

## Chapter Eight:

### *The Elusive Tael, and the "Loofang."*



WE have, however, still to consider another important phase of the money question of China, which Sign No. 71 presents to view, and by so doing automatically introduces itself as easily the most significant of all our emblems. In this group of lozenges, yellow, blue, and yellow, suspended above an object that purports to represent the peculiarly characteristic silver "shoe" of China, we have the device of the *Loofang*, the shop in which silver bullion is converted into taels. The fact that this mysterious unit of calculation and basis of accountancy in China, has thus far resisted all efforts to bring it into tangible being as a coin, is too well known to require reiteration here; but an equally surprising circumstance, that may or may not be a matter of common knowledge, is the fact that the ingots, which are the actual taels of commerce, are produced by private enterprise.

It follows naturally, therefore, that the *Loofang* represents the most important of all industries in China; and by reminding ourselves

of the elaborate machinery of industrial organization operated by the guilds, we are enabled to form some conception of the influence wielded by the heads of such enterprises as the *Loofang*. The effect, on the scheme of Chinese life generally, of the power vested in such guilds as these, is graphically indicated in a recent article by Frederick Cunliffe-Owen, C.B.E., published in the *New York Times*, wherein the subject of the guilds is touched upon in connection with other aspects of China.

"Perhaps the most potent of these guilds," says this writer, "is the one that controls the entire specie and bullion trade of China, and which has been known to sway the money markets and the gold resources of the United States, of Great Britain, and of Continental Europe at various times, notably in the early stages of the Great War, when the movement of bullion was a matter of so much difficulty and delicacy.

"As a general rule, these great guilds work independently of one another; but on the rare occasions when they cooperate, their force is well-nigh irresistible. And in this connection it is worthy of note, that none of the great provincial Tutchuns, or more or less independent Governors, no matter how strong, not even the Manchu Emperors and Empresses in the days of their most despotic sway and tyranny, have ever sought to control and dominate these guilds, either individually or collectively. They know by experience that the guild has the means of completely paralyzing almost overnight any particular trade and industry with which it is concerned, and of thus arresting the economic machinery of the nation."

A truer and more life-like picture of the real China than is suggested in these broad lines, it would be difficult to find. On one side of the coin, as it were, are the emblems bespeaking the despotic power of its rulers, great and small; and on the reverse, the signs of the definite and distinct limitations beyond which the submissiveness of their subjects must not be put to the test. And thus the power of the people lives on, while dynasties perish, and successive republican governments crumble. And, meanwhile the *Loofang* maintains its pre-eminent position in Chinese industry; the tael its place on the books of the Sino-foreign commercial world; and the guild retains its more than imperial sway over the economic destinies of the nation.

The *Loofang*, needless to say, has not had its initial inception in actual appointment by the government; but, nevertheless, its operations are subject to official control, this power being exercised by the public assaying office—the *Kung Ku Chü*. Hence, recognition by the *Kung Ku*, of certain long-established industries of this nature is a sufficient guarantee of the firms' status. The actual business of ingot-moulding, however, is usually farmed out to a succession of small shops, which are identified by our emblem, No. 71.

The interior of such a shop is crude and bare enough, considering the importance of the work being done there. Furthermore, it is an interior which few Chinese have ever glimpsed, save those actually engaged in the industry. The "shoes" are cast in varying sizes, from a half-ounce to fifty (the "tael" of commerce); and these ingots are set about on ledges, or on any available spot on the small stoves, or rude benches occupying haphazard positions here and there. They are first stamped with the name, location, and number of the shop; and after the *Kung Ku* has tested them for quality (with the aid of the touchstone) he marks the result of his examination upon their surface in ink.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that in our list of inscribed signboards mentioned in an earlier chapter, there appeared one typical of the bullion assayer. Its characters represented him to be possessed of "Great Virtue"; and that this claim is not to be taken as a mere example of flowery language is evident from the following authoritative statement found in *The Currencies of China*.

"In spite of the very primitive manner of assaying," says the author, "it must be emphasized that the results, upon examination within the country and abroad, have invariably shown the honesty of the assayer, as well as the correctness of his judgment."

