cooked meat. He was a clever cook, and his viands were greatly appreciated by his customers, but turtle was his speciality, and always fetched a high price.

His manner of proceeding was as follows: He first washed his turtle clean, and then placed it alive in a cauldron of luke-warm water, which he brought slowly to the boil. In the lid of the cauldron he had made a hole. When the poor turtle found the water getting hot it began to feel thirsty and stuck its head out through the aperture. At this juncture the cook put into its open mouth a spoonful of tasty sauce, with the object of giving a piquant flavour to its flesh by the time the boiling process was finished.

The fame of this wonderful restaurateur became great—indeed he made quite a fortune through his delicious turtle. But now comes the tragic sequel. Not many years had gone by, when suddenly his house caught fire. He tried to open the door of his room, but somehow was unable to do so. He then rushed to the window, and attempted to jump out, but was met by streams of water squirted in by the firemen, who were trying to save the house. He stretched his head out of another window, and yet another, but the water always dashed in his face half blinded him, and drove him back into the flames.

So the cruel cook, slowly roasted to death in his burning house, met a fate very similar to that to which he had often condemned poor innocent turtles. His ill-gotten gains, too, were all destroyed in the conflagration.

The Mandarin's Decision.

Two oxen once had a fight, which ended in one of them goring the other to death. Their respective owners quarrelled about the matter, one claiming damages which the other was unwilling to pay. The neighbouring "peace-talkers" being at a loss what advice to give, the farmers appealed to their Magistrate, who soon settled the question by writing down his decision in poetic form as follows:

"Two oxen fought:
One died, one lived:
Let the dead one be enjoyed together,
Let them plough together with the living one."

Chinese Customs connected with Births, Marriages and Deaths.

By HELENA VON POSECK.

IN the following sketches of Chinese customs I have confined myself almost exclusively to details related to me by an intelligent Chinese literary man in the province of Kiangsu, or else coming under my own personal observation, with scarcely any reference to books written upon the subject. Hence it must not be supposed that wedding and funeral ceremonies all over China are here described in every minute particular. The Chinese have a proverb to the effect that customs differ at a distance of three or five li (from a mile to a mile and a half). All the main features no doubt hold good throughout the Empire, but I have observed in books written by foreigners, living in other parts of China, items of which I have never heard in my own neighbourhood, while, on the other hand, I have not seen the slightest hint of many details which I now lay before the reader.

I.

Customs connected with the Birth of a Child.

GREAT are the rejoicings when a son is born into a Chinese family, for not only may the parents count upon being cared for and supported in old age, but upon being worshipped after death for generations to come, and having their wants in the other world supplied by the offerings of a filial son and his descendants Of course the son *may* die before attaining manhood, or *may* turn out badly, but it is devoutly hoped that neither of these contingencies will occur. Yet, in view of their possibility, the more sons the better, so that, failing one or two, others may be at hand to fulfil the offices of filial piety. So the father is loudly congratulated by friends and neighbours, and the mother probably envied by female acquaintances who have not the honour and felicity of being the mothers of sons.

The advent of a daughter is, as a rule, regarded in the light of a misfortune, and no congratulations are offered, for etiquette demands that the unlucky parents should not be reminded of the trouble that has come upon them. In many parts of China a baby-girl is done away with as soon as she is born if she happen to have elder sisters, for one or two girls in a family are quite enough. It is a mistake, however,

to suppose that the horrible practice of infanticide prevails through the whole country. There are regions in which it seems to be quite unknown. Still, the fact remains that the welcome extended to a little girl is a very poor one compared with that received by her brothers. A boy will probably always remain with his parents, whereas a girl will early be married into another family, and thenceforth be regarded almost exclusively as a member of that family, her own parents having very little claim upon her. Hence the feeling that all care and money bestowed upon her are spent upon another man's child, and the keen business instinct of a Chinese recoils from such waste.

Yet, in spite of time-honoured maxims and selfish considerations, I have seen little girls in China who were petted and prized by their parents, especially where there was no brother to cast them into the shade. These soft-hearted people, however, are shockingly unmindful alike of the precepts of their sages and of the consensus of public opinion, in allowing themselves to be swayed by such unworthy feelings.

But now let us turn to the ceremonies gone through in connection with the advent of a new little Celestial.

The third day of a baby's life is an important one, and is known as "Shi San," or "Wash Third," because then he gets his first bath! (In some parts of China a baby is washed the *first* day). His relations are invited on that day to enjoy a feast at the parents' house, and to thank the gods for his birth. The parents afterwards usually send to their kinsfolk and neighbours a present of hard-boiled duck eggs painted red, if the baby be a boy, and of boiled rice, if a girl. In the case of a wealthy family, duck eggs are sometimes presented in honour of a girl, but then an even number must be given to each recipient, as two, four or six, whereas it must be an odd number for a boy. But as a general rule if you receive a present of duck eggs, you know that your friend is the happy mother of a *son*. Fairly well-to-do middle-class people spend about fifteen or sixteen Mexican dollars on such occasions, and as a dollar will usually buy from a hundred-and-thirty to a hundred-and-sixty, the quantity of eggs sent round is enormous.

When the present consists of rice, two servants are sent to the neighbouring houses, one carrying on a bamboo pole two large buckets of rice, and the other a basin, which he fills on arriving at each door, and presents to the inmates, who empty the basin, and return it. Sometimes each family receives two basinsful.

After this comes the parents' turn to receive presents, which may consist of legs of pork, tripe, red sugar (we should call it brown), or "san tze," a concoction made of doughstrings and oil. When visitors call, red sugar and hot water are mixed with the "san tze," and set before them. The women-servants, too, who bring presents to the house, are often regaled in this way.

Until her baby is about a month old the mother remains out of sight, receiving no visitors, and paying no visits, but at the end of that time she goes to the temple to offer incense, and after that may visit the houses of her friends. I believe that in some parts of China the period of seclusion extends over a period of thirty days, if the

baby be a boy, and forty days, if a girl. At about a month old, the baby's head is shaved, and a feast given in his honour, a grander feast, and more numerously attended than that of the third day. The female guests are entertained by the mother at the back of the house, and the men by the father in the guest-room in front. The guests generally arrive at about eleven o'clock, and present their congratulations to the parents, dine at twelve, drink wine in the afternoon, and leave somewhere about five.

But previous to the feast, all sorts of presents have been sent to Master Baby—bracelets, hats of truly wonderful and mysterious composition, a silver lock and chain for his neck, a silver tablet to hang on his breast, and a silver image of Buddha or some other idol to place on his hat. These articles are sometimes made of gold instead of silver, if the donors are wealthy people. The lock has a figurative meaning, being supposed to fasten the baby up safely, so that it may not run away (or, in plain language, that it may not die). The image on the hat is to protect it from evil spirits. Wine and doughstrings are also presented, but these, it is to be presumed, are intended for the use of the older members of the family.

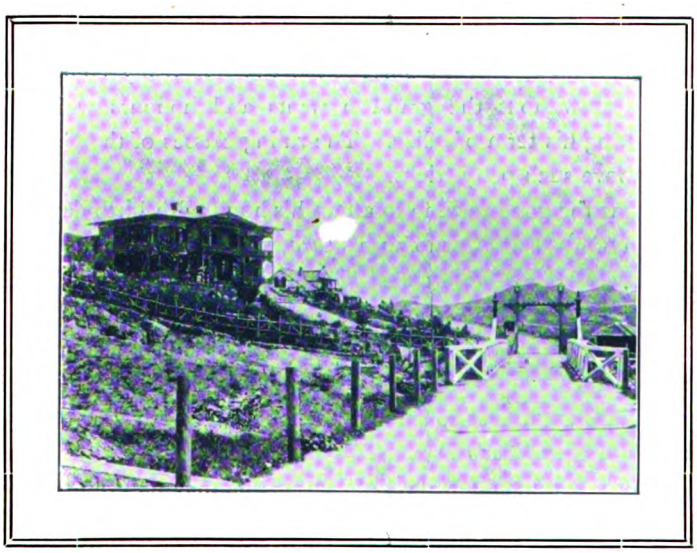
Baby's first birthday is celebrated by another feast, on which occasion the father often places near the child objects typical of various careers in life, such as an inkslab, a cake of ink, pen and paper, an abacus (or reckoning-board), a set of money-scales, and other articles. If he eagerly grasp an inkslab or a pen it is taken as a sign that Baby will hereafter become a literary man; if an abacus takes his fancy, has career will certainly be a commercial one, and so on with the rest of the typical articles.

Apropos of birthdays, every tenth birthday is called a "ta seng rih," or "great birthday," and is made the occasion of feasts and presents. Intermediate birthdays are but little noticed. A mandarin often antedates his great birthday by a few years, for fear he should not be in office when the day really comes, and should therefore have to go without the grand presents and honours which fall to his share if it occur during his term of office. The ruling classes of the Celestial Empire are by no means above such petty tricks.

If a Chinese has the good fortune to attain his hundredth birth-day, he is entitled to tell the mandarin of his district, who, in his turn, passes on the news to the "Son of Heaven," and then a memorial arch called "Peh Sui Fang" (Hundred Years' House) is erected in honour of the venerable Celestial.

As mentioned already, ordinary birthdays are not of much account; indeed, the years of a person's life are not reckoned by the number of his birthdays, but of the years of which he has seen ever so small a portion; each fresh year of his life being estimated to begin on New Year's Day. Thus a Chinese is at least a year older than an Englishman born within a few days of himself; he may be even two years older, if born at the end of the year. A baby born on the last day of the old year would, on New Year's Day, be just two years old, according to their mode of reckoning; but I have observed that the mothers generally wait till their little ones have reached the

age of a few months before they tell you that they are two years old; just at first they prefer to give the age in days or months as we should do; apparently it would be too absurd, even in the eyes of a Celestial, to call such a wee mite two years old! But if their way of calculating age seems ludicrous to us, it is beaten hollow by *our* mode of reckoning, as they have been given to understand it. Over and over again I have met with sensible Chinese women who thought that a Western baby is called a hundred years old at the time of its birth, and that we reckon our ages downwards from one-hundred, ninety-nine, ninety-eight, and so forth. I well remember the surprise of some of our native visitors on hearing that two little foreign children whom they were examining and admiring, were respectively nine and seven years old. They stared at one another with a look of amazed enquiry, and then began to count up (or rather, *down*) "Ninety-nine, ninety-eight," and so on till they came to ninety-three. Surely that child could not be ninety-three years old! and yet that was the foreigners' way of reckoning: the extremely youthful appearance and manners of these nonogenarians were altogether too perplexing! Their mother, too, certainly looked younger than that! The women did not *say* all this, but what they *did* say, coupled with the looks exchanged between them, made it plain that they, as well as so many others, were firm believers in the hundred years' theory, and I hastened to enlighten them upon the subject. I hope they believed my statements and those of the children's mother, but it was hard to convince them that we were none of us born a hundred years old.



Chinese Customs connected with Births, Marriages, and Deaths.

By Helena von Poseck.

II.

CUSTOMS CONNECTED WITH BETROTHAL AND MARRIAGE.

WHEN a Chinese girl is about fourteen, or, in many cases, a good deal younger, a relation or friend will say to her parents, "In such and such a family there is a boy who is not betrothed yet: shall I act as go-between for you with regard to your daughter?" Or he may make the first suggestion to the boy's parents; circumstances will guide as to which should be spoken to first, the go-between's greater intimacy with one or the other family probably having to do with it. The said go-between may be of either sex, but I think is most frequently a woman; for convenience sake, however, I shall generally speak of this important personage as "he." If the girl's parents approve of the suggestion, the matchmaker goes to the house of the other family, and talks the matter over with them. They perhaps politely say, "If the girl's family would like it, and don't look down upon our family, please ask them to have her eight characters written out, so that we may see whether the match will do." The said "eight characters" are written upon a piece of red paper, and tell the year, month, day, and hour of the girl's birth, each item of information consisting of two characters, or words.

