

HENRY

ARTHUR BLAKE

CHINA

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China

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Sir Henry Arthur Blake

China

CHAPTER I

In attempting even a slight sketch of China, its physical features, or some of the manners and customs of the various peoples whom we designate broadly as the Chinese, the writer is confronted with the difficulty of its immensity. The continuous territory in Asia over which China rules or exercises a suzerainty is over 4,200,000 square miles, but China Proper, excluding Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and Turkestan, consists of eighteen provinces, covering an area of 1,530,000 square miles, with a population of about 410,000,000, or about twelve and a half times the area of the United Kingdom, and ten times its population.

This area is bounded on the west by southern spurs from the giant mountain regions of Eastern Tibet, that stretch their long arms in parallel ranges through Burma and Western Yunnan, and whose snow-clad crests send forth the great rivers Salween and Mekong to the south, the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers to the east, to fertilize the most productive regions on the surface of the globe.

It is this conformation that has so far presented an insurmountable barrier to the construction of a railway from Bhamo in Burmese territory to the high plateau of Yunnan, from whence the province of Szechwan, richest of all the eighteen provinces in agricultural and mineral wealth, could be reached. Some day the coal, iron, gold, oil, and salt of Szechwan will be exploited, and future generations may find in the millionaires of Szechwan Chinese speculators as able and far-seeing as the financial magnates who now practically control the destinies of millions in the Western world.

The portion south of the Yangtze is hilly rather than mountainous, and the eastern portion north of that great river is a vast plain of rich soil, through which the Yellow River, which from its periodical inundations is called China's Sorrow, flows for over five hundred miles.

In a country so vast, internal means of communication are of the first importance, and here China enjoys natural facilities unequalled by any area of similar extent. Three great rivers flow eastward and southward – the Hoang-ho, or Yellow River, in the north, the Yangtze in the centre, and the Pearl River, of which the West River is the largest branch, in the south. The Yangtze alone with its affluents is calculated to afford no less than 36,000 miles of waterways. The river population of China comprises many millions, whose varied occupations present some of the most interesting aspects of Chinese life.

The population of China is composed of different tribes or clans, whose records date back to the dynasty of Fuh-hi, 2800 B.C. Sometimes divided in separate kingdoms, sometimes united by waves of conquest, the northern portion was welded into one empire by the conqueror, Ghengis Khan, in A.D. 1234, and seventy years later the southern portion was added by his son, Kublai Khan, who overthrew the Sung dynasty. It was during his reign that China was visited by Marco Polo, from the records of whose travels we find that even at that time the financial system of the Far East was so far advanced that paper money was used by the Chinese, while in the city of Cambaluc – the Peking of to-day – Christian, Saracen, and Chinese astrologers consulted an astrolabe to forecast the nature of the weather, thus anticipating the meteorological bureaux of to-day.

There are, however, still districts in the southern portion of China where the aboriginal inhabitants have never accepted the position of complete incorporation with the Chinese neighbours. In the mountain district between the provinces of Kwangtung and Hunan a tribe exists known as the Yu people, in whose territory no Chinese officials are permitted to reside, nor do they allow strangers to enter their towns, which are built on crags difficult of access and capable of offering a stubborn resistance to attack. Their chief occupation is forestry, the timber being cut during the winter and

floated down the mountain streams when in flood. Their customs are peculiar. Among them is the vendetta, which is practised by the Yu alone of all the people in the Far East. But no woman is ever injured; and even during the fiercest fighting the women can continue their work in the fields with safety. Their original home was in Yunnan and the western part of Kwangsi, from whence they were driven out by the Chinese in the time of the Sung dynasty. The Yu, Lolos, Miao-tse, Sy-fans, etc. (all Chinese names expressive of contempt, like our "barbarians"), are stated by Ma-tonan-lin and other Chinese historians to have been found inhabiting the country when, six thousand years ago, it was occupied by the ancestors of the Chinese, who came from the north-west. The savage inhabitants were gradually driven into the hills, where their descendants are still found. Their traditions point to their having been cannibals. Intermarriage with the Chinese is very rare, the Chinese regarding such a union as a *mésalliance*, and the aboriginal peoples as a cowardly desertion to the enemy. The embroideries worked by the women are different from those of the Chinese and, I am informed, more resemble the embroideries now worked at Bethlehem. They are worked on dark cloth in red, or sometimes red and yellow.