The name by which this much-discussed, and ever baffling object, the "tael" is known, is said to be derived possibly from the Indian word *tola*, though in the sense of value the two do not correspond. The tael is both a weight—*i.e.*, the Chinese ounce, irrespective, naturally, of whether it be of silver, gold, or cotton wool—and a unit of currency; but the word is not used by the Chinese, and most of the prevailing confusion of mind that surrounds it arises from the fact that the foreigner seeks to render the two meanings in a single term. When the Chinese refers to an ounce of silver—or the money tael, in

other words—he uses the expression *liang-yin* (sometimes adding the affix belonging to nouns, *tze*). Otherwise the ounce is simply a *liang*—*yin* being the word for silver.

As to the weight and fineness of the hundreds of varieties of Chinese taels, and their relative equivalents in Troy weight, much has been said and written, but the subject is far too complicated and involved with local conditions to admit of any but the carefully detailed treatment it has received in the volumes specially devoted to finance.

“Taels current in various parts of China,” says Mr. Kann, “differ considerably from each other, not only with regard to weight, but also in respect to the standard of fineness. Local taels of certain denomination represent a *quasi* standard of weight. But the fineness of the silver is not uniform on account of the primitive methods of smelting, and also owing to different institutions manufacturing sycee without regard to standardized methods . . . . If silver of a fineness of at least 0.935 is cast into ingots of varying weights, such money taels will be called collectively ‘sycee’.”<sup>23</sup>

The word “sycee” signifies “fine silk,” the application of which term to the silver ingot is thus explained in Giles’s *Glossary of Reference*, wherein the sycee is stated to have originated in the five northern provinces, Chihli, Shantung, Shansi, Shensi and Honan:

The Shansi bankers melt silver into ingots, and “after it has solidified, the mould is lightly tapped, when there appear, on the surface of the silver, fine silk-like circular lines. The higher the ‘touch’ of the metal, the more like a fine silk are these ‘circlings’ on the surface of the silver. Hence, ingots of full quality are classified as ‘sycee’”.

The history of the efforts at converting myth into reality by the production of a tael coin is not less interesting than the story of the dollar that was to oust the Mexican; but, in the case of the tael, these attempts were exclusively Chinese, with the single exception of the Hongkong Colonial Government’s shortlived venture, in 1867. Its object was the creation of a Shanghai tael, this unit having been adopted for accountancy in Shanghai in 1856, after the Carolus dollar had been rendered no longer practicable owing to the fictitious value given it by a shortage of the coins. By reason of a practical correspondence in normal value of the Carolus dollar and the Shanghai tael, the transfer was made on the books by the mere exchange of terms. But the Shanghai “sycee” tael has still to make its material appearance

as a coin—as, indeed, have all the other taels of China.

From *The Currencies of China*, one gathers that the first of the efforts along these lines took place under the Southern Sung, in A.D. 1183, the coins having circulated for three years only. Nothing further seems to have occurred until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when, according to S. Wells Williams in *The Middle Kingdom* a tael coin was produced in Fukien province. It weighed 7 mace, 2 candareens (the table for tael weights is: 10 cash=1 candareen; 10 candareens=1 mace; 10 mace=1 tael) and bore the image of the "God of Longevity," its weight and the name of *Tao Kuang*. After this came the attempt at Hongkong; and in the latter part of the nineteenth century, in the reign of Kuang Hsü, was coined the only tael that is in actual present existence. Its circulation, however, is confined to Chinese Turkestan. In 1905 a decree of the Imperial Government (of China) commanded that the K'u-p'ing tael, which was the basis of accounting for internal revenue—as the Haikuan tael functions as regards the Customs—be taken as the unit of a new currency. The experiment, however, was abandoned.

At this time, too, and for a period of ten years (1905-1915) a peculiar type of tael circulated in the province of Hunan. It consisted of a flat lump of silver, stamped with its weight and the name of a bank. This represented a local custom among the banks of Changsha, which institutions delivered such bits of metal to the provincial mint, to be stamped, and then caused them to circulate as tael coins. The last of the efforts at the production of the tael coin was made by the Tientsin Mint in the latter part of the Ching dynasty, but this ended, shortly, as had all the preceding attempts. Thus, in China Proper, the tael coin has still to be given visible form: yet this fact does not in the least affect the status of the silver ingot, which having withstood every test of time and reliability, pursues the even tenor of its way, regardless of what may be happening in the world of dollars.