Upon this the go-between returns to the first family and reports what has been said; the "eight characters" are written out, and given to him, and he takes the paper to the boy's home, and places it under the incense-censer, before either the kitchen-god or the house-god. During this performance no one utters a word.

The middle-man (or middle-woman) then goes away, and the matter is left in abeyance for three days, presumably to give time to the god to make up his mind as to the merits of the case, and to make known his will. If, during these three days, one of the family is taken ill, if a child breaks a basin, or any other untoward event occurs, it is taken as a sign that the

match is undesirable. But if all goes well, a soothsayer is called in to look at the girl's "eight characters," and compare them with those of the boy or young man, to see whether they agree or clash with one another. If they clash, as, for instance, if one was born in the year supposed to be presided over by the tiger, and the other in that ruled by the dragon, or if one belongs to the hare and the other to the cock, there is no need to proceed any further; the match is clearly impossible, for the tiger and the dragon are incongruous, as also the hare and the cock. But if the animals to which the young people respectively belong are compatible with each other, and there are no other prohibitive signs, back goes the middle-man to the maiden's home, and gives his report.

If the father and mother know nothing about the family of the prospective bridegroom, they will probably go to the place and enquire what sort of people they are. This, however, is no great safeguard, for the neighbours have generally been prompted beforehand, and take care in speaking of them. If a neighbour, by giving an unfavourable report, causes a match to be broken off, he is considered to have committed a great sin, even though his words may have been perfectly true. But if the families are slightly acquainted with each other, they do not trouble to make enquiries, but proceed at once with the necessary arrangements.

It is not customary to marry a daughter to the son of near neighbours, or of fellow-villagers, because there would always be the danger, closely secluded though she usually is, that the betrothed maiden might be caught sight of by some member of the bridegroom's family, which would be a highly improper and undesirable thing. If, however, the bridegroom's father or mother should happen to die during the period of the engagement, this rule has to be broken through, for, since the maiden is regarded as already belonging to her future family, she must present herself with them to pay her respects to the dead body the same as if she were actually married.

In spite of their objection to marrying a daughter in the same village, or even town, the Chinese do not, as a rule, care to send her to a great distance, for various reasons, some of which, at any rate, do them credit. One is the fear lest the bridegroom may be only marrying in order to take her away and sell her—a by no means groundless fear. Another objection is, that, if she live far away, her parents will be able to have little or no intercourse with her after her marriage. Then, too, her husband and mother-in-law may perhaps ill-treat her, and her parents will be too far off to know anything about it, or to interfere for her protection. And yet another reason is that people might gossip about them, and say that they had sold their daughter—had not minded sending her to a distant place, because plenty of

money was offered for her. Hence it will be seen that Chinese parents are not, as a whole, perfectly indifferent to the fate of their daughters, though they *do* consider them immensely inferior to their sons.

Another point worthy of notice is, that in China a man must not marry a woman bearing the same surname as himself. This must sometimes prove a very trying limitation, as Chinese surnames are comparatively few (the greater part of the inhabitants of a village often longing to the same clan, and having the same surname). This fact, combined with the strong feeling against sending a daughter to a distance, and also the frequent clashing of the days, months, and years, in which the birthdays of proposed partners occur, greatly limits the choice of a husband or wife. Then there is the fact that mandarins, and many other wealthy Chinese, are given to having two or three wives, and if we add to this the fearful prevalency of the murder of baby-girls in vast regions of the Empire, we shall see that it is not the easiest thing in the world for a young man of moderate income to find a suitable wife.

We must not, however, run away with any romantic ideas about an interesting pair of lovers, whose hearts are bound up in each other, being confronted by the stern fact that one belongs to the hare and the other to the cock, and that therefore marriage is out of the question for them, or that, because Edwin happens to be Mr. Wang, and Angelina to be Miss Wang, they are for ever separated. Neither must we conjure up before our mind's eye a harrowing picture of the young lovers, locked in each other's arms, leaping together into the swiftly-flowing river, or pining in solitude till death comes to end the sad story. No, no! Suicide is, alas, fearfully common in China, but it is rarely, if ever, caused by love-affairs. These are unknown, or if, by any possibility, such a preposterous thing *should* occur as a young man and a girl falling in love with each other, it would be regarded by the Celestial Mrs. Grundy, and indeed, by everybody else, as most wicked and shameful. Marriage is solely a matter of business and convenience, and all the arrangements must be carried out by match-makers, parents, and guardians; for the young man himself to have a word to say in the matter, even if he has arrived at years of discretion, would be the height of impropriety. A man who is already married, but who can afford to have more than one wife, and cares to do so, may choose a woman who happens to take his fancy, but she will always have a secondary and somewhat degraded position: the one chosen for him in his youth by his parents is the only true wife. Alas for poor China! The pure and beautiful love, which in our eyes must precede all true marriage, is unknown there, as in almost all heathen lands, and a sordid bargain takes its place, resulting often in such misery to the poor wife, that, despised by her husband and ill-treated

by her mother-in-law, she takes the remedy that lies nearest—a dose of opium, or a plunge into the river, scarcely realizing that it is an immortal soul she is thus casting away.

If in easy circumstances and well-treated, a Chinese wife no doubt often considers herself happy; she has never expected *love* from her husband, and therefore does not feel the lack of it, but lives her poor empty life without knowing *how* poor and *how* empty it is. In some cases, where compatibility of temper and amiability of disposition exist, no doubt husband and wife *do* become sincerely attached to each other, and here and there a husband is found who listens to his wife's opinion, and loves her better than his father and mother; at least a son is sometimes charged by his parents with this shocking crime.

But this long digression started from the fact of two people of the same name not being allowed to marry, and we must hasten to return to our subject. Occasionally, if a poor man wants to marry a rich girl of the same name (for a man of mature age, and without parents or guardians must, of necessity, arrange these matters for himself), he meets the difficulty by changing his name; but of course he can only do this when at a distance from his native place, as otherwise his true name would be known. He runs considerable risk, moreover, in practising this piece of deception as, if it came to the knowledge of the mandarin, he would be liable to punishment.

Well, the boy and girl whose case we are considering, not bearing the same surname, not belonging by their birthdays to incongruous animals, no one having been taken ill, and no crockery having been broken during the three days of suspense, the all important question of "likin," or betrothal-money, is entered upon. The bridegroom's parents send the go-between to enquire how much money, jewellery, and other presents will satisfy the bride's parents. The amount, of course, depends upon the means of the family. Bracelets, a ring, earrings, and hairpins figure among the presents. If the family be wealthy, these are of gold, if somewhat poor, of silver, if fairly well-off, two kinds may be of gold, and two of silver, while, if they are very rich, the articles are adorned with pearls and precious stones. The boy's family also gives three or four rolls of silk, or, if poor, a few yards. Artificial flowers for the women's hair and dried fruits generally complete the list. As for the most important part—the money, ordinary people will perhaps be expected to pay eighty-six dollars, or it may be seventy-six, or ninety-six, but there *must* be a six in it, for *luh*, the Chinese word for six, is supposed to convey a prophecy of good fortune for the bridal pair, *luh*, though written with a different character, having the sound of a word which denotes emolument or prosperity. If the family be wealthy, 116, 126,

or even 160 taels may be demanded, only the auspicious figure "6" must be there. If the bridegroom's family are not very well-to-do, one of them—generally the mother—will probably tell the matchmaker that the price is too high, and propose ten dollars less. The money-question being settled, the next thing to be done—again, of course, by means of the indispensable middle-man—is to fix on a day for sending the presents.

This day, called "Shia Ting," or "Ting Ch'ing," is a highly important day, for then the betrothal is looked upon as finally and irrevocably settled. A marriage engagement in China is not as lightly entered upon, and as lightly broken off as is too often the case in our own land, but is in general looked upon as equally binding with a marriage. There are occasions on which one of the parties concerned backs out of the agreement, but these are very rare, the proceeding being considered scandalous in the extreme, and a girl deserted by her intended husband would very likely commit suicide, as she considers herself, and is considered by others, as disgraced for life. Besides the presents, a little book has to be prepared, by means of which the young man's father requests the girl's father, on behalf of his son, for his daughter's hand. On the first page of the said booklet are written the words, *Kong Chiu* (an expression of respect), on the next, the father's name; the third page is left blank, and the fourth contains the date. Then, the momentous day having arrived, the go-between sets out for the girl's house in a sedan-chair, followed by two servants or hired men, each carrying two round boxes of presents, one of which boxes contains also the little red book. The boxes are fastened by strips of red paper passing round them crosswise. In the summer these bearers wear pointed hats adorned with streamers of red silk or linen thread; in the winter, round black caps almost covered by red streamers. The bride's family, meanwhile, have invited their relations and friends to be present on the auspicious occasion, and have placed incense and tall red candles on a table in front of the house-god.

The matchmaker, on arriving, gets out of his chair, and bows to the parents of the bride-elect, while someone quickly sets light to the candles and incense. By this time the boxes have been brought in and placed on the table in front of the house-god. Then a woman is asked to open the boxes, and spread out the presents for the inspection of the guests. But let it not be imagined that *any* woman may perform this important ceremony. No, indeed! A *yu fuh-tih* (happy, or fortunate) woman has been invited beforehand on purpose. By a "happy," or "fortunate" woman is meant one who is the possessor of a husband, sons, father, mother, and money. "K'u ren" (bitter people, *i.e.* persons in affliction) are never allowed to be present on such occasions, widows in particular being most rigidly excluded,

as their presence would be unlucky in the extreme. For this reason no one attired in mourning is very welcome, though the rule is not quite so rigid as regards slight mourning. The go-between dines with them, and after dinner the girl's parents send presents to the boy's family. Among these are duck-eggs, which are, of course, painted red, red being the colour of happiness. There will probably be two hundred and sixty of these, if the family be fairly well-off. Then there are silk handkerchiefs for the bridegroom's mother and grandmother, and for any other female relations who live in the same house, and who are *tsang pei-tih* that is, who belong to an older generation than the betrothed pair. A silken sash for the bridegroom, with shoes and stockings of the same material, figure also in the list. A little of the dried fruit sent to the girl's family must be left in the boxes when they are returned.

All these arrangements being completed, the matchmaker gets into his or her chair, and rides triumphantly back at the head of the present-bearers. The bridegroom's family, like that of the bride earlier in the day, have put candles and incense ready on a table in front of the idol, and light them upon the arrival of the little *cortége*. Relations and neighbours have been invited to a feast, which the matchmaker of course shares, so that useful personage certainly need not go to bed hungry on the betrothal-night. The next day both families send to relations, friends, and neighbours, part of the presents received, such as flowers for the hair, fruit, and eggs.

And now the betrothal ceremonies are at an end, and the affianced pair pursue the even tenor of their way in their respective homes, and will (unless in exceptional circumstances) not make each other's acquaintance till the wedding-day, which is probably still in the far future.