After the time of Kublai Khan, succeeding centuries found the various divisions of the Chinese again disunited, in accordance with a very old Chinese proverb frequently heard at the present day, "Long united we divide: long divided we unite"; but the final welding took place under Shun-chi, who established the Tsing dynasty in 1644, and imposed upon all Chinese people, as a permanent and evident mark of subjection, the shaving of the front portion of the head and braiding of the back hair into a queue after the Tartar fashion – an order at first resented bitterly, but afterwards acquiesced in as an old custom. To this day the removal of the queue and allowing the hair to grow on the front portion of the head is regarded as a casting off of allegiance to the dynasty. In the Taiping rebellion that raged in the southern provinces from 1850 to 1867, and which down to its suppression by Gordon and Li Hung Chang is computed to have cost the lives of twenty-two and a half millions of people, the removal of the queue and allowing the hair to grow freely was the symbol adopted by the rebels.

To secure the empire against future risings, the Manchu conquerors placed Tartar garrisons in every great city, where separate quarters were allotted to them, and for two hundred and sixty years these so-called Tartar soldiers and their families have been supported with doles of rice. They were not allowed to trade, nor to intermarry with the Chinese. The consequence was inevitable. They have become an idle population in whom the qualities of the old virile Manchus have deteriorated, and supply a large proportion of the elements of disorder and violence. Of late, the prohibition against entering into business and intermarrying with the Chinese has been removed, and they will ultimately be absorbed into the general population.

From the point of view of a trained soldier these Tartar "troops" were no more than armed rabble, with the most primitive ideas of military movements; but in the north the exigencies of the situation have compelled the adoption of Western drill, adding immensely to the efficiency but sadly diminishing the picturesqueness of the armies – for there is no homogeneous territorial army, each province supplying its own independent force, the goodness or badness of which depends upon the energy and ability of the viceroy.

The pay of a Chinese soldier is ostensibly about six dollars a month, which would be quite sufficient for his support were it not reduced to about half that amount by the squeezes of the officers and non-commissioned officers through whose hands it passes. He receives also one hundred pounds of rice, which is not always palatable, the weight being made up by an admixture of sand and mud to replace the "squeeze" by the various hands through which the rice tribute has passed.

While under arms he is clothed in a short Chinese jacket of scarlet, blue, or black, on the front and back of which are the name and symbol of his regiment. The sleeves are wide and the arms have free play. The shape of the hat varies in every corps, the small round Chinese hat being sometimes worn, or a peakless cap, while some regiments wear immense straw hats, which hang on the back except when the sun is unduly hot. The trousers are dark blue of the usual Chinese pattern, tied round

the ankles. The costume is not unsoldierlike, and when in mass the effect is strikingly picturesque; but it must not be inferred that all the men on a large parade are drilled soldiers. An order to the officer commanding to parade his corps for inspection not seldom interferes seriously with the labour force of the day. He draws the daily pay of, say, two thousand men, but his average muster may not exceed three hundred. This is a kind of gambling with Fortune at which China is disposed to wink as being merely a somewhat undue extension of the principle of squeeze that is the warp and woof of every Chinese employee, public or private. But he must not be found out; therefore seventeen hundred coolies are collected by hook or by crook, and duly attired in uniform, possibly being shown how to handle their rifles at the salute. The muster over, the coolies return to their work, and the arms and uniform are replaced in store until the next occasion.

The officers are chosen from the better classes, except when a more than usually ferocious robber is captured, when sometimes his supposed bravery is utilized by giving him an army command. The young officers undergo some kind of elementary training. In Canton it was until lately the custom to have an annual examination of their proficiency in riding and archery. In a field outside the city a curved trench about five feet wide and two feet deep was cut for about two hundred and fifty yards. At intervals of fifty yards were erected close to the trench three pillars of soft material each six feet high by two feet in diameter. Into each of these pillars the candidate, who was mounted on a small pony and seated in a saddle to fall out of which would require an active effort, was required to shoot an arrow as he passed at a gallop. With bow ready strung and two spare arrows in his girdle, he was started to gallop along the trench that was palpably dug to prevent the ponies from swerving, as the reins were flung upon his neck. As the candidate passed within two or three feet of the pillar targets the feat would not appear to have been difficult. If all three arrows were successfully planted the candidate was at the end of the course received with applause, and his name favourably noted by the mandarins, who sat in state in an open pavilion close by. But this description would not at present apply to the northern provinces, where some of the armies are apparently as well drilled, armed, and turned out as European troops. That Chinese troops are not wanting in bravery has been proved; and if properly led a Chinese drilled army of to-day might prove as formidable as were the hosts of Ghengis Khan, when in the thirteenth century they swept over Western Asia and into Europe as far as Budapest.