The popular name, "shoe," also applied to the tael, or sycee, originates from a custom of the Mongols, who were given to secreting lumps of silver in the crevices of their horses' hoofs. Soon after their conquest of China, however, the Mongol invaders revived the old Sung dynasty custom, and began the casting of their vast stores of silver from Arabia and Europe into ingots whose rudimentary likeness to the hoof of a horse suggested the name of "shoe." The Chinese

promptly followed suit, realizing that worldly wealth, in this form, was both easily estimated on account of its comparative purity, and readily stored on the possessor's premises. Later, the system made its practical appeal to foreign firms as the most reliable basis for accounting, and for interprovincial transport.

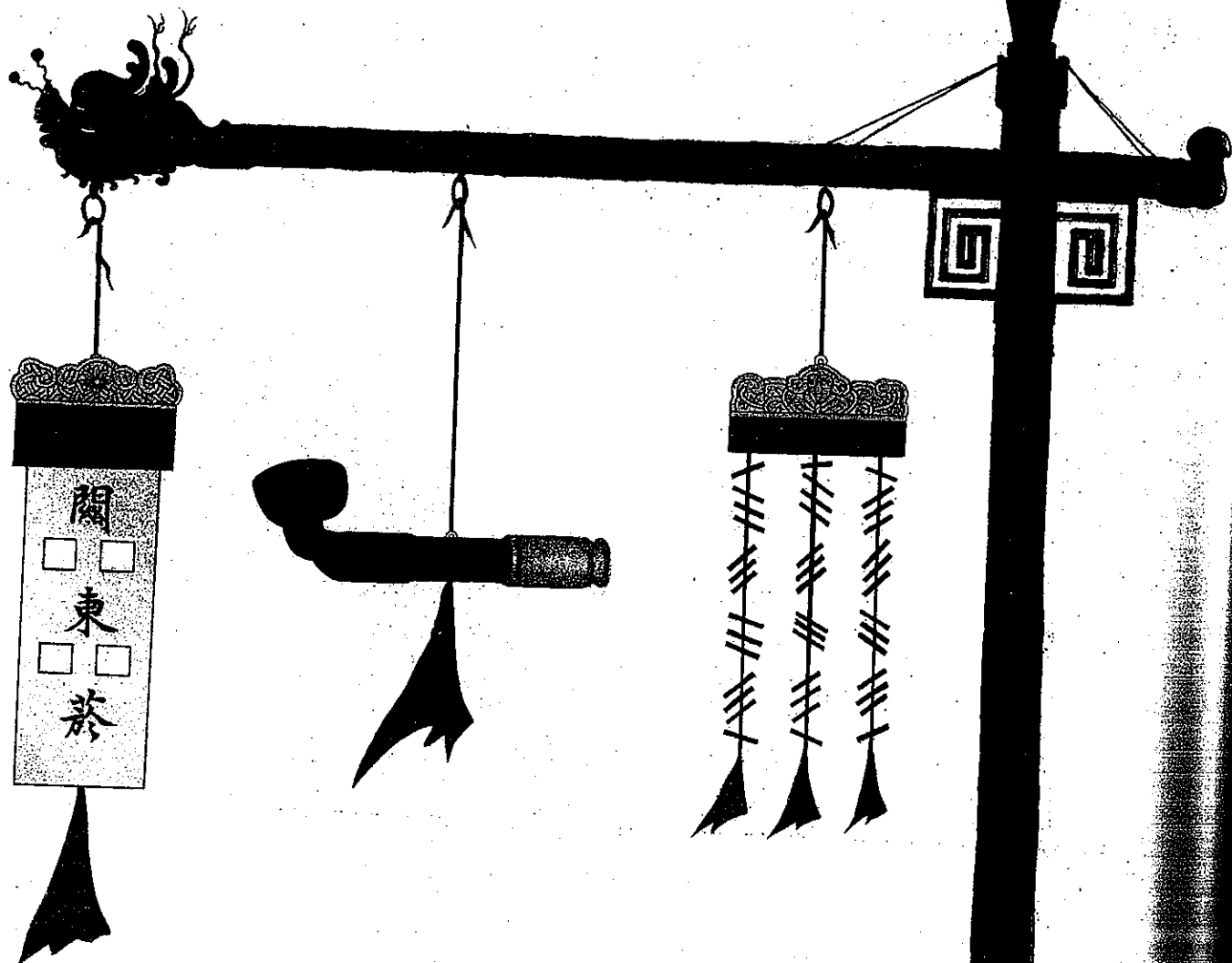
Vast quantities of "shoes" are said to be hoarded in the "model" province of Shansi, where, by the way, the banking system—and the exchange shop—originated. It will be remembered that a certain section of the territory now marked out on the maps as Shensi, Shansi and Honan is to be regarded as the cradle of the race known as the Chinese—born elsewhere, in northwest Asia, perhaps. It was included in the great state of Ch'in (whence, possibly, the name given to the people) into which the early settlement expanded in the Feudal Period, when the seat of the central government was established at P'ing Yang (modern Shansi). With the gradual organization of trades under the guild system, Shansi became the bankers' stronghold.