In some cases, however, the little fiancée is taken to live at the house of her intended, or, as the Chinese express it, "goes to her mother-in-law's house"—for the mother-in-law is the great central figure looming upon the poor child's vision. But this plan is only adopted when her parents are too poor to support her, or when her mother is dead, and, there being no one to rule and take care of her, she is confided to her mother-in-law's safe keeping. Every one pities a *hsiao shihfu* (little daughter-in-law), as she is called, for too often her lot is grievous indeed. In her own home she *might* have enjoyed a certain amount of liberty, together with a mother's love, as long as childhood lasted, but under a mother-in-law's roof she will most likely be the slave of every whim, not only of the redoubtable *p'op'o* herself, but also of her future sisters-in-law, the wives of the bridegroom's brothers. She is often beaten, ill-clothed and half-starved. A "little daughter-in-law," of about eleven or twelve years old, used to come among the women and chil-

dren to the room in which I was accustomed to receive them, make friends with them, and tell them the Gospel, and a poor, ragged, woe-begone little creature she was! The other girls would occasionally ask me to give her a few cash, pleading that, "She is a little daughter-in-law, and her mother-in-law beats her, and gives her scarcely anything to eat." There may, of course, be exceptions to the rule, for there are some kind mothers-in-law in China, but in general, if one may believe the testimony of the Chinese themselves, cruel advantage is taken of the helplessness of the poor little maiden.

The years roll by—a good many of them if our young couple were betrothed in early childhood—and then comes *nien-ken* the day on which the bridegroom's family tells that of the bride that the marriage is to take place a hundred days hence. For, of course, the bride is not asked to name the day; that depends upon the *bridegroom's* convenience, or rather that of his parents: *her* people are not consulted at all in the matter, though, as will be seen, they are addressed with all due respect on this occasion.

The arrangements take place on this wise. When the parents of the happy man (or youth, for he is often still in his teens) think it is getting time for him to be married, they call in a soothsayer, who examines the "eight characters" of every member of the family living in the house, and calculates from them what will be an auspicious day for the wedding. They then have four suits of *li-y*, or ceremonial garments made for the bride; these are of silk, if the wedding takes place in summer; if in winter, of silk lined with fur. The garments are sent to her home, together with a present of fruit—the same in quantity and of the same kinds as on the occasion of the betrothal. In a box is placed a small red book, called the *nien-ken* card. Inside the cover is written, "Carefully chosen seventh month, fourth day (or whatever the date may be), a good day prepared on purpose, a many-coloured (or flowery) chair to receive with honour your loved one (*i.e.* your daughter) to her home. I bow, and beg you to stoop to answer, and cause me to obtain unbounded honour." Perhaps the next page will bear the inscription: "Great, virtuous, respected So-and-So, old relation, Sir, great man!" Towards the foot of the left-hand page come the words "Your relation foolish younger brother So-and-So kowtows." If the girl's father is the happy possessor of a literary degree, or is a mandarin, the little red book does not address him as "great, virtuous, and respected," but uses other words suitable to his rank, though one would think that he could hardly look for anything more flattering than the usual terms, which are certainly high-sounding enough! Inside the back cover are written the year, month, and day on which the request is sent (the date inside the front cover is that of the wedding). Then off starts another little procession, consisting of the matchmaker in a sedan-chair, and

the servants walking behind, carrying the boxes of presents. When these have been taken out of the boxes at the bride's home, they are replaced by a return-present of duck-eggs, and sent under the care of the matchmaker to the bridegroom's people.

There is a man whose business it is to supply coolies to carry the presents on all these occasions, and if people choose to make use of their own servants instead, this man will nevertheless come and claim his money, which they are obliged to pay, as it is considered his due.

After this day the bride and her family are busily engaged in preparing her trousseau, while the bridegroom's family also find plenty to do in getting his clothes made, cleaning up the house, and buying his share of the furniture, part of which is provided by the bride's family. Of course, it is generally only one room that has to be furnished, as the newly-married couple will live with the husband's parents, but if the bride's family are very rich, they may perhaps buy new furniture for the general living-room and the kitchen.

Two or three days before the wedding, the go-between is sent to enquire how much *k'ai-men-tih ch'ien* (open-door money) is expected by the bride's family. (The purpose for which the "open-door money" is wanted will appear in due course.) Occasionally the two families disagree as to the amount, and the matchmaker has to mediate.

The bride's share of the furniture and the boxes containing her clothes are usually carried to her future home a day or two previous to the wedding. But before they are sent off a curious ceremony takes place. The various articles are all displayed in the living-room before the admiring gaze of the neighbours, chiefly women and girls. A round tub containing a small quantity of water is set on the ground, and in it is stood a plate full of oil (Chinese plates are rather deep, something like our soup-plates). Seven lamp-wicks are placed in the oil, diverging like the spokes of a wheel, and then set light to. When the bride's garments have been duly examined, they are laid one at a time in a red sieve, specially purchased for the occasion, and then passed over the tub, which performance is called *ko ho* (passing the fire), after which they are replaced in the boxes. The bride's boxes having been duly locked, the keys are given into the charge of the middle-man, or middle-woman, who takes his or her usual place in a chair at the head of the little procession of servants carrying the boxes and furniture. On arriving at his destination, he hands over the keys to the bridegroom, presumably as a symbol of the latter's entire control over his wife and everything belonging to her. The happy man then makes the go-between a present of a sum of money, probably about two dollars, as "joy money."

I remember reading an amusing incident among the reminiscences of a lady-missionary touching the predicament in which a bridegroom and his sister once found themselves on the wedding-day. While waiting for the bride, their curiosity as to her trousseau got the better of them, and thinking that they still had plenty of time before them, they unlocked the boxes, and began to examine their contents—a proceeding contrary to all etiquette. While the garments were still strewn in every direction, the approach of the bridal procession was announced. Imagine the terror and shame of the guilty parties! In wild haste they gathered up the things and crammed them into the boxes, and, with hot, red faces and beating hearts, were just in time to take their places in the outer room, as the bride was brought in at the door.

But now, after these manifold preliminaries, the all-important day arrives. First the chair-bearers regale themselves on a meal of *mien*, or doughstrings, provided by the bridegroom's family, and then the procession starts off to fetch the bride. If the bridegroom be a mandarin, or a man holding a high literary degree (which of course can only be the case when he is considerably above the age *usual* for a first marriage), or if a relative of the same name be a mandarin, there are carried in the procession one, two, or three red umbrellas, four flags, and one or more tablets, according to his degree, or the number of times he has held office. Perhaps if the family be fairly well-to-do, there will be about thirty attendants walking in front: first two men beating gongs (in the case of a mandarin, or the possessor of a degree), then several carrying tablets, followed by four with flags; then two men holding the red umbrellas, two more with torches, and behind them two bearing lanterns on poles, held high in the air over their shoulders; then come four men, each carrying a hand-lantern wrapped in red cloth, and followed by seven musicians, discoursing sweet music on seven various instruments. Then there paces in solitary dignity a man bearing a red sieve over his shoulder at the end of a bamboo pole, and after him comes the bridal chair, or two chairs, if the bridegroom goes himself to bring home his spouse, each chair being carried by eight men. The go-between's chair brings up the rear, but he has only two bearers with a third to relieve them. In theory, the bridegroom rides in the bride's chair to her father's house, and a boy (often a younger brother, or some other relation) occupies the chair destined for the bridegroom on the return journey; but, as a matter of fact, he generally stays at home, and his bride is brought to him. He is often supposed to be, and perhaps really is, too shy to go through such an ordeal.

On arriving at the house of his parents-in-law, the poor bridegroom has the door shut in his face. (Query: Is the prospect of this indignity the hindrance to his going in person to fetch the bride?) Be that as it may, he

is not admitted until he produces the "open-door money," the amount of which has been already agreed upon, and which will probably be about 3,600 cash (eight shillings, or thereabouts). He also gives them the "little open-door money," to be scattered by the parents among the bystanders outside, when the bride's chair is carried in to fetch her. This will perhaps amount to about three hundred and sixty cash, of which they very likely scatter only one hundred. When the door is at last opened, the bridegroom goes into the *t'ang*, or principal room, where he finds a good many guests, who have been invited to welcome him. He kowtows to the bride's parents, who invite him to sit down and drink tea, but he must decline this favour, and go outside, and take his seat in his own chair, which has meanwhile been vacated by the boy who was its temporary occupant.

And now, leaving the happy man to his solitary reflections, as he sits waiting in his sedan-chair, we will pay a visit to the bride, and see how things are going with her. If the ordeal which has to be undergone by the bridegroom in coming to fetch her is so trying that he generally shirks it, her lot is still more trying, and cannot be shirked. For three days previously she scarcely eats anything, because she is supposed to be so grieved at the thought of being married. On the day before the wedding, her parents give a feast to her girl-friends, who come to visit her for the last time in the old home. But of this feast the bride herself must scarcely taste a morsel. On the wedding morning she lies in bed till the chair comes to fetch her. This, as well as the refusing to eat, is intended to show her reluctance to leave her old home for a new one. The bridegroom sits waiting outside in his chair, but she still declines to get up. By-and-by he sends some one in to hurry her up, and at last, after a great deal of urging, she consents to sit up on the bed, and be attired in her bridal garments, but during the whole process her feet must not touch the ground. A woman (who is paid a hundred and sixty cash by the bridegroom) arranges her hair, coiling it very simply around her head, for it will not be seen under her bridal crown, and so it is not considered worth while to do it as elaborately as usual. The crown is made of brass presumably intended to represent gold, and is adorned with flowers; it also has fringes of pearls hanging over the face, and down to the waist in front, but shorter at the back. From both sides of the crown depend long strips of red silken fringe, reaching almost to the knees. The gown and shoes are of scarlet. Her toilet accomplished, the poor bride has to shut her eyes, which she must not reopen till the dawn of the next day.*

* The custom of keeping the eyes closed is probably local, for I have read accounts of Chinese weddings in which it is not mentioned.

She is then carried out to her chair, for her feet must not touch the ground, unless a piece of carpet has been laid down. The chair meanwhile has been taken into the middle room, the poles having been drawn out. If, in lifting her in, the attendants want to warn the poor blind bride not to knock her head against the top of the chair, they must not use the usual expression, *t'i t'eo* "lower your head," because the mention of the word *ti* "low," or "down," would be an augury of ill-luck, or of a descent in the social scale for the bridal pair. They must therefore say just the opposite of what they mean, namely *kao shen* "high body," or "raise body."

The "flowery chair," in which the bride is thus deposited, is, of course, red, and is adorned with artificial flowers and probably a hundred or more little lamps, placed on the top, and hanging round the sides. The bearers, whose previous meal at the bridegroom's house has by no means incapacitated them for enjoying a second at that of the bride, now stand ready to lift the "flowery chair," in which the poor girl must sit without moving, in precisely the same position in which she was deposited in it, however uncomfortable she may be, neither must she open her eyes. The curtains are drawn so closely around the chair that scarcely a breath of air can get in, and I believe more than one bride, whose wedding has taken place in the summer, has been found dead from heat and suffocation when the chair was opened on reaching the bridegroom's door. In winter it is said that brides have been frozen to death in their chairs. It is considered absolutely necessary that wadded clothes should be worn, at whatever time of year the wedding takes place, though, happily, they are not worn as thick in summer as in winter. The poor bride's sufferings during this eventful ride on a hot summer's day must be terrible, especially if her new home be several hours' journey from the old one. The door of the chair being shut and the curtains drawn, the bride's father and mother stand at the front door and throw, not rice, but ten pairs of red chopsticks out into the road for any of the bystanders to pick up; they also throw red-coloured water out of a small tub, with what mysterious import I am not aware.