It has been stated that the empire has been welded together by its conquerors, but perhaps it would be more correct to say that it coheres by the almost universal acceptance of the ethics of Confucius, whose wise precepts – delivered five hundred years before the birth of Christ – inculcated all the cardinal virtues, and included love and respect for parents; respect for the Prince; respect for and obedience to superiors; respect for age, and courteous manners towards all. He held that at their birth all men were by nature radically good, but "as gems unwrought serve no useful end, so men untaught will never know what right conduct is."

The bedrock upon which the stability of China has rested for over two thousand years is the family life, the patriarchal system reaching upwards in ever-widening circles, from the hut of the peasant to the palace of the Sovereign. The house is ruled by the parents, the village by the elders, after which the officials step in, and the districts are governed by mandarins, whose rank of magistrate, prefect, taotai, governor, or viceroy indicate the importance of the areas over which they rule, each acting on principles settled by ancient custom, but with wide latitude in the carrying out of details. Nothing is more charming in respectable Chinese families than the reverential respect of children for their parents, and this respect is responded to by great affection for the children. It is a very pretty sight to see a young child enter the room and gravely perform the kotow to his father and mother. No young man would dare to eat or drink in the presence of his father or mother until invited to do so. Among the princely families the etiquette is so rigid that if a son is addressed by his father while at table he must stand up before answering.

It is sometimes assumed that the custom of wealthy Chinese having two, three, or more "wives" must lead to much confusion in questions of inheritance, but there is no real difficulty in the matter,

for although the custom allows the legalized connection with a plurality of wives, there is really but one legal wife acknowledged as being the head of the house. She is called the kit-fat, or first wife, and though she may be childless all the children born of the other "wives" are considered as being hers, and to her alone do the children pay the reverence due to a parent, their own mothers being considered as being in the position of aunts. Strange though it may appear to Western ideas, this position seems to be accepted by the associated wives with equanimity. The custom probably originated in the acknowledged necessity to have a son or sons to carry on the worship at the family ancestral hall, where the tablets of deceased members are preserved. Sometimes instead of taking to himself a plurality of wives a man adopts a son, who is thenceforth in the position of eldest son, and cannot be displaced, even though a wife should afterwards bear a son. A daughter is on a different plane. She is not supposed to be capable of carrying out the family worship, and cannot perpetuate the family name. A daughter, too, means a dowry in days to come, so sometimes a father determines, if he has already a daughter, that no more shall be permitted to live. This determination is always taken before the birth of the infant daughter, the child in that case being immersed in a bucket of water at the instant of its birth, so that from the Chinese point of view it has never existed; but female children who have practically begun a separate existence are never destroyed. In such cases the father is quite as fond of the daughter as of the sons, and in families where tutors are engaged the girls pursue their studies with their brothers.

The power of the parents is practically unlimited, extending even to life or death. A mother might kill her son without fear of legal punishment, but if, in defending himself, he killed his parent, he would be put to death by the lin-chi – or death by a thousand cuts – a horrible punishment reserved for traitors, parricides, or husband murderers. Indeed, while theoretically the woman is in China considered inferior, the kit-fat, or principal wife, is really the controller of the family, including the wives of her sons. She rules the household with a rod of iron, and has considerable, if not a paramount, influence in the conduct of the family affairs. The wife of an official is entitled to wear the ornaments and insignia of her husband's rank, and in the Imperial Palace the Dowager-Empress of the day is probably the most important personage in the empire after the Emperor.