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HIS GENERAL NEEDS

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No. 73.  
The Tobacconist.

煙  
鋪  
幌  
子

No. 74.  
The Pipe Shop.

煙  
袋  
鋪  
幌  
子

No. 75.  
Pipe Parts.

煙  
袋  
桿  
幌  
子



## Chapter Nine:

### *Miscellaneous Shops.*



HAVING, as it were, fed, bathed and clothed a sort of composite type of Chinese, and subsequently observed him at his labours, the next point to be considered would seem to be the field over which he scatters the coins of brass, copper or silver, as the case may be, which his toil has yielded him. Serious reflection suggests that his first consideration probably would be his pipe, without which item of his accoutrement, whether it be actively contributing to his comfort, or passively figuring as an accessory to his costume, it is impossible to visualize the old-school type of Chinaman. Though the inevitable tin of cigarettes—preferably, but not necessarily, of native manufacture—invariably accompanies the bowls of tea proffered to his guests, he will be found drawing his own solace from a long, straight-stemmed implement, with removable mouthpiece of brass, agate, jade—or whatever he may be able to afford—and a bowl the size of a thimble, however long the stem. It should, perhaps, be mentioned in passing, that unlike Bacchus, My

Lady Nicotine shows no noticeable disposition to relinquish her hold over her subjects in China.

#### THE TOBACCONIST.

Our composite guide, it must be understood, unites both the feminine and masculine elements, especially as regards the taste for tobacco; and therefore Sign No. 73 auspiciously introduces the subject.

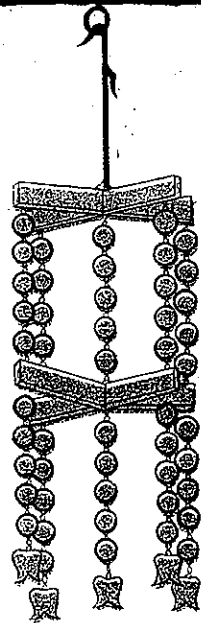
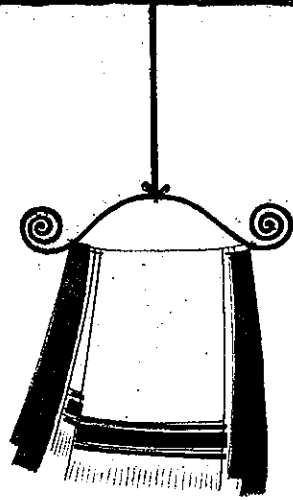
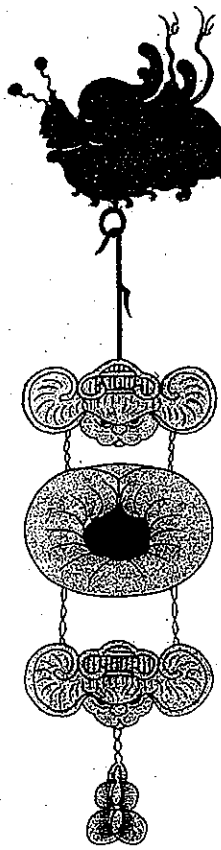
This black, white, red and yellow device is that of the tobacconist, whose patron saint is the "God of the Hempen Sack," instead of Kuan Ti, "God of War," usually invoked by the tradesman; and if the reader like, he may fancy this barefooted figure, with back bent, stout staff in hand, and his sack slung across one shoulder, as he is pictured on the scroll that hangs in a place of honour in the shop, with incense sticks and candles on a table in front of it.

The characters on the sign announce that the stock is of the leaf recognized as the choicest, and coming from Kuantung, in the northern province of Fengtien. Both cigarettes—favoured by the Chinese woman—and tobacco, are included in the one word *yen*, and this fact does not aid the foreigner with a limited knowledge of the language, in making known his wants.