At last, sped on its way by the letting off of crackers, the chair starts off, the bridegroom, if present, riding in front of his bride, and the *mei ren*, or matchmaker behind her. They are followed by four or five of the bride's brothers, or other male relations, who escort her part of the way, and turn back when asked to do so by the bridegroom, after which the bearers move on more rapidly. Meanwhile the bride's mother and sisters at home are weeping with loud voices, which is the proper thing to do, whether they feel sad or not. The bride also weeps in her chair during the first part of the journey and the chair-bearers sometimes take it upon themselves to console

her in a jocular sort of way, as they trudge along. Before her new home is reached, her parents-in-law send out servants to meet the bride. When the chairs arrive at the door, the top of which is hung with red silk or calico, the bridegroom alights from his chair, and goes into the house; crackers are let off, and candles, hanging lanterns, and incense lighted. If anyone in the house happens to have been born in a year presided over by an animal which is supposed to be incongruous with the animal to which the bridegroom belongs, that individual must "make himself scarce" before the bridal procession arrives, otherwise ill-luck will be the sure result. My Chinese teacher told me that, on the occasion of his marriage, his father had to be in hiding, because he belonged to the hare, whereas his son, the bridegroom, was born under the cock.

But now the poor bride has a fresh ordeal to undergo, for the bearers refuse to carry her in till they have received their *hsi ch'ien* or "joy-money," and sometimes she has to wait outside a long time, while the amount of "joy-money" is being haggled over. When at last they are satisfied, they lift the chair over the threshold into the living-room, and open the door. Two middle-aged or elderly women, who have been invited for that purpose by the family, help her to alight, and to step on a red carpet. Then the bridal pair together worship Heaven and Earth, and go into the room which is destined for them, the bride, whose eyes are still closed, being supported by the two *pang-p'o*, or old women-helpers, who lead her about, and tell her what to do. In this room also there are tall red candles and incense burning. Round cakes made of ground rice, and called *fu-kwei yuen-tze*, are then brought to them, but only the bridegroom must eat, though he had a good meal before starting, and the bride is almost starving. Another performance which they have to go through is sitting together on the edge of the bed or on chairs: this is called *Tso fu kwei*. After this the bridegroom goes into the principal room, and drinks wine with those of his relatives who bear the same surname as himself, and it is considered to be good form for these relatives to press him to drink freely.

They then take lanterns, and escort him back to his bride, whom he has left in the smaller room. A servant takes in two cups of wine on a tray, which he sets on the table, whereupon the friends tie the cups together with red string, and present them to the bridal pair, who put their lips to them, but only make a pretence of drinking. After this, the friends sing their good wishes, and then everybody, no matter who, may come in to see the bride. The old women support her on either side, and make her bow to the people who are inspecting her. There she stands with her eyes still closed, and her face shaded by the fringe which in China takes the place of a veil, and which

her visitors try to lift, in order to get a peep at her face, but are prevented, or supposed to be prevented, from doing so by the duennas. Both men and women criticise her personal appearance, and make all sorts of rude remarks. All the rules which keep a Chinese girl so thoroughly in the background, and require so much decorum from her, seem to be flung to the winds on this occasion, and a modest sensitive girl, as many of them are, must suffer intense torture in going through this ordeal, which is called "teasing the bride." Perhaps the trial is slightly lessened by the fact that her eyes are closed.

At dawn the next day she is allowed to open them, and to get what is very likely her first glimpse of her husband and her new home; had she opened them before, they would have brought misfortune upon whatever object they fell upon.

And now she has to submit to a process which was probably begun in her mother's house the day before the marriage, but not completed. The hairs growing on the top of her forehead must be pulled out one by one, to show that she is now a *taniang* or married woman. As a "kuniang," or girl, she probably wore her hair either parted in the middle, and brushed down very smoothly over her ears, or else cut in small fringe, according to the custom of the neighbourhood in which she lived. A woman whose profession it is, now proceeds to pull out these front hairs, thus making the bride's forehead appear considerably higher than it did in her girlish days. She also powders the poor victim's face in order to soften the skin, and then, with the help of a piece of thread, pulls out every tiny hair all over it. The latter process will have to be constantly repeated through life, for no self-respecting married woman would like to be seen with hairs on her face! A girl allows them to grow, but not a wife. The extraction of the hairs on the top of the forehead is the distinguishing mark of a married woman, just as the ring is with us Westerners. The absence of small hairs on the face is not quite such an unmistakable sign, as a beggar or, indeed, any very poor woman may allow them to grow again, simply because she cannot afford the slight expense of having them extracted, or because she has lost all care for her personal appearance.

For three days our little bride must endure the weight of her wedding clothes, which have, in all probability, been hired for the occasion.* On the second day, incense and red candles are burnt upon the table in the principal room in honour of the bridegroom's ancestors, and bowls of food set before

* Dr. Arthur H. Smith in his interesting book, "Village Life in China," speaks of having been present on an occasion when the bride's dress was taken off and delivered over to the head man in charge of the chair soon after her arrival at her new home. So it is clear that the three days' wearing of the bridal garments is not universal.

them. The bridal pair then together kowtow and worship them, this being the introduction of the new member of the family to her husband's ancestors, who are henceforth considered her own. The articles on the table having been cleared away (or presumably consumed by the defunct ancestors), other red candles and fresh incense are lighted; the father and mother seat themselves at either side of the table, and receive the kowtows of their son and daughter-in-law. Then comes the turn of the uncles and aunts, who have remained at the house since the previous day. They are invited to sit in the seats of honour—husband and wife at the same time; unmarried people, widowers, or widows, singly, and a servant brings the sweetened tea. The bridal pair stand in front of them, the bride being again supported by the two elderly women. Then they kowtow before them, the recipients of the kowtow and all present standing up during the ceremony. The uncle and aunt deposit a present for the bride in a red tray, from which they have just taken *her* gift of some of her own needlework, and then give up their chairs to the next couple, when the kowtowing performance is again gone through. All the aunts and uncles having thus received due honour and exchanged presents with their new niece, the next event is a feast for the bride, of which, however, she tastes nothing, only sitting down for a moment, and then going away, leaving others to enjoy the good things provided.

On the third day towards dinner-time the newly-married couple go in sedan-chairs to pay a visit to the bride's parents, taking plenty of presents with them. On the way thither the bride's chair takes the precedence, because they are going to *her* home, but on the return-journey, the bridegroom's chair goes in front. On arriving, they kowtow to the father and mother, then dine and return in the afternoon. On the fourth day, the bride resumes her ordinary style of dress, and begins to settle down to her new duties.

One more feast, however, has to take place—the feast given to the matchmaker, who is also offered presents, which are no doubt as a rule gladly accepted. Occasionally, however, if a near relation, he or she refuses the presents. He is thanked for the trouble taken, and then all is over.

All is over as to wedding-festivities, but now the young wife and daughter-in-law has to "dree her weird," and oh, *what* a "weird" it often is!

Chinese Customs connected with Births, Marriages, and Deaths.

III.

By Helena von Poseck.

DEATH AND BURIAL.

WHEN a Chinese begins to grow old, he and his family think it is time to prepare for death by the purchase of a coffin. It may easily happen that he lives for twenty years or more after the coffin is brought into the house, but that does not matter in the least: the coffin is ready whenever he may require it. Instead of the children being thought guilty of cold-blooded heartlessness in thus preparing for the loss of a father or mother, it is looked upon as a proof of filial piety and of respectability, and the old people would feel very much aggrieved if this duty were neglected, and they could not feast their eyes upon their future narrow dwelling, as it stands in an honourable place in the house, probably in the principal room. Many who have no children buy their coffins for themselves, quite in middle life, fearing lest, if the matter be left to be cared for by others, an inferior one should be provided for them. Horrible as the practice appears to our Western minds, there is something to be said in its favour. Should the person in question die suddenly, especially if in the country and at some distance from any town, it would be extremely difficult to get a good coffin made on the spur of the moment, besides which, the necessary money would probably not be forthcoming in such a hurry. A Chinese coffin is a massive affair, and Chinese workmen do not, as a rule, greatly hurry themselves, while in hot weather a corpse cannot be kept unenclosed longer than a day or so. "Unenclosed" I have said—not "unburied," for a reason which will be apparent later on.

Chinese villagers often join a coffin-club, especially if their parents are growing old, and they think a coffin may soon be needed. Each member of the club contributes his quota, and then, when a death occurs in his family, he

can claim the amount of dollars necessary for the purchase of a respectable coffin. One day, my Chinese teacher, who was living in our house at some days' journey from his own home, was surprised by a visit from his younger brother. The young man said that their father, who was about sixty years of age, was very weak and poorly, and he had thought it necessary to come and consult his elder brother as to what was to be done with respect to preparing a coffin, since the expense would be beyond the present means of the family. It was thought that the best thing would be to join a coffin-club, but there was a difficulty about getting together enough money even for that. I offered a little help, if necessary, but do not remember what arrangement was finally made; I believe, however, that the poor old man's coffin was ready for him when he died a few months later.

Burial-clothes, as well as coffins, are generally prepared beforehand, and are a good deal grander than the usual garments, being made very much in the style of a mandarin's. High boots, which are only worn by the Chinese on state occasions, are also provided.

An aged, or even elderly, person seldom sleeps out of his own home; if he happen to pay a visit to friends or relatives, they are afraid to invite him to stay the night lest he should die in their house, which they think might bring upon his hosts the suspicion of having hastened his end. So the poor old man or woman is hurried home the same evening, the fact of age and weakness, which ought to furnish a special reason for offering a night's hospitality, being the reason for refusing it. What looks like a strange lack of hospitality and good feeling is due to the want of mutual confidence which pervades all ranks of society. Children, as is well-known, are honoured with no grand funeral ceremonies, but, in too many cases, at any rate if quite small, are merely wrapped in a piece of matting and laid in a field, or on the hillside.

When a person is at the point of death, he is stripped of his ordinary clothing and attired in his burial-garments (a process which one would think must materially hasten the end, even if it does not cause death where recovery might otherwise be possible). This unseemly haste is due to the idea that the spirit ought to go into the other world respectably clothed. I remember two cases in point. Both were young men—opium suicides—whom we had been called in too late to save. In one case I had, though knowing it to be useless, tried a hypodermic injection at the earnest request of the district magistrate who was present. It had no effect, the patient being already all but dead, and suddenly some of the bystanders began to strip the motionless body, no doubt in great fear lest the best garments should not be put on in time to clothe the departing spirit. On the other occasion I

was called in the early morning to the bedside of a young man, whose relatives had only just discovered from his condition that he had taken the deadly drug several hours previously. The poor fellow was lying helpless and unconscious on his bed, his livid lips, clenched teeth, and stertorous breathing telling but too plainly that no efforts of ours could save him. As I turned sadly to come away, our Chinese cook, who had accompanied me, said to the relatives of the dying man, "It's no use: you had better put his burial-clothes on him." This was tantamount to telling them that the young man was at the point of death.

When the sick person has died, and has been noisily wailed over (often no doubt, sincerely, but often as a mere form) the first thing to be done is to send for a *yingyang sienseng* (a species of soothsayer) to decide at what hour of the day the bereaved family must assume their mourning garb. This consists, in the case of the widow, sons, daughters-in-law and unmarried daughters, of a coarse yellowish material of the nature of sackcloth; but married daughters, who are regarded as belonging principally to the family into which they have married, do not wear *ma y*, but white garments, a slighter degree of mourning. Sometimes, indeed, a particularly tyrannical mother-in-law will not allow her daughter-in-law to put on any sort of mourning for her parents. *Ma y* is worn by the nearest relatives for forty-nine days, during which time the widow also wears her hair in a sort of net, made of coarse linen thread of the same colour as her garments. I may observe, however, that the rule as to the wearing of *ma y* does not appear to be very stringent, for I have seen widows wearing the prescribed net, but clothed in white garments instead of *ma y*. They were poor women, and the probability is that they could not afford to observe all the proprieties as strictly as those in easier circumstances. A son, during this period of deep mourning, does not plait his hair in a queue as usual, but ties it together with flax, and wears straw shoes like the poorest beggar, even mandarins not being exempt from the rule. For forty-two days he does not shave, and, if in a position to afford it, he must remain indoors for forty-nine days. Of course a poor man cannot carry out this precept, as he has his living to earn; the mourning ceremonies fall most heavily on the upper classes. When the forty-nine days are over white garments may be worn instead of sackcloth, and later on, the outward signs of mourning may be reduced to a blue knob on the cap instead of a white one, which was previously worn. This again in due time gives place to the usual red knob. The queue is plaited with white thread during the time of lesser mourning.