In a Hong Kong paper a short time ago there appeared a paragraph reciting that a wealthy young Chinese, whose mother controlled a large business in Canton, had been spending the money of the firm too lavishly, the attraction of motor-cars and other vehicles of extravagance being too powerful for him. After various endeavours to control him, the mother at length prepared chains and fetters, and had him locked up. He, however, escaped, and the irate mother announced her intention to exercise her maternal rights on his return by cutting the tendons of his ankles and thus crippling him. The account proceeded to say that this treatment is often resorted to by irate parents with prodigal sons.

The most incomprehensible custom among Chinese women of family is that of foot-binding, which is generally begun at the age of three or four, the process being very slow. Gradually the toes, other than the great toe, are forced back under the sole, so that when the operation is complete the girl is only able to hobble about on the great toes. When a Chinese lady goes out, not using her sedan chair, she is either carried by a female slave pick-a-back, or walks supported on either side by two female attendants. Nevertheless, Chinese women of the humbler classes are sometimes to be seen working in the fields with bound feet. Why their mothers should have inflicted the torture upon them, or why, when they had come to years of discretion, they did not attempt to gradually unbind their feet, seems incomprehensible. The explanation is that not alone would the unbinding inflict as much torture, but slaves and their descendants are not permitted to bind the feet; the deformity is therefore a badge of a free and reputable family, and a girl with bound feet has a better prospect of being well married than her more comfortable and capable sister, upon whom no burden of artificial deformity has been placed. The origin of the custom is lost in the mists of antiquity. One would imagine that the example of the Imperial family ought to have had an effect in changing it, for the Manchu ladies do not bind their feet; but though several edicts have been issued forbidding it, the custom still continues.

To Western eyes, bound feet are as great a deformity as is the tight-lacing of European ladies to the Chinese; but physically the former is much less injurious than the latter, which not alone deforms the skeleton, but displaces almost every one of the internal organs.

CHAPTER II

The marriages are arranged in a somewhat similar manner to that of the Irish peasants. The negotiations are usually begun by a go-between instructed by the young man's family, the etiquette of the entire proceeding being rigidly adhered to. There is one insurmountable objection to unrestricted choice – the bridegroom and bride must not bear the same name, except in the province of Honan, where the prohibition is disregarded. The extent of this restriction will be realized when we remember that among the four hundred millions of Chinese there are not much over a hundred family names. There may be four millions of Wongs, but no man of that name may marry any one of the four millions. As marriage is the principal event of a Chinese woman's life, she has crowded into it as much gorgeous ceremonial as the circumstances of her parents will allow. The day before she leaves her ancestral home her trousseau and presents are forwarded to her new home. At the wedding of a daughter of a wealthy gentleman in Canton a few years ago, seven hundred coolies were engaged in transporting in procession all these belongings, some of the presents being of great beauty and value. The next day the bridegroom arrived with his procession of two hundred men – some on horseback, some armed and in military array – trays of sweetmeats, and numbers of children representing good fairies. The inevitable red lanterns, with a band, led the procession, which was brought up by a dragon thirty feet long, the legs being supplied by boys, who carried their portion on sticks, and jumping up and down gave life and motion to the monster.

The bridal chair in which the bride was carried was elaborately carved and decorated. Its colour was red, picked out with blue feathers of the kingfisher carefully gummed on, which has the effect of enamel. On arrival at her new home, the bride was met with the usual ceremonies, and was carried over the threshold on which was a fire lighted in a pan, lest she should by any chance be accompanied by evil influences.

This carrying of the bride over the threshold is sometimes practised in the Highlands of Scotland, the ceremony having been observed when Her Royal Highness Princess Louise, Duchess of Argyll, first entered Inveraray Castle as a bride.

The day after the wedding it is the custom for the bride to cook her husband's rice, the fire being made from wood, which forms part of her trousseau, as she is supposed to bring everything necessary for the purpose to her new home. At a wedding at Macao not long ago, on proceeding to perform the usual ceremony, it was found to the consternation of the bride that no firewood had been sent. Her mother-in-law good-naturedly offered to give her the wood, but this the proud bride would by no means permit. Calling her amah, she directed her to fetch two rolls of silk, each worth about forty dollars, and with them she cooked the rice. When next her father came to see her she told him of the occurrence. He said, "You did right, my daughter; you have saved your father's face"; and on his return he promptly dispatched a hundred coolies laden with firewood, which was more than the bridegroom's house could hold.