#### THE PIPE SHOP.

The pipe used as the shop sign, No. 74, is cast in a size that would suit the giants one meets in Chinese stories, and is not the model most often seen. This latter runs from one to five feet and more in length, and in its extremest manifestation is oftenest seen in the hands of the riverman, perhaps because the deck of a barge offers it rather better than average accommodation. The shorter variety travels the country roads, and when not in action has its nose thrust into the bag that feeds it. Mouthpieces and bowls are practically of uniform size, it being the stem that gives it length. This is usually made of bamboo, and when it needs to be changed, from time to time, it is at the shop where Sign No. 75 hangs, that these parts are procured—as the shop-keeper has indicated by attaching them crosswise, in groups of three, to a like number of lengths of red cord.

But the pipe that would be most conspicuous in the shop displaying No. 74 would be that intriguing plaything, the Chinese water-



No. 76.  
The Snuff Dealer.

鼻烟鋪幌子

No. 77.  
The Towel Shop.

手巾幌子

No. 78.  
The Soap Shop.

肥皂鋪幌子

pipe, made entirely of metal—white or yellow brass, silver, or cloisonné—with a curved stem about a foot and a half in length, rising from an oval-shaped body about three inches long, and a little less in height. Inside this is the receptacle for water. The “bowl” of the pipe is a tube, set in, just in front of the stem, to the height of an inch. Into the top of this fits a removable tube into which a few grains of tobacco are fed with a pair of tweezers. These are then lighted, and having yielded one puff to the smoker, the process of cleaning and refilling is repeated.

This latter operation is frequently performed by a servant, and when one has the good fortune to share a compartment on a railway train with a party of Chinese ladies engaged in this interesting pastime, the experience is one worth remembering. While one's attention wanders from the pipe to the graceful movements of the hands that have just received it, there comes a gurgle, a flare of light, a puff of smoke. Then begins again the passing to and fro, the while one seeks for the explanation of the whole proceeding from among the salient characteristics of the race. Is it the combination of patience, economy, and the unreflecting acceptance of the accustomed, that accounts for the popularity of this pastime, or is it that the whimsicality of it appeals to the spirit of playfulness, which is also distinctly a Chinese trait, particularly among the women?

#### THE SNUFF DEALER.

Sign No. 76 belongs also to the realm of the enticing weed, this being the device of the dealer in snuff. Whether the upper and lower sections are intended to represent the head of the tiger—as the colour would suggest—or that of a horned animal, it would be difficult to say. Probably the former was the artist's intention, the horns being added in consonance with artistic custom in China, where sculptured animals must not too closely resemble their living counterparts, as this would offend the spirits of the beasts. Despite which, nothing untoward appears to be involved in their faithful delineation in paintings. At any rate, the thought that rises at the aspect of the symbol is that the snuff-dealer would have done better to have reproduced any one of the beautiful bottles with the tiny spoon attached to the stopper, which are so coveted by the foreign collector.

## THE TOWEL SHOP.

Sign No. 77, obviously, is that of the towel shop.

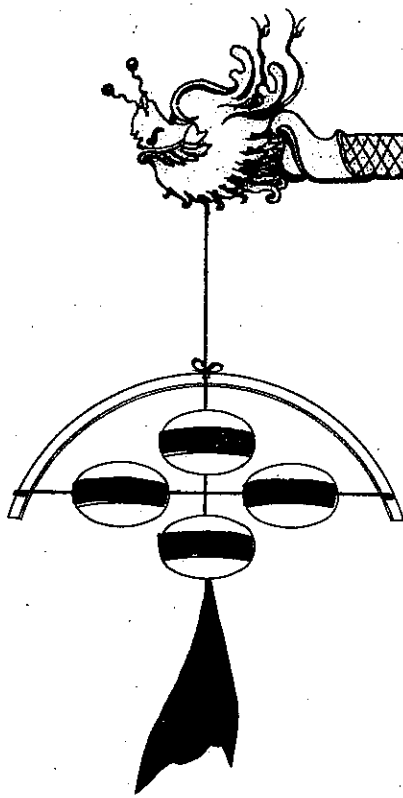
## THE SOAP DEALER.

Adjoining the sign of the dealer in towels is the appropriate but slightly more intriguing symbol of the soap merchant, No. 78. Doubtless the little balls strung together and suspended from the crosspieces, are intended to represent that commodity.