But to return to the day on which death has entered a house. Having put on their mourning garments, the sons issue forth to kowtow to their

friends, and inform them of the sad event which has just taken place. They carry with them on their errand a small stick called "the Staff of Tears and Sorrow (or Wounds)." This staff they always use when obliged to go out, and on their return lay it on the bed of the dead man, or later on in front of his coffin. Relatives and friends hasten to the house to mourn and kowtow to the dead man or woman; all day long they are coming and going in and out of the room where the corpse lies on a bed, at the head of which a lighted lamp stands on the floor, while tall white candles burn on a table in front.

The soothsayer is consulted as to the hour at which the body must be placed in its coffin. The hour having arrived, all stand in front of the coffin, the bottom of which is spread with lime; the eldest son then takes the head of the corpse, and the eldest daughter the feet, and with the help of the others they lift it in. Then they place around it rolls of lime, wrapped in a kind of parchment, corresponding in number with the years of life of the departed, a custom which reminds one of the American passing-bell, slowly counting out, as it tolls, the years of the one whose death it announces.

If it be the mother who has died, the son, as soon as he has put on his mourning garb, sets off for her old home, and breaks the sad news to her family, who then hasten to the house of mourning. As the time approaches when their arrival may be expected, someone is sent out every now and then to see whether they are in sight, and when they appear, the sons and daughters-in-law go out to meet them, and kneel down in the road before them. The mother's relatives raise them from the ground, and all enter the house together. Incense is lighted on the table at the bedside, and the newcomers perform the kowtow while the sons and daughters-in-law kneel upon the ground. When the body has been placed in the coffin, the brother of the deceased woman strikes two blows on the lid, as a proof that he is satisfied that his sister did not come to her death by foul means. In the supposed necessity for such a declaration we cannot fail to observe a fresh sign of the terrible distrust undermining all relationships among the hundreds of millions of this vast empire. The son then presents some white calico to his uncle, which, however, the latter does not wear unless it be in the form of underclothing, for *p'ing pei-tih ren*, that is, relations belonging to the same generation, only wear very slight mourning, such as a blue knob on the cap; but those belonging to a younger generation wear it, and for this purpose the son gives white garments to his cousins. A husband only wears the blue knob for his wife.

The burning of paper money, paper chairs, houses, and other articles, takes place directly after the death, for the spirit will need the things thus represented in paper, which are supposed to be changed in some mysterious

way into a more substantial form on, or before, reaching the nether world. Friends and relations bring presents of paper-money, which they have hastened to purchase at one of the numerous shops which supply this commodity.

Another highly important item is the consultation of a soothsayer with regard to the time, place, and hour of burial. If, however, the body be committed to the ground within three days of death, or if the event take place during the period of *Ta Han* (Great Cold), which lasts for about half-a-month in the depth of winter, any convenient day may be chosen. At all other times the *yingyang siensang* must first select a place, and afterwards a propitious day and hour, for the funeral. The choice of a suitable spot is a question of such vital importance that sometimes a corpse is kept in a house unburied for ten or twelve years, because the soothsayer has had such difficulty in finding a burial-place with the right aspect. A Chinese friend of mine once heard some fellow-passengers on a boat discussing the cause of the wonderful prosperity of Li Hung-chang. The reason suggested by one of them, and which seemed to find favour in the eyes of the rest, was that the great statesman had chosen a good spot in which to build his house, and that the graves of his ancestors were also in an auspicious place.

Two or three days before that of the funeral, invitations are sent out on yellow paper books, consisting of two or three leaves. The previous day is known as *K'ai Tiao* (Begin the Rites), for then relatives and friends swarm into the house of mourning (before the door of which an ornate pavilion is often erected), in order to again pay their respects to the poor unconscious body. As fresh guests arrive throughout the day, they first kowtow to the dead man or woman, and are then regaled on doughstrings. In the evening a feast is provided for them, and during the night prayers are chanted by Taoist or Buddhist priests.

The burial will probably take place in the early morning, and accordingly the procession must start betimes. The hour of dawn is generally chosen, but at times, for some occult reason, the ceremony takes place during the night. If the *yingyang siensang* has decided that the body must be let down into the grave exactly at sunrise, it must of course be carried out of the house while the sky is still dark, and so great is their dread of being too late that the funeral-party sometimes has to wait a considerable time before the sun rises. The more distant relatives only accompany the coffin halfway, and are not present at the interment, but the mourners and bearers stand, shivering perhaps on a bleak hillside, till at last the brightening sky shows that the orb of day is about to make its appearance above the horizon. But now a very disagreeable hitch is apt to occur. Just at the critical moment the unsympathetic bearers utterly refuse to perform their sad office, until they have

received a tip in the shape of *shi k'un ch'ien* (wash pit money). It will be remembered that the same thing takes place on the arrival of a bride at the door of her new home, whence it would appear that the Chinese coolie is not to be prevented by any sentimental notions of either joy or sorrow from the due consideration of his material interests. However much against the grain, the person in charge must hand over the money demanded, if he would not incur the heavy responsibility of burying his deceased relative one or two minutes too late. This important transaction settled to the satisfaction of the recipients, if not of the donor, the coffin is lowered into its resting-place, in which has previously been deposited the sum of four cash (about the ninth part of a penny). One by one the members of the family kowtow before the grave, crackers are let off, and the mourners, having duly given expression to their grief by loud and discordant wails, set out for home. Outside the front door a fire has been lighted, through which all are supposed to pass on reëntering the house. It would be extremely interesting to trace these ceremonies of passing through fire, used in connection with both marriages and funerals, back to their origin in ages long gone by, for surely they point to some idea of cleansing by fire, and remind us of idolatrous practices among the Phœnicians, and also (probably as introduced by them) among the Irish of more recent times. A *yingyang sienseng* is then invited to chant before the idol certain words wishing peace to the family, water is sprinkled upon all in the house, and afterwards relatives and friends assemble and drink wine together.

The feasting connected with both funerals and weddings is a heavy drain upon the family purse, for, though each guest brings a contribution, either in the form of money or food, he will often eat more than twice the amount represented by his contribution; women, too, frequently bring with them one or two voracious children, who devour an immense amount of provisions, without having paid anything towards the expenses. An amazing number of friends and relatives turn up on such occasions, and though entailing much expense and worry, they are not unwelcome, since the greater the number of guests, the greater the amount of "face" enjoyed by the family at whose expense they feast, and the Chinese is an eminent lover of display. To "lose face" over his wedding or funeral feast would be still worse than losing money!

In the case of somewhat well-to-do families, devoutly inclined, there are special religious observances held every seven days up to the forty-ninth day, the relations coming to the house to worship the tablet of the dead man. Indeed, during the whole period there is always something going on in houses of this class—priests droning through their monotonous chantings, music (!) torturing the ears of any unfortunate foreigner who may happen to be a

neighbour of the bereaved family, and rendering sleep at night, if not an impossible, at any rate a difficult operation. Fortunately for the Chinese, their nerves are made of such substantial material that they can sleep through almost any amount of noise, and in the midst of the greatest discomfort. On the forty-ninth day comes the grand finale, Buddhist and Taoist priests chanting with special ceremony all night long, for bereaved families often employ the ministers of the two rival religions to waft the departed spirit to its future abode, thus making assurance doubly sure! Proud Confucianist scholars, who for the most part look down with tolerant contempt upon the superstitions of both Buddhism and Taoism, do not hesitate to call in the priests when death enters the home, probably in some cases merely in order to conform to general custom, in others, from an uneasy feeling that, after all, in view of the *after-state*, a cold scheme of moral philosophy will not suffice, but some sort of religion is needed.

I remember, not many months after my arrival in China, being taken one evening by friends into a Chinese house of mourning (that of their next-door neighbour) to witness the performance of the funeral ceremonies by the priests. A strange, weird scene it was. The large gloomy-looking room, for the chief part in semi-darkness, or "dim religious light," the groups of women looking on, among whom we took our place, and in the upper part of the room, a curious arrangement of various objects, of the nature of which I have but a dim recollection, not having been able to see them very clearly, though I remember an elaborate pattern traced upon the floor in rice. A young man and a boy, who appeared to be the chief mourners, knelt at the edge of this pattern, and kowtowed at certain points during the performance, while the priests, solaced and sustained at intervals by cups of tea, handed to them quietly from the background, walked in procession round and round the rice-strewn spot, and droned out their monotonous dirge, a portly and somewhat grandly-robed individual, who appeared to be the archpriest, occasionally going through various bowings and genuflexions close to the principal mourners.

"Which have no hope" are the awful words engraved upon the mind of the one who witnesses either the foolish and hollow ceremonies carried on over the dead, or the last moments of the dying heathen, whether he passes away in ignorant indifference, or crying out (as many do), his eyes wide with terror, that he sees the demons which have come to carry him away. A bright contrast to these sad scenes was presented some time ago by the deathbed of a little Christian Chinese girl, who, just before she "fell asleep," said, "I'm not afraid; I don't see any demons; Christ is with me."

During the period of deepest mourning a son is supposed to sit perpetually by the side of his father or mother's coffin in the upper part of the middle room, which has been curtained off for its reception, and to eat nothing but the coarsest food. The ancient books also prescribe that, after the burial has taken place, he should make a little hut for himself by his parent's grave, and sit and watch there for three years, but such devotion is seldom, if ever, shown in these degenerate and money-making days. There is, however, one rule which is still rigidly observed, never being broken, except in the case of some great national or local emergency. A mandarin must retire from office immediately on the death of his father or mother, and remain in private life during the whole of the twenty-seven months, which are always reckoned as the three years of mourning.

This rule is, of course, often a cause of serious inconvenience, especially during crises in which the services of a competent and honest official cannot well be dispensed with for so long a period. Keen observers of current events will probably have noticed a case in point during the recent troubles, in which one of the best and ablest of China's great men had the misfortune to lose his mother. It was immediately decided to petition the Throne to allow him under the present exceptional circumstances to continue to serve his country, instead of going into retirement. We will hope, for China's sake, that the precedent will be largely followed, till the senseless and hollow custom has lost its hold upon the minds of a great and practical nation.

Ancestral worship is, of course, closely connected with the burial of the dead, but to take up such a wide and far-reaching subject would require more information than I possess, besides drawing out this paper to too great a length, so I must refrain from entering upon it, as well as upon various details of superstitious observances connected with funerals.

One example of the latter, however, I may as well submit to the reader, as illustrating and adding to the account already given.

A Chinese friend of mine saw, not long ago, affixed to the door of a house in Shanghai, a large square of white paper,* written by a *yingyang sienseng* on the occasion of the death of one of the inmates. On this paper it was stated that the dead man was thirty-two years of ago, the year, day, month, and hour of his birth being also given. Then followed the day and hour which had been chosen for putting the body in the coffin, and

* It will be observed that in connection with funerals white or yellow paper is always used, whereas all the paper that has to do with betrothals and weddings is red, the same colours prevailing in the matter of clothing. The symbolical meaning of these colours is such an understood thing that weddings and other festivities are known as "Red Affairs," and funerals as "White Affairs."

persons of three specified ages were warned against being in the house at the time. The day and hour chosen for the burial were also announced, together with the ages (differing from the first) of persons who must not be in the house when the coffin was carried out. The *yingyang sienseng* then informed all whom it might concern, that the ghost of the dead man was twelve feet in height, and fixed the night on which it might be expected to revisit its old home. He had ascertained, he added, that the spirit had gone on the road towards Buddha.