The ceremony of the "teasing of the bride" is sometimes trying for her, but in good families propriety is rarely outraged. Here is an account of such a ceremony which took place in the house of one of our friends the day after her marriage. The ladies' dinner was over when we arrived; the gentlemen had not yet come up from their dinner at the restaurant. This evening the bride had gone round the tables pouring out samshu, a ceremony that her mother-in-law had performed on the previous evening. The bride came into the room wearing a gorgeous and elaborate costume of red, the long ribbon-like arrangements over her skirt, huge open-work collar of red and gold, and the bridal crown on her head. The veil of pearls was looped back from her face, and she looked arch and smiling. It was quite a relief to see her after the shrinking, downcast girl of the previous evening. When the gentlemen came the "teasing" of the bride began. She was given various puzzles to solve, two or three of which she undid very deftly. An intricate Japanese puzzle was produced, but the

mother-in-law would not allow it to be given to the bride to solve, as she said it was too difficult. The bridegroom came in, and the gentlemen present demanded that he and the bride should walk round the room together, which they did, and were then made to repeat the peregrination. There was a demand that the pearl veil, which had been let down, should be hooked back that all present might see her face. This was done. Then a sort of poetic category was put to her, a gentleman of the family standing near to judge if she answered correctly. The bride was told to ask her husband to take her hand; to ask him what he had gained in marrying her, and so on. The bride had to go round the room saluting and offering tea to the various gentlemen. To one or two relatives she kotosed, and one or two kotosed to her. This, of course, was a question of seniority. Some of the questions and remarks made on the bride must have been trying and unpleasant to any young lady, but being in Chinese they were incomprehensible to us. The idea of the custom is to test the temper, character, and cleverness of the bride.

In the case of people of the lower orders, the ceremony must be more than unpleasant, as there is sometimes rough horseplay, the unfortunate bride being insulted, and now and again pinched severely. But she must show no display of temper or resentment at the rough process, as it would be taken as an indication that she did not possess the qualification of non-resisting submission to her husband.

Each family possesses an ancestral "hall," where are kept the tablets of every defunct member of the family, before which incense sticks are burnt daily, and where once or twice a year all the members of the family within reach attend to lay offerings before the tablets in a spirit of reverence. Should a man disgrace his family he is often repudiated as a member, and at his death no tablet will be placed for him in the ancestral hall. The consequence is that his descendants cannot present themselves for the competitive examinations upon which all official position depends.

The family lands are apportioned annually, and from one particular portion the contribution must be paid towards the expenses of the local temple, including the theatrical performances that cost considerable sums. This portion of the family land is cultivated by each member of the family in turn. If the tenant be a Christian he declines to pay the money for purposes to which he claims to have a conscientious objection. Increased expense therefore falls upon the other members of the family, who feel that the secession has placed an additional burden upon them. The result is a feeling of antagonism to Christianity; otherwise religious intolerance is not characteristic of the Chinese.

The official hierarchy in China is peculiarly constituted. China is, like all democracies, intensely autocratic, and, within certain bounds, each official is a law unto himself. To become an official is therefore the ambition of every clever boy. At the triennial examinations held in the capitals of provinces, from 150,000 to 200,000 candidates present themselves, who have passed successfully preliminary competitive examinations held annually at various places. To compete in these examinations a certificate must be produced by the candidate that he is a member of a known family. If unsuccessful, he may go on competing at every triennial examination held during his life. Here we see the importance of family tablets in the ancestral hall. No barber, or actor, or member of the boat population may compete.

At Canton, and also at Nanking and other great cities, may be seen the examination halls and the rows of cells in which the candidates – after being rigidly searched to ensure that no scrap of paper or writing is retained that could assist them in the tremendous pending effort of memory – are strictly confined during the time that the examinations last. In Canton there are over eleven thousand; in Nanking there are many more. The lean-to cells are built in rows, and measure three feet eight inches in width by five feet nine inches in length, being six feet high in front and nine feet in the back. From this cell the candidate may not stir, except as an acknowledgment of failure, and many die during the trial. At Nanking during an examination an average of twenty-five deaths occurred daily.