## COTTON WOOL.

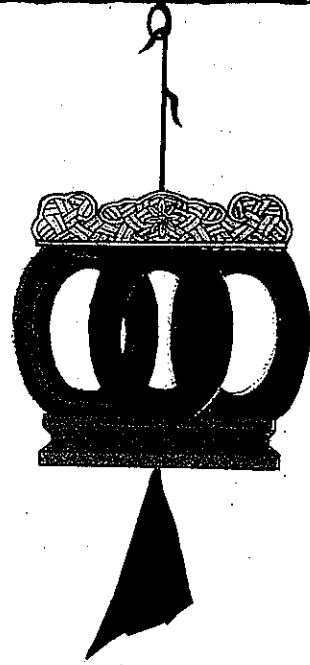
In No. 79 the red-banded objects are meant for balls of cotton wool, a product as important to the Chinese as the air he breathes. Doubtless, he would cavil at this degree of comparison, and, not being given to physiological reflections, he would wish to change it to the superlative, seeing that it furnishes him his bed and his coverlet, and in cold weather attends him closer than a brother, determining the inflation of his silhouette, according to the number of layers interposed between the form that nature gave unto him, and the elements with which she has surrounded him.

The workshop, where it is spread out on a dais, and flayed into a lightness rivalling the snowflake that falls in the latitudes of dry cold, is one of the most familiar sights of a Chinese city, on the approach of, and during the cold season—as the spang of the taut string that produces the fluffiness is one of the most familiar sounds. The primitiveness of the process is a never-ending source of wonder to the twentieth-century mind, as are the cheerfulness and uncomplaining industry of the workers, seen as through a cloud formed of dust and fine particles of the cotton, that give a furry look to the bodies, and render the air only slightly less dense than the white mass on the dais. But for the fact that the front of the narrow shop is open to the outdoors, during the day, asphyxiation would be only a question of time. However, under the merry twanging of the string, the cumuli rise higher and higher as one watches; and one falls to comparing the faces seen through the mist with those of the pictured cherubim who lean leisurely elbows on similar white masses, far away from



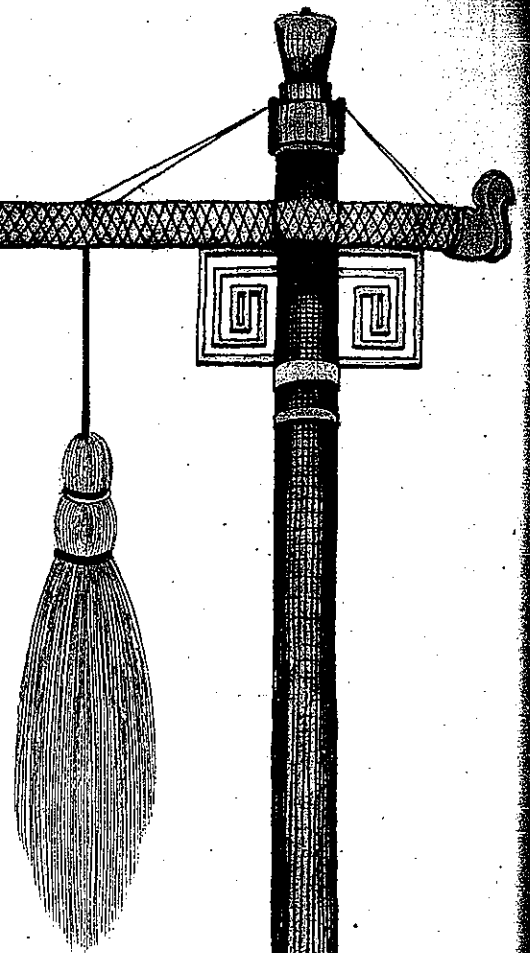
No. 79.  
Cotton Wool.

棉花幌子



No. 80.  
The Wool Shop.

絨線鋪幌子



No. 81.  
Rope, Cord, etc.

線麻幌子

such scenes of toil. To them the twanging of strings is but incidental to the music of heavenly harps, one reflects, with a twinge of pity for the patient souls in whose flesh-and-blood features, sufficiently unlike those of the artist's fancy, one nevertheless seems to discern a spirit akin to that which shines forth in the ecstatic gaze of the cherubim.

#### THE WOOL SHOP.

In No. 80, we have the device of the dealer in woollen yarns—easily identified when one has learned that the red, blue and green rings are meant to suggest the skeins.

#### ROPE, CORD AND STRING.

No. 81 is one of the cruder emblems. It consists of a quantity of hempen string tied together in the form of a brush—the sign of the dealer in hemp. Rope, cord and string, of all sizes are to be found here—and a stiff and unwieldy article it is, as made in China.