Why the City God of Yench'en has no Skin on his Face.

By Helena von Poseck.

THERE is a curious story told of the Ch'ên Huang Pusa of the city of Yench'ên (or Salt City) in the Kiangsu Province.

As no doubt most readers are aware, the Ch'ên Huang Pusa is the tutelary god of a city, his position in the unseen world answering to that of a Chihsien, or District Magistrate, among men, if the city under his care be a "hsien;" but if the city hold the rank of "fu," it has two Ch'ên Huang Pusas, one a Prefect, and the other a District Magistrate. One part of his duty consists in sending small demons to carry off the spirits of the dying, of which spirits he afterwards acts as ruler and judge. He is supposed to exercise special care over the "K'u Hwei," or spirits which have no descendants to worship and offer sacrifices to them, and on the occasion of the Seventh Month Festival, he is carried round the city in his chair to maintain order among them, while the people offer food to them, and burn paper money for their benefit. He is also carried in procession at the "Ch'ing Ming" festival, and on the first day of the tenth month.

The particular Ch'ên Huang Pusa who is supposed to be the protector of the city of Yench'ên is in the extremely unfortunate predicament of having no skin to his face, which fact is thus accounted for.

Once upon a time there lived at Yench'ên an orphan boy who was brought up by his uncle and aunt. He was just entering upon his tens when his aunt lost a gold hairpin, and accused him of having stolen it. The boy, whose conscience was clear in the matter, thought of a plan by which his innocence might be proved.

"Let us go to-morrow to Ch'ên Huang Pusa's temple," he said, "and I will there swear a oath before the god, so that he may manifest my innocence.

They accordingly repaired to the temple, and the boy, solemnly addressing the idol, said:

"If I have taken my aunt's gold pin, may my foot twist, and may I fall as I go out of your temple door!"

Alas for the poor suppliant! As he stepped over the threshold, his foot twisted, and he fell to the ground. Of course, everybody was firmly convinced of his guilt, and what could the poor boy say when his own appeal to the god thus turned against him?

After such a proof of his depravity his aunt had no room in her house for her orphan nephew, neither did he himself wish to stay with people who suspected him of theft. So he left the home which had sheltered him for years, and wandered out alone into the cold hard world. Many a hardship did our young hero encounter, but with rare pluck he persevered in his studies, and at the age of twenty odd years became a mandarin.

Our friend appears to have been of a forgiving disposition, for in the course of time he returned to Yench'ên to visit his uncle and aunt. While there, he betook himself to the temple of the deity who had dealt so hardly with him, and prayed for a revelation as to the whereabouts of the lost hairpin. He slept that night in the temple, and was rewarded by a vision in which the Ch'ên Huang Pusa told him that the pin would be found under the floor of his aunt's house.

He hastened back, and informed his relatives, who took up the boards in the place indicated, and lo and behold, there lay the long-lost pin! The women of the house then remembered that the pin had been used for pasting together the various layers of the soles of shoes, and, when night came, had been carelessly left on the table. No doubt the rats, attracted by the smell of the paste which clung to it, had carried it off to their domains under the floor.

Our young mandarin joyfully returned to the temple, and offered sacrifices by way of thanksgiving to the Ch'ên Huang Pusa for bringing his innocence to light, but he could not refrain from addressing to him what one is disposed to consider a well-merited reproach.

"You made me fall down," he said, "and so led people to think I was guilty, and now you accept my gifts. Aren't you ashamed to do such a thing? *You have no face!*

As he uttered the words all the plaster fell from the face of the idol, and was smashed into fragments.

From that day forward the Ch'ên Huang Pusa of Yench'ên has had no skin on his face. People have tried to patch up the disfigured countenance, but in vain: the plaster always falls off, and the face remains skinless.

Some people try to whitewash the character of that Ch'ên Huang Pusa by saying that he was not at home on the day when his temple was visited by the accused boy and his relatives, and that one of the little demons employed by him in carrying off dead people's spirits, out of sheer mischief perpetrated

a practical joke on the poor boy, and thus was the cause of all the trouble. So, according to these special pleaders, it was not the Ch'ên Huang Pusa's fault at all.

In that case, it is certainly hard that his skin should so persistently testify against him by refusing to remain on his face!

A Chinese Draco.

By Helena von Poseck.

IT is recorded in history that Draco, the Athenian Archon, was accustomed to punish every crime with death. On being remonstrated with for his severity, he replied: "The smallest crime deserves death, and I know of no heavier punishment for the greatest."

Hence the saying that his laws were "written in blood."

There is a Chinese story of a mandarin who rivalled Draco in severity, since for the theft of a single cash he would have a man executed.

On going one day into the Treasury to ascertain whether all was in order, he discovered a cash in the ear of a *li jwih* (a servant who keeps guard at the Treasury door). The mandarin forthwith extracted the cash from its hiding-place, and upon due examination found that it belonged to the Treasury. He rebuked the unfaithful doorkeeper, and commanded him to be beaten. The culprit was indignant, and said defiantly:

"For one cash you can only beat me; you can't kill me."

But the unhappy man had better have "let well alone," for the mandarin made answer:

"I will certainly have you killed," and at once wrote out the *li jwih's* condemnation in the following terms:

"One day one cash; in a thousand days, a thousand cash. A rope wears wood away, and dripping water bores a hole through stone."

He then had the criminal led out and beheaded. The other *li* (so says my informant) were greatly frightened, to which statement one feels inclined to add: *Ca va sans dire.*

The Three Questions;

or, the English Abbot and the Chinese Tutor.

By HELENA VON POSECK.

AS a child I read, and was greatly amused by, an old-fashioned ballad relating the story of King John and the Abbot of Canterbury. It told how the said Abbot was possessed of so much wealth and power as to arouse the envy and suspicions of his Sovereign, who accordingly summoned him to appear before him. The King knew of no special crime of which to accuse the cleric, and therefore made his punishment or release depend on his ability to answer three questions, which, in his Majesty's opinion, were unanswerable.

"If you reply to these questions correctly," he said (I cannot vouch for the exact words, as it is many years since I read the ballad), "you shall have a free pardon; if not, you shall be beheaded."

The trembling Abbot enquired what the questions might be.

"The first," said the irate monarch, "is this: how long would it take to travel round the world? In the second place, you must tell me exactly how much I am worth, and" (I quote the words of the ballad)

> 'At the third question thou must not shrink,
> But tell me here truly what I do think.'"

Poor Abbot! not all his learning could help him to solve the royal riddles, and his heart sank within him like lead.

"I will give thee three days to think over the questions," said the King in his clemency, "and if, at the end of that time, thou art not prepared with an answer, thy head shall be taken from thee."

The Abbot left the royal presence, and was proceeding on his homeward way with downcast eyes and woe-begone countenance, when he was met by one of his retainers, a jolly-looking miller.

"Why does my lord look so sad to-day?" was the miller's greeting.

The poor Abbot poured forth his tale of sorrow into the ears of the sympathising rustic.

"Don't trouble about that, my lord," was the cheery reply. "Leave it to me. If you will lend me your robes and your palfrey, I will disguise myself, and go to the palace in your stead."

It seemed a preposterous idea, but as the Abbot could think of no other way out of the difficulty, he complied with the proposal of his humble friend in need. Accordingly, ere the allotted three days had run out, the miller, mounted on the Abbot's palfrey, and wearing the Abbot's apparel, proceeded to the palace. He was admitted to the royal presence, and King John, imagining that he was addressing the Abbot (whose features closely resembled those of the miller) demanded the answer to his three questions.

In reply to the first, the pseudo-Abbot informed His Majesty that if he rose with the sun, and rode with the same, he would compass the world about in twenty-four hours. The King, rather taken aback at finding his first riddle so easily solved, brought forward the second, the answering of which would certainly prove a delicate task for any subject. But the miller was equal to the occasion. He priced his Majesty at twenty-nine pence, but as his reason for this decision brings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the solemn subject of his betrayal, I prefer to leave it unquoted. Suffice it to say, that King John dared not demur to the miller's statement, but proceeded to name the third question, which he no doubt thought *must* prove a poser.

> "And at the third question thou must not shrink,
> But tell me here truly what I do think."

And the miller did not shrink, but manfully made answer:—

> "*You think* I'm the Abbot of Canterbury,
> But I'm his poor miller, as plain you may see,
> That am come to beg pardon for him and for me."

The King was so delighted with the miller's astuteness that he exclaimed, "I'll make thee Lord Abbot this day in his place!" But the miller remonstrated with His Majesty, showing him how impossible it would be for a poor unlettered rustic to perform the functions of a church dignitary. King John eventually listened to reason, and sent the honest miller home rejoicing, the bearer of a free pardon for his master the Abbot.

But what has this Western story to do with THE EAST OF ASIA? the reader may ask, and with reason. Simply this, that the Chinese also have a tale in which three questions are propounded to a presumably learned man, a penalty being attached to their non-solution, and that these questions are not answered by the one to whom they were addressed, but by a less-learned person in his stead. There are divergencies in the two stories, as a matter

of course, but I think the reader will agree with me that, on the whole, there is a curious resemblance between them.

Once upon a time, so runs the tale, a literary man accepted the post of tutor to the sons of a wealthy man. While he and the father of his pupils were drinking wine together, as is customary at the inception of such an engagement, the latter said:

"I have something to say to you beforehand, *Siensang*. As each festival comes round, I will ask you a question. If you can reply to it, I will pay your salary, and make you a little present in addition; but if you cannot, I will not pay you."

Manifestly unjust though this proposal was, the tutor thought that his employer, not being a scholar, would certainly be unable to put any question which would prove to be beyond his (the *Siensang's*) capacity to answer, and he accordingly agreed to the stipulation. He probably was unacquainted with the saying that "a fool can ask a question which a wise man cannot answer."

The fifth day of the fifth moon came round in due course, and the tutor was preparing to go home for his holidays, when his employer came up with his question.

"Are you acquainted with the history of Confucius?" he enquired in the first place.

"Yes I know it."

"Well then, what about Confucius' seventy-two *Hsien rên* (virtuous men)—how many of them were married? Then as to his 3,000 *titze* (disciples)—after they left off studying under Confucius, what occupation did they follow?"

The poor tutor was utterly dumfoundered, for none of his books gave him any information on these points. So he was obliged to go home without the salary due to him. The lugubrious expression of his countenance struck his wife just as, according to our ballad, the Abbot's woeful appearance struck the miller, and she naturally wished to know the reason. When he had told her:

"What question did he ask you?" she enquired.

Her husband informed her, upon which she retorted:

"You literary men are no good! You just stay at home, while I go and see to it."

On arriving at the *Tongkia's* house, the worthy lady thus introduced her errand:

"At home I hear that you asked my *Siensang* a question which he was unable to answer. *I* can tell you the answer."

"If *you* tell me, *Sïmu*," replied the *Tongkia*, "it will be all the same, and I will hand over the money to you."

"Thirty of the seventy-two '*Hsien rên*' were married," said the tutor's wife, unhesitatingly, "and forty-two were unmarried."

"How do you know that, *Sïmu*? In what book did you find it?"