Those who win the prizes are at once appointed to office, and are received at their homes with great honour. Of those who have passed lower down, some are allocated to different provinces,

where they remain in waiting at the expense of the viceroy until some situation becomes vacant. Once appointed they are eligible for promotion to the position of prefect or taotai, or governor, or even viceroy. In all these promotions money plays no inconsiderable part, and a wealthy man may purchase mandarin's rank without the drudgery of examination, as is not unknown in countries that boast of more advanced civilization. In some cases, if a boy shows great intelligence and aptitude for learning, a syndicate is formed by his family, and no expense is spared upon his education. Should he be successful and attain a position of importance, his family rise with him in wealth and influence, and the syndicate turns out a productive speculation. The whole system of examination is one of cramming, which, with competitive examinations, was adopted by England from the Chinese.

The Chinaman who has passed the examination and received what we colloquially term his B.A. degree, even though he obtains no official employment, holds himself above all manual labour, and however poor he may be he belongs thereafter to the body of *litterati* known as the gentry, who are consulted on all matters affecting the district in which they reside. It is not easy to know how they live, but the Chinese, like all Easterns, have a great respect for men of letters, and have not yet become so civilized as to abandon higher ideals for the degrading worship of wealth. There is probably found for such men suitable employment in their localities that works into the social economy. There are, of course, among them some lazy ones who, for want of regular work, abandon themselves to the solace of opium-smoking; but the class is a valuable leaven in the mass of the population.

The viceroy of a province is really semi-independent. His nominal salary in a province of possibly sixty millions of inhabitants is £1000 or £2000 a year, out of which he must supply an army, possibly a navy, internal customs, and civil service.

The taxes are very much at his discretion, with the exception of the settled duty paid by the cultivators on seed corn, that being the way in which the land tax is levied. That paid, the small cultivator is practically free from official interference, and such a man in China is quiet and honest as free as any man of his position elsewhere.

This method of levying a land tax is most ingenious, and has existed from time immemorial. The land is taxed, not proportionate to its area, but to its productive capacity. Of two plots of equal area one may produce a return from two bushels, while the other being poorer soil will require wider sowing and take but one bushel. All seed must be procured through the official, who levies an equal rate upon it. The same idea governs the computation of distance. A road to the top of a hill may be counted and carriage paid for ten li, the return down hill being measured as five or six, it being assumed that the muscular exertion and time are in both cases being paid for at the same rate.

There are, besides the seed tax, *likin*, or internal customs, levied on transport of all commodities between districts, and various imposts upon traders. When a man has amassed any wealth he is bled pretty freely. Should a loan be requested it could only be refused at a risk that he would not care to face, and any idea of its repayment is out of the question. But should the demands exceed the bounds of custom there is a check. The people of all classes know pretty well how far the cord may be drawn before it breaks. Should the demands be excessive the people put up their shutters, refusing to do any business, and memorial the Throne. Should such a state of affairs continue for any time even a viceroy would be recalled. Such a state of affairs existed a few years ago in Canton over a proposal to collect a new tax. The people resisted, and at length the viceroy yielded.

The principles on which the viceroy acts are adopted in a lesser degree by all officials, but the people seem to understand the custom and accept it, and in the ordinary business of life justice is on the whole administered satisfactorily.

There are, of course, exceptions. In the province of Kwangtung the house of a well-to-do man living in the country was attacked by a numerous band of armed robbers. The owner stoutly defended his house and having killed three of the assailants the robbers decamped. But this was not the end of it, for the indignant robbers lodged a complaint with the magistrate, who summoned the owner of the assailed house to appear, which he did with fear and trembling. He was obliged to pay a

hundred and fifty dollars before he was admitted to the presence of the magistrate, who, instead of commending him for his bravery, scolded him roundly, and ordered him to pay the funeral expenses of the three dead robbers. The system of payments to everybody connected with the court, from the judge downwards, would appear to be destructive of every principle of justice; but a highly educated Chinese official, who held the degree of a Scotch university and who had experience of the colony of Hong Kong, when speaking on the subject, declared that he would rather have a case tried in a Chinese court than in a British, for while he knew what he would pay in the first, in the colonial court the lawyers would not let him off while he had a dollar to spend.

When the territory of Kowloon was leased from China and added to the colony of Hong Kong (after some armed resistance by the inhabitants, who had been led to believe that with the change of the flag terrible things would happen to them), local courts were established giving summary jurisdiction to their head-men sitting with a British magistrate, but a proviso was inserted that no lawyer or solicitor should practise in these courts. The result was peaceful settlement of disputes, generally by the arbitration of the British magistrate, at the joint request of both parties to the dispute.