#### SWORDS AND KNIVES.

On the following page we come again on a reminder of imperial days, in the sign of the dealer in swords and knives, No. 82. Fancy readily supplies the appropriate background of embroidered robes and high boots, thickly soled in felt, and turning up at the toes, like the points of the swords themselves. Whether flourished by the fierce Bannerman, or worn as an adjunct to the robe of state, the curved sword has passed into oblivion, which does not prevent its use as a shop sign to indicate where the "modern" variety now in vogue may be purchased.

#### EDGED TOOLS.

In No. 83 are plainly indicated the edged tools of the man of peace. One and all are made of iron. To the left are the tailor's scissors, and above them—what would be the reader's guess? It is the instrument plied by the chiropodist! Next it are the shoemaker's

knives, one of which we found simulated in sign No. 50. The rest are for kitchen use. The preponderance of choppers gives an interesting insight into the method of preparing Chinese food. The peculiar object at the top is one of the implements used for "chopping" coins or for cutting lumps of silver. The pincers are shown in the lower left-hand corner.

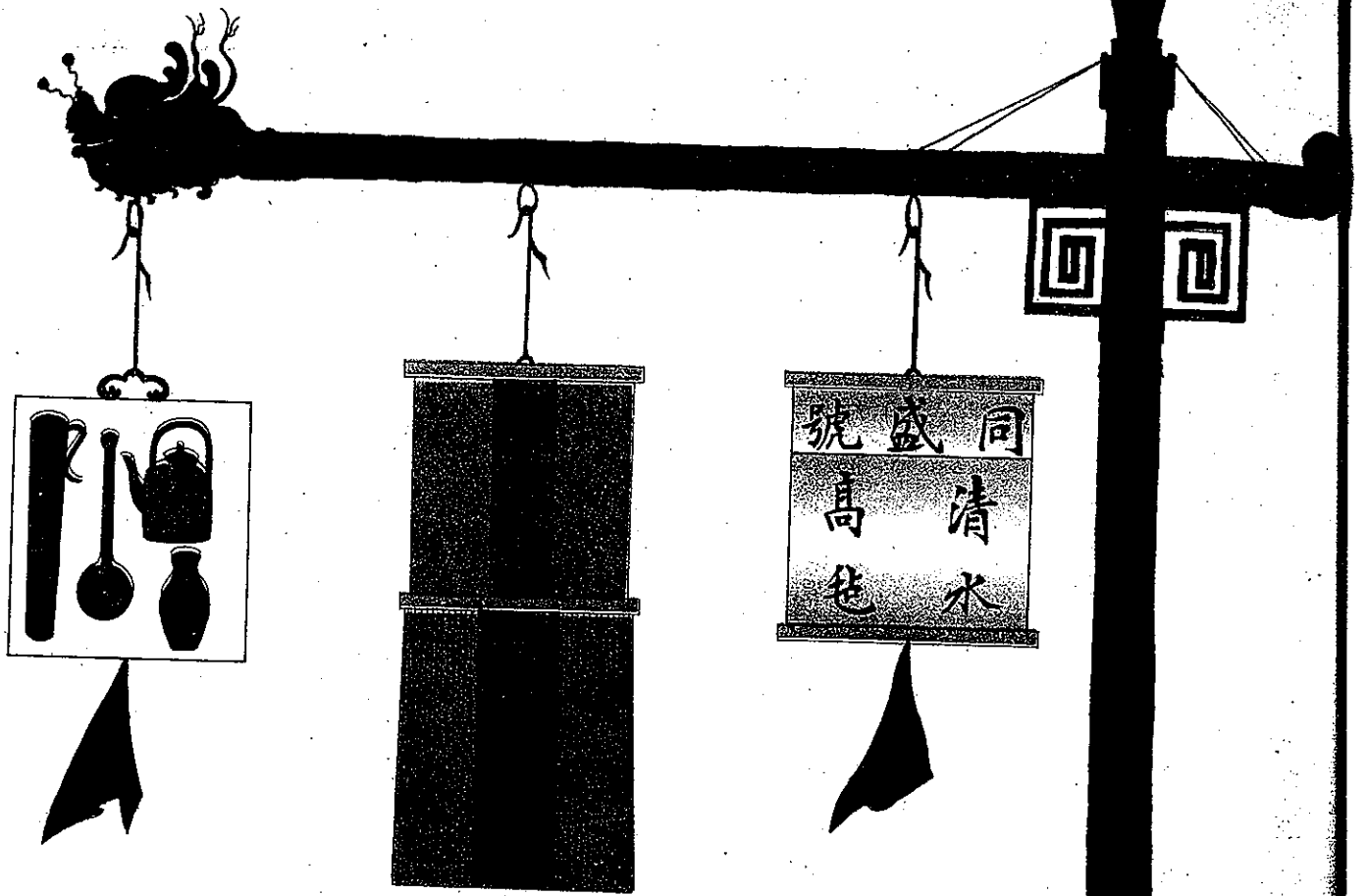
#### MIRRORS.