"It is said in the 'Analects,'" was the reply, "that there were *five six* who wore caps (an expression used for grown-up or married men), and *six seven* youths. Are not five sixes thirty, and are not six sevens forty-two?" It may be as well to explain here that the words quoted from the "Analects" mean "five *or* six" and "six *or* seven," and have nothing whatever to do with the subject in hand, but as *wu-luh* and *luh-ch'ih* in some connections mean "five times six" and "six times seven" the tutor's wife chose to take them in that way. The point of course lies in the extremely far-fetched nature of her explanation.

"As for the 3,000 disciples," she went on to say, "after studying literature under Confucius, they turned to military studies, and all became soldiers."

"In what book do you find that?" enquired the astonished gentleman.

"Is it not written in the 'Analects' that 500 men constitute a regiment, and 2,500 a legion?" she asked.

Again, of course, her quotation was very wide of the mark, but, as the two numbers together amounted to the required 3,000, the *Sïmu* was quite satisfied with her own solution of the problem, and so, apparently, was her interlocutor, for he replied, "Your answers are right," and gave her the money.

On her arrival home, her husband made anxious enquiries as to the result of her expedition. She triumphantly laid the money on the table.

"You hadn't the ability to get it," she said; "*I* have brought it."

The holidays over, the *Sienseng* went back to his work. The Mid-Autumn Festival having in due course arrived, the *Tongkia* came to him with his next question.

"I have something more to ask you, *Sienseng*," he said.

"What is it?" enquired the tutor, probably not without a certain amount of fear and trembling.

"Has *Sienseng* studied the *Wu King Sz Shu*?" (五經四書)

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Has *Sienseng* also read the *San Kuoh*?" (三國志)

"I have read it a little."

"In the *San Kuoh* two men are mentioned, one named Chu Keh-liang, and the other named Cheo U. What were their surnames?"

"Why, of course Chu Keh-liang's surname was Chu Keh, and Cheo U's surname was Cheo."

"No," replied the *Tongkia*, "Chu Keh-liang's surname was not Chu Keh, and Cheo U's surname was not Cheo. Please, *Sienseng*, go home and think over it a little."

So the poor tutor had to start for home a second time empty-handed. He was greeted by his wife with the encouraging statement that several people were waiting to have their bills paid.

"Now you can bring out your money and pay them," she said.

The crestfallen husband had to confess that he had brought none of that indispensable commodity with him.

"Has the *Tongkia* asked you another question that you couldn't answer?" demanded his quick-witted better-half. He was obliged to acknowledge that such was, alas! the case.

"What has he asked you this time?"

On receiving the required information she pondered for a while, then said as before: "You stay at home, and I will go and answer him."

"My *Sienseng* tells me," she said, on arriving at the abode of the troublesome questioner, "that the *Tongkia* has again asked him something that he cannot answer. My *Sienseng* is able to write *essays*, but as these history books (this probably with a supercilious toss of the head) are unimportant, though he has read them, he has somewhat forgotten them. I know a little of these subjects, so I can tell you. Cheo U's surname was Ki, and Chu Keh-liang's surname was Ho."

"Indeed! and how do you know that?"

"It is said in the '*San Kuoh*,'" she replied, "that Ki was the father of U (既生瑜), and Ho was the father of Liang (何生亮)":

This again, is an absurd travesty of an expression in the famous "History of the Three Kingdoms." The story runs that Chu Keh-liang was more learned than Cheo U, who therefore envied him, and constantly plotted against him. He failed, however, to do any harm to Liang, and only succeeded in injuring himself. At last his rage and envy reached such a climax that he "spat blood, and died of anger" (*we* should probably say that he broke a blood-vessel). When dying, he sighed, and thus addressed Heaven:—*Ki séng U, ho séng Liang* (既生瑜, 何生亮) since you produced U (*i.e.* me) why did you produce Liang?"

This is the sentence which that ingenious dame, the tutor's wife, made to mean that Mr. Ki was the father of Mr. U, whose surname must therefore have been Ki, and that Mr. Ho was the father of Mr. Liang, and Liang's surname accordingly was Ho. The *Tongkia* applauded her wisdom, and again handed over to her her husband's salary.

By-and-bye the last month of the year came round, and our friend the tutor was on the point of going home for his New Year holidays. But again the dreaded question came to the fore.

"You are going home for your holidays now, *Sienseng*," said his persecutor; "I have one more question to put to you. You have read books on astronomy and geography?"

"Though I am not thoroughly acquainted with those subjects," was the modest reply, "I know a little about them."

"Well then, how far is our house-door from the door of heaven?"

The tutor's studies had not extended thus far, and again he went home empty-handed.

His wife greeted him with the words:

"I have been looking out for you. We have got nothing for the New Year yet. Now we can buy what is wanted." (One would have thought experience might have taught her better by this time!)

The *Sienseng* sat down with a sigh.

"I won't teach any more," he said, presently; "a tutor's basin of rice is not nice eating. The *Tongkia* asks me all sorts of strange questions, and I can't answer him."

"What strange questions has he asked you now?" enquired his wife. He told her.

"That question is not difficult," she said, after a moment's consideration, and off she started to answer it for him.

"Your house is not very far from heaven's gate," she announced to the *Tongkia*.

"You say it is not far," he returned, "how many *li* is it?"

"To go and come back does not take more than five or six days," was the reply.

"How do you know that?"

"People send off the kitchen-god on his way to heaven on the 24th of this month, and on the 30th they welcome him back. Is it not five or six days from the 24th to the 30th?

"The *Sïmu's* learning is greater than the *Sienseng's*," said the astonished *Tongkia*. And the *Sïmu* returned once more with her husband's salary in her hand.

It seems almost a pity that, since in his opinion, her learning exceeded that of her husband, the *Tongkia* did not follow King John's example, and say: "I'll make thee tutor this day in his place." She would probably have exercised the tutorial functions at least as well as the miller would have exercised those of an Abbot.

How John Chinaman Builds His House.

By Helena von Poseck.

WHEN a Chinese has decided to build a new house for himself, the first thing to be done is to consult a *yingyang siensong*, or geomancer. This individual has studied the mysteries of *fengshui*, or wind and water, and knows all about the influences supposed to be exerted thereby upon the destinies of mankind; he can, therefore, give the householder all the instructions necessary to be observed if he would avert misfortune.

Having carefully examined the site in question, the *yingyang siensong* marks the spot which must be occupied by the front door, which, by the way (though a *partly* southern aspect is considered desirable) must never face due south. A strictly southern aspect is reserved for the Emperor's throne and palace, and also for the yamêns of the "father and mother" officials, that is to say, those who govern the *people*, as distinct from military mandarins. The lesser officials, whose work is merely auxiliary, and who have no seals of their own, do not possess this privilege: it belongs exclusively to the aforesaid father and mother officials, each of whom, from a Viceroy to a District Magistrate, has his own seal of office.

The geomancer, having marked out the site for the front door, also prescribes its exact height and width, for an inch too high or too low, too wide or too narrow, might have disastrous consequences.

A *chaopih*, or screen of wood or bricks, must be erected about three yards in front of the door to prevent the entrance of any evil breath. Not *human* breath, be it observed, nor yet March miasma, or noisome odours: such minor evils are beneath the consideration of the elevated celestial mind. No! the dreaded breath is of a more mysterious and spiritual nature. I, in my ignorance, formerly supposed that the *chaopih* was intended as a bar to the inquisitiveness of passers-by—only another proof of the utter incapacity of the matter-of-fact "Western barbarian" to comprehend the deep mysteries of Chinese science. Human eyes, indeed! why, all the world and his wife (at least, the Chinese world—the eyes of the foreign would probably

be regarded with more suspicion)—all the world and his wife might stare in and contemplate the domestic arrangements of a middle or lower-class house without any feeling of delicacy on the part of the said somewhat voluminous couple, or of annoyance on the part of the family subjected to their scrutinizing gaze. Human eyes, indeed! what would that matter? And as for human breath, why, the atmosphere might be polluted by *that* to any extent without anyone troubling about it in the least, even though a sick or dying person were gasping for want of air. No, the dreaded breath is not human, neither is it a cold or hot wind, or anything referable to natural causes. Suffice it to say that there *is* such a breath, according to the *yingyang sienseng* and his clients, and the *chao-pih* must be erected to keep it out. It is not a question, as in many an English home, of "keeping the wolf from the door," but of "keeping the breath from the door." But the screen must be of exactly the right height and width, or it will be of no use.

Leaving the *chao-pih*, we proceed to the *tsao*, or kitchen fireplace. This important structure must not face south, because the south, in symbolical language, represents fire and, as there will be a fire in the *tsao*, the power of that destructive element would in that case be too great, and the house would probably be burnt down. The intending house-builder is probably already aware of this indisputable fact but, if not, the geomancer will not fail to bring it before his notice.

The owner may suit his own convenience in the arrangement of the minor details of the various apartments, though, of course, he will be likely to follow the plan which generally obtains in Chinese houses, and build them in blocks of three rooms each.

Having settled the question of place, now comes that of time: when is the house to be built? "Surely that may be left to the convenience of the house-builder," you will probably say. "Given the necessary funds and materials, why not set about it at once, provided the weather be suitable?"

Far be the thought! Funds, materials, and favourable weather may count, but there are more important questions still, and these our professor of the occult sciences will now proceed to settle.

He must carefully reckon when the earth god, *Tai Sui*, will be absent from the place, as, should he happen to be at home when the workmen begin to dig, they might chance to hurt his head, and what an explosion of wrath might be expected under such circumstances, should the earth-god's dignity be thus outraged! the family inhabiting that house would infallibly die out.*

* The Earth-god has such a reputation for irascibility that people say of a man of extremely violent temper, whom it is dangerous to offend: *Tai Sui t'eo-shang tong-liao t'u*—"The clods have been stirred above *Tai Sui's* head." Sometimes a member of a gang of robbers, or some other mischievous society, assumes the nickname *Tai Sui*, and is known thereby among his comrades; outsiders will also attach the name, as they do that of "Tiger," to a man of this description.

The next thing to be found out is whether the present year is one in which the house-builder may *tong t'u* or move earth, for there are certain years in the life of every individual during which he must not enter upon certain undertakings. For instance, it is considered unlucky for a man to be married when the years of his life amount to an even number, such as twenty-four, twenty-six, or twenty-eight. An odd number, such as twenty-three or twenty-five is all right. If the year in question is inauspicious for house-building, our friend must wait till the next.

That question settled, the *yingyang sienseng* must ascertain, if the house-builder does not know it already (which he probably does), which two months are favourable to his client, for there are only two out of the twelve in which a Chinese may safely undertake any important business—*which* they are depends upon the year of his birth. If, for example, he happens to be *shuh ki tih*, *i.e.*, to have been born during the year governed by the cock, his two auspicious months will be the first and seventh; no other month will do. All his important transactions, therefore, must be set on foot either in the height of summer or while winter still holds sway—not a very convenient circumstance, one would imagine.

The *yingyang sienseng* or *fengshui sienseng*, for he is called by both names, next consults the almanac to see which days in those two months are *hwang tao reh-tze*, or "yellow road days," and which are *heh tao reh-tze*, or "black road days." There are more of the black, or bad days, than of the yellow, or good.

He then casts (or, perhaps, has already cast) the horoscope of the entire family—an intricate proceeding which the barbarian mind finds no slight difficulty in comprehending. He first ascertains when each member of the family was born, all the dates being written out for him on pieces of red paper. As there are eight of these characters, two each for the year, day, month, and hour of the individual's birth, they are known by the name of *Pah Tsï*, or "Eight Characters." By comparing the "heavenly stem" and "earthly branch" of each person with those of the rest, he is able to estimate which days of the month will be *kih reh*, or lucky days for the whole family. These lucky days must now be compared with the "yellow road days," and a day must be chosen which is both a *kih reh* for the whole family, and a *huang tao reh*, as shown in the almanac.