The punishments inflicted in Chinese courts are severe, and sometimes very terrible. The ordinary punishment for minor offences is the cangue and the bastinado. The cangue is a three-inch board about three feet square, with a hole in the centre for the neck. When this is padlocked on the neck of the culprit he is placed outside the door of the court, with his offence written upon the cangue, or is sometimes allowed to walk through the town. In this position he cannot feed himself, as his hands cannot reach his head, nor can he lie down or rest in comfort. Sometimes the hands are fastened to the cangue. The punishment is more severe than that of our old parish stocks, but the idea is the same. Were it in the power of a troublesome fly to irritate a Chinaman, which it is not, he might suffer grave discomfort if the insects were active.

The bastinado is a different matter. This is administered by placing the prisoner on his face, his feet being held by one man and his head by another. The blows are inflicted with a large bamboo or with two small ones. The large bamboo looks more formidable, but though the strokes are heavy they break no bones, and do but little injury. The small bamboos are used in a different manner. Taking one in each hand, the operator sits down and strikes the culprit rapidly with alternate strokes, apparently mere taps. These are hardly felt for the first fifty or sixty taps, and the skin is not broken; but after this phase the flesh below the skin becomes regularly broken up, and the agony is very great. The recovery from this severe punishment is slow, as the tissues are destroyed for the time being.

These are, however, the light punishments; torture for the purpose of extracting evidence is still inflicted, and in pursuance of a custom that down to a late period had acquired the force of a law, that no person should be executed except he had confessed his crime, the palpable difficulty of that apparently beneficent rule was surmounted by the administration of torture, until the victim was reduced to such a state of mutilation and despair that he was prepared to state anything that would secure for him relief from his sufferings by a speedy death. It must be acknowledged that the pressure of the torture has now and again secured valuable evidence from unwilling witnesses that may have been capable of independent proof, but as a rule such evidence was utterly untrustworthy.

The following story was told to me by a Chinese gentleman who had personal knowledge of some of the persons concerned.

A son and daughter of two wealthy families were married. At the conclusion of the first evening's ceremonies the bride and bridegroom retired to their apartments, which were separated from the main house. Some time after they had retired, hearing a noise overhead, the bridegroom got up and putting on his red bridal dress he lit a candle and went up to the loft. Here he found a robber, who had entered through a hole in the roof, and who, seeing himself detected, after a short struggle plunged a knife into the bridegroom and killed him. He then assumed the bridegroom's dress, and taking the candle in his hand he boldly went down to the chamber where the bride awaited the return of her husband. As Chinese brides do not see their husbands before marriage, and as she was

somewhat agitated, she did not perceive that the robber was not her newly married spouse. He told her that he had found that a robber had entered the house, but had made his escape on his appearance. He then said that as there were robbers the bride had better hand her jewels to him, and he would take them to his father's apartments and place them in the safe. This she did, handing over jewels to the value of several thousand taels. The robber walked out, and he and the jewels disappeared.

Early next morning the father of the bridegroom came to visit his son, and on entering the apartment was told by the bride that she had not seen her husband since he took the jewels to have them deposited in safe keeping. The father on hearing the story went up to the loft, where he found the dead body of his son. He searched about and in one of the courtyards outside he found a strange shoe.