This is not always easy, as the days are liable to clash. For instance, if a member of the family was born in the year called *Yin* the day called *Mao* must not be chosen, because a man born in the *Yin* year belongs to the "cock," while the *mao* day corresponds with the "hare," and a cock and a hare are supposed, for some occult reason or other, to be mutually

incongruous. In like manner, a man born in the *Ch'ên* year belongs to the "dragon," and therefore a *yin* day must not be chosen, as that corresponds with the "tiger," and if a tiger and a dragon came into collision, they would be sure to fight, which must inevitably bring misfortune upon the family.

Naturally, the more numerous the family, the greater the danger of clashing and the difficulty in finding a favourable day. If all the animals of the cycle are represented in the family birthdays, the *yingyang sienseng* settles the question by saying that *any* day will do. There is no need for further research.*

At last, oh joy! an auspicious day is found for beginning the work. But all is not arranged yet: the *yingyang sienseng* must also tell his client when to put the front door in its place, what will be a favourable day and hour for raising the topmost beam of the roof, when to build the kitchen fireplace, and when to sink the well (if there is to be a well). And now there is nothing left for the Professor to do but receive his *k'o-king*, or fee, and take his leave.

After, perhaps, several months of waiting, the great day arrives. The workmen having assembled, the house-builder places a table in the middle of the site of his future dwelling, and sets candles on it, together with offerings to *T'uti Pusa* (the tutelary divinity of the neighbourhood). These offerings consist of a pig's head, a fowl, a fish, and three cups of wine. He then *kowtows* in front of the table, and afterwards he or some male member of his family or servant burns silver paper money *(yüanpao)*, and crackers are let off. It is of little use for a *woman* to burn silver paper money under any circumstances, for it is believed that her hands will cause the silver to turn into iron. This only applies to burning it, for women are often employed in making it. Hence if a woman has bought *yüanpao* she gets a man or boy to burn it for her. While the paper money is burning, the master pours over it two or three drops of the wine from one cup.

The sacrifices concluded, the masons begin to dig, but only do a few strokes of work in order to be able to say that they have started. It is an understood thing that this is a holiday—a day devoted to jollification rather than to labour. Two or three spadefuls of earth having been thrown up, they leave off, and their employer gives them a feast, consisting in part of the pig's head, fowl, fish and wine previously offered to the *T'uti Pusa*.

* Any day during *Ta Han*, or "The Great Cold," is also available, but as the weather during that period (the latter half of the twelfth month) is decidedly unsuitable for housebuilding, it may be presumed that few, if any, take advantage of the permission.

The meat is parboiled whole before being set before the idol, but afterwards cut up, and completely cooked for its human consumers. The next day work is begun in earnest.

Nothing of special interest now occurs till beam-raising-day, which is a very grand occasion indeed. The house-builder comes up on the scene, attired in his *li-y*, or ceremonial garments and hat, a table is placed in front of the beam, and on the table are arranged two tall candles, a bundle of incense-sticks and the sacrifices offered, not this time to the *T'uti Pusa*, but to the beam god. If the family be wealthy, a whole pig and a whole sheep are offered, otherwise the sacrifice again consists of a pig's head, a fowl and a fish, as well as three cups of wine. The candles are lighted and the incense burned in honour of the tutelary divinity of the beam. By the side of the table farthest from the beam stands a brazier called the *chü pao p'ên*, or "collect *yüanpao* pan"; this brazier contains charcoal which must be made to burn very red, as an emblem of prosperity; it is also used at the new year. The master meanwhile kneels before the brazier, and *kowtows* again; a third time he goes through the same performance, making in all nine *kowtows*.

The devotion having come to an end, the carpenters may now raise the all-important beam, on which are stuck three pieces of red paper, each bearing the character *fuh*—happiness, or good fortune. A piece of red paper is also pasted on the upper part of each of the two pillars which support the ends of the beam. On the left hand one are written the seven characters: *Shu chu hsi fung hwang tao reh*—a sentence expressive of joy that a "yellow road day" has been found for erecting the pillars, while the right hand motto tells of the owner's delight that he has met with the purple *wei* star for the elevation of the beam: *Shang liang hsin yü tze wei hsing*. (The purple *wei* star is the morning star belonging specially to the Emperor, and hence highly auspicious.) As the beam is being raised, the carpenters hang a piece of red cloth over its whole length, fasten upon it two sprays of gilt flowers, and attach to the top of each of the pillars a red sieve with three bamboo arrows projecting from it, and pointing towards the sky. Within the sieve they suspend an almanac.

The carpenters then take their seats on the smaller rafters and strike the beam several times with a hammer painted red. This hammer is afterwards presented by the master of the house to a man who has no son; and who if the wished-for-heir is later on born to him, is expected to reward the donor of the hammer by inviting him and his family to a feast. The people who, with sound of gongs and cymbals, carry the hammer in procession to the childless home, also count upon receiving an invitation. A

Chinese of my acquaintance was favoured in this way during a long and severe illness. He was lying on his bed in great weakness and suffering, when suddenly the sound of gongs and other musical (?) instruments was heard approaching the house, and in a few moments more the sickroom was thronged with people, banging and drumming away still more vigorously than they had done outside. He was a young man who as yet had no children, and presumably the donor and bearers of the hammer thought that they were conferring a double obligation upon him, since the promise of a son also involved the sparing of his own life.

The sick man was almost distracted by the turmoil. "I felt that I *hated* thèm in my heart," he said, when relating the circumstance. Nevertheless, as in duty bound, his stepmother was obliged to set food and wine before the uninvited guests in the next room, and when by-and-by they took their leave, no doubt it was in a self-congratulatory spirit both as regarded the good action accomplished and the feast which possibly awaited them in the future. The sick man recovered and about five years later became the happy father of a son. His neighbours were not slow to remind him of the benefit they had conferred upon him, and the acknowledgment they expected in return. But he had, meanwhile, become a Christian, and he, therefore, took his little son as a gift from the hand of God instead of the result of the presentation of a red hammer, so the feast was not forthcoming. But from that day to this (though nearly four years have passed by) those neighbours every now and then remind him of his duty with regard to the feast. So much for their disinterested benevolence.

But it is time to return to the carpenters, whom we left sitting on the rafters. They will not object to the delay, however, for they are well occupied, and in no hurry to descend from their elevated position. After making speeches expressive of their good wishes for the prosperity of the householder and his descendants, they hang on the large beam several wooden mallets painted red. And now comes a part of the ceremony particularly interesting to the carpenters themselves and to the bystanders—most of all, perhaps, to any youngsters who happen to be present. A large number of *mant'eo* (small cakes of steamed bread) have been prepared for the occasion, most, if not all, of them probably presented by relatives and friends. A basket is filled with these, and drawn up by the carpenters, who reserve a portion for themselves and throw the rest among the crowd which has by this time assembled in anticipation of the coming good things. It seems that, more often than not, the hour chosen by the *yingyang sienseng* for the raising of the beam is in the night or early morning; this fact would no doubt diminish the number of applicants for *mant'eo*, and leave a larger

share for the carpenters. These worthies have also been supplied with a quantity of cash, painted red. Of these also they keep what is probably the lion's share for themselves, and scatter a goodly portion among the expectant throng beneath. Some people give these red cash to their children to play with, others hang them by a red string round the necks of the little ones as a charm against evil spirits.

Our friends the carpenters seem in no hurry to leave their seat on the beam; the *mant'eo* and the cash disposed of, they still remain perched aloft, and occupy themselves in saying "good words," which good words consist of complimentary speeches addressed to their employer, with expressions of the desire that he may amass a fortune, that his son may become a mandarin, that all his descendants may flourish, and so forth. Interspersed with these good words are requests for *hsi-t'sien*, or joy money. The householder complies with their wish, but they are not satisfied. "*Laopan, ch'ang ch'ang ts'ai*," they cry—"Master, increase wealth!" which speech has a twofold application to him, in that it expresses the desire that *his* wealth may increase, and to themselves, inasmuch as it is a request to him to increase *theirs*. He dares not refuse them, but goes on adding; they continue asking and saying good words, till at length they consider that he has given enough, or that they can get no more out of him, and then they condescend to come down to his level. *Terra firma* regained, they gather round him and congratulate him, after which he burns paper money and lets off crackers in honour of the beam god. No more work is done that day, but another feast is given to all the workmen, or, if there are too many (for sometimes a hundred or more are employed in building a large house) they receive money as an equivalent. In addition to this their pay is doubled for that day. Some of the more diligent may employ the rest of the day in doing an odd job for someone else, the others will very likely spend it in gambling, drinking wine, or smoking opium. The next day they return to their work. When raising the walls the workmen are careful to leave in one of them a round hole called the "dragon's mouth," and this is not filled up till the building is quite finished.

But now I must tell of an artful trick to which Chinese masons are said to be somewhat addicted. If they choose to consider that the owner of the house has treated them shabbily, they make a little straw or wooden effigy of him, and build it into one of the walls without his knowing anything about it. If they wish him to turn blind, or to have a blind child, as a punishment for his behaviour to themselves, they pierce the eyes of the effigy; if they want him to be dumb, they stick a needle in its mouth; while if the judgment is to take the form of constant quarrels between him and his

better-half (or worse-half, according to Chinese ideas), they make two figures in a fighting attitude. But this satisfactory performance is attended with some little risk, for if the householder finds it out, and destroys the effigy, the man who made it is sure to die before long, because his magic has failed.

But at last the final touch is put to the building, and this event (as well as its commencement and the raising of the beam) is marked by idolatrous ceremonies. The owner on this occasion pays his respects to *three* divinities: he worships *T'uti Pusa* at a little shrine which has been built into a wall in the courtyard, and in which that idol's tablet is placed; in the *t'ang ch'ien*, or middle room of the principal block, he worships *Kiat'ang Pusa*, the god who is supposed to rule over household matters, and in the kitchen he worships the tablet of *Tsao Shên*, the kitchen god. On this final day he again gives a feast to the workmen.

Before the owner and his family move into their new house—before even the furniture is carried thither, two pots of plants, with red paper wrapped round their stems, must enter and take possession. These plants are named respectively, *wan nien ch'ing*, or "Ten thousand years green," and *kih ch'iang ts'ao*, or "Lucky herb."

On the day of "flitting" relatives and friends send presents of *mant'eo* and *kao*, or small cakes. Tbese also have a figurative meaning; *mant'eo*, because being made with yeast it rises, symbolises prosperity, while the word *kao* (though written with a different character) has the same sound as *kao*—high, and thus, by a verbal quibble, it also is made to indicate the advancement of the family concerned. Some of these eatables are consumed by the recipients, the rest are distributed among their neighbours—the word "neighbours" taking in possibly about twenty-five families. Two or four of each kind of cake are sent to each family (the number must always be even), and if the relatives have not provided enough for this distribution, more are bought to make up the deficiency.

About three days after the removal, or sometimes on the same day, a house-warming takes place, the nearest neighbours, together with the relatives, being invited to a feast.

"And now my story's done," as windeth up the nursery rhyme, and I leave my readers to congratulate themselves that in the favoured Western lands from which they hail, if they want to build a house, and possess the necessary funds, they can set about it when and how they like, without being in terror of offending some uncanny spirit, or transgressing some occult law.

The apparent good fellowship between neighbours and between employer and employed would be a pleasant feature in Chinese social life, were it not that it is to be feared that in too many cases it is connected with "a lively anticipation of favours to come," or else with the fear of being reviled as mean.