For the wedding a number of the friends of the family had assembled who were, as usual, accommodated in the house. Among them was a young man, a B.A., and most respectably connected. The father taking the strange shoe went round all the guests, who had just arisen. On comparing the shoe he found that it belonged to the young B.A., who was wearing its fellow, the other shoe being that of his murdered son. The father was a cautious man, so instead of taking immediate action he returned to the young widow and questioned her closely. He asked if she could identify the man whom she had mistaken for her husband. She said that she could not. He begged her to think if there was any mark by which identification was possible, and after thinking for a time she answered "Yes," that she now remembered having remarked that he had lost a thumb. The father returned to the guest chamber and asked the B.A. for explanation of his wearing the son's shoe, for which he accounted by the statement that having occasion to go out during the night he had stumbled in crossing one of the courtyards and lost his shoe in the dark, and groping about had found and put on what he thought was his own. Upon examining his hands he was found to be minus a thumb. The father having no further doubt caused him to be forthwith arrested and taken before the prefect. The young man denied all knowledge of the murder, saying that he had a wife and child, was well off, and was a friend of the murdered bridegroom. He was put to the torture and under its pressure he confessed that he was the murderer. The body had been examined and the extent of the wound carefully measured and noted. Asked to say how he had disposed of the knife with which the murder had been committed, and what had become of the jewels, he professed his inability to say, though tortured to the last extremity. He was then beheaded. His uncle, however, and his widow would not believe in his guilt, and they presented to all the superior authorities in turn petitions against the action of the prefect, who ought not to have ordered the execution until corroborative proof of the confession had been secured by the production of the knife and the jewels, but the officials refused to listen to them. At length they appealed to the viceroy, who, seeing their persistence, concluded that there must be something in a belief that braved the gravest punishment by petitioning against a mandarin of prefect rank. He sent for the father and widow of the murdered man, who repeated the story, which seemed almost conclusive evidence of the young man's guilt. He asked the widow if she remembered from which hand the thumb was missing of the robber to whom she had given the jewels. She replied, "Yes, perfectly. It was the right." He then sent for the petitioning widow and asked her from which hand her husband had lost a thumb. She answered, "The left." Then recalling the father of the murdered man he bade him try to recollect if he had ever known any other man wanting a thumb. He said that there was such a man, a servant of his whom two years before he had dismissed for misconduct. Asked if he had noticed the dismissed man during the time of the wedding the answer was that he had, but he had not seen him since.

The viceroy then had inquiry made, and the man was traced to another province, where he was living in affluence, with a good shop, etc. He was arrested, and under torture confessed the crime and told where he had concealed the knife and disposed of the jewels. The knife had a wide blade that coincided with the width of the wound, and a portion of the jewels were recovered, some having been pawned, some sold. The prefect was degraded and punished for culpable want of due care in having executed the man without securing complete proof by the production of the knife and the jewels.

The case is curious as showing the danger that lurks in all cases of circumstantial evidence, and also, from a purely utilitarian point of view, the failure and success of the system of torture. It will always be to me a source of deep gratification that during my administration of the government of Hong Kong, in the case of two murderers surrendered from that colony and convicted after a fair trial and on reliable evidence, I induced the then viceroy to break through the immemorial custom, and have the criminals executed without the previous application of torture, though they refused to confess to the last. The precedent once made, this survival of barbarous times will no longer operate in cases of culprits surrendered from under the folds of the Union Jack, and awakening China may, I hope, in such matters of criminal practice soon find herself in line with the other civilized nations of the world, to the relief of cruel injustice and much human suffering.

CHAPTER III

In China the gradations of the social fabric as generally accepted are

First. – The *literati*; for mind is superior to matter.

Second. – The agriculturist; for he produces from the soil.

Third. – The artisan; for he is a creator from the raw material.

Fourth. – The merchant; for he is a distributor.

Fifth. – The soldier; for he is but a destroyer.

However superficially logical this division is, the Chinese have failed to realize that the army is an insurance and protection, wanting which all other classes may be destroyed; but the fallacy has had an unfortunate influence upon China, for until within a few years the various so-called armies were simply hordes of undisciplined men, whose officers were, as I have before said, sometimes robbers reprieved on account of supposed courage and given command of so-called soldiers. But this is now changed, and such armies as those of Yuan Shi Kai and Chang Chi Tung (viceroy at Hankow) are well disciplined and officered. This viceroy adopted an effective method of combating the contempt with which the army was regarded by the *literati*. He established a naval and agricultural college, and colleges for the teaching of geography, history, and mathematics, and formed all the students into a cadet corps. When I was in Hankow the viceroy invited me to see his army of eight thousand men, who were then on manœuvres in the neighbourhood, and on my arrival I was received by a guard of honour of one hundred of these cadets, whose smart turn-out and soldierly appearance impressed me very favourably. They were well clothed and well armed, as indeed were all the troops, whom I had an opportunity of inspecting during the manœuvres under the guidance of a German captain in the viceroy's service, who was told off to accompany me. I have no doubt that many of those cadets are now officers, and will tend to raise the character of the army.

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