No. 84 is the sign of the dealer in mirrors of all kinds—a very popular article in China, both within and without the home. The Chinese lady is probably the most immaculately groomed woman in the world; yet her carriage, or motor-car, is always equipped with a mirror, and on her person, somewhere, is another—exactly as if the miraculous might happen, and a single hair in that polished coiffure stray from its appointed place, or some inconceivable variation take place in the fine skin, over which the powder puff travels without leaving any visible traces.

The squares, coloured variously in the shop device, refer to these pocket mirrors, and to those others, most important of all to the Chinese, that are set into the headdress of the baby, or worn by the bride, as a protection against devils, who are known to regard a mirror very much as His Satanic Majesty of the West reacts to holy water. The belief is that these beings dread, above all things, the sight of their own faces—and rightly so, one would say, judging by some of the specimen portraits seen on every hand. The bride's mirror is worn on a short neck chain, and rests not in front, but to the left, over the heart—and face outward, obviously, with its essential purpose in view.

Glass mirrors are, of course, a feature of modern China, belonging perhaps to the last twenty-five years of history. Formerly they were made of polished gold, brass, bronze and other metals, and it is one of these that "the young bride wears on the abdomen, on the day when she proceeds in a sedan chair to the house of the bridegroom, and likewise, when she returns in the chair to the family of her parents a short time after the marriage ceremony . . . . On the back are two embossed circles and four characters, reading: 'May your five children attain the highest literary degrees!'"





No. 85.  
Copperware.

紅  
銅  
鋪  
幌  
子

No. 86.  
Woolen Coverlets.

毯  
子  
鋪  
幌  
子

No. 87.  
The Rug Shop.

毡  
子  
鋪  
幌  
子

In addition to this, there is also "the mirror to light the corpse," which is deposited on the breast of the loved one to serve him on his journey through the dark regions. This highly important mirror will come in for mention in a subsequent chapter.

A "magic mirror" also properly belongs in this list of talismans. This is worn by the woman with child, who would otherwise be unable to enter a house of mourning, without exposing the embryo to premature death.<sup>24</sup>

#### COPPERWARE.

Passing now to the next page of illustrations, we may imagine our composite guide on a housefurnishing expedition. For his teapots, jugs, bowls, match and ash-receivers, his ornamental vases, and whatever else he may fancy made of copper, he would stop at Sign No. 85, in which the reddish tint given these objects imperfectly suggests the gleaming metal. Fortunate indeed is the possessor of some of the fine examples of the old chased copper, which grow increasingly rare with the passing years, and which the modern Chinese show little interest in attempting to imitate.

#### WOOLLEN COVERS.

At No. 86 he would find the warm coverlet of woven wool which supplements the cotton pad on his bed, or on the brick *k'ang* that has a fire underneath it. The blanket for his ricksha, the table cover, hangings, and so on, also would be among the merchant's wares.

#### THE RUG SHOP.

At No. 87, he would choose the rugs for the floor. In the announcement on this signboard the dealer makes special mention of the small red mat on which the mandarin performed his *k'o-tows* before the Emperor, and which he brought with him in a box fastened behind his sedan chair. Sometimes the same box contained a complete set of robes of the same color, which would indicate that the official had received the dread summons that meant summary execution. In such event, the robes would be assumed on his arrival at the palace gates.

Such uses as these for the red mat have passed, but in the temples they lie at the foot of the shrine, in front of the altar, and at oldstyle weddings they receive the kneeling forms of bride and groom for the interminable series of *k'o-tows* to ancestors, parents, go-between, relatives, near and distant, and guests. And while at ultra-modern weddings, the *k'o-tow* is replaced by the ceremonial bow, reduced, in numbers to three or four at most, the red mat is none the less the central note in the scheme of decorations.

#### MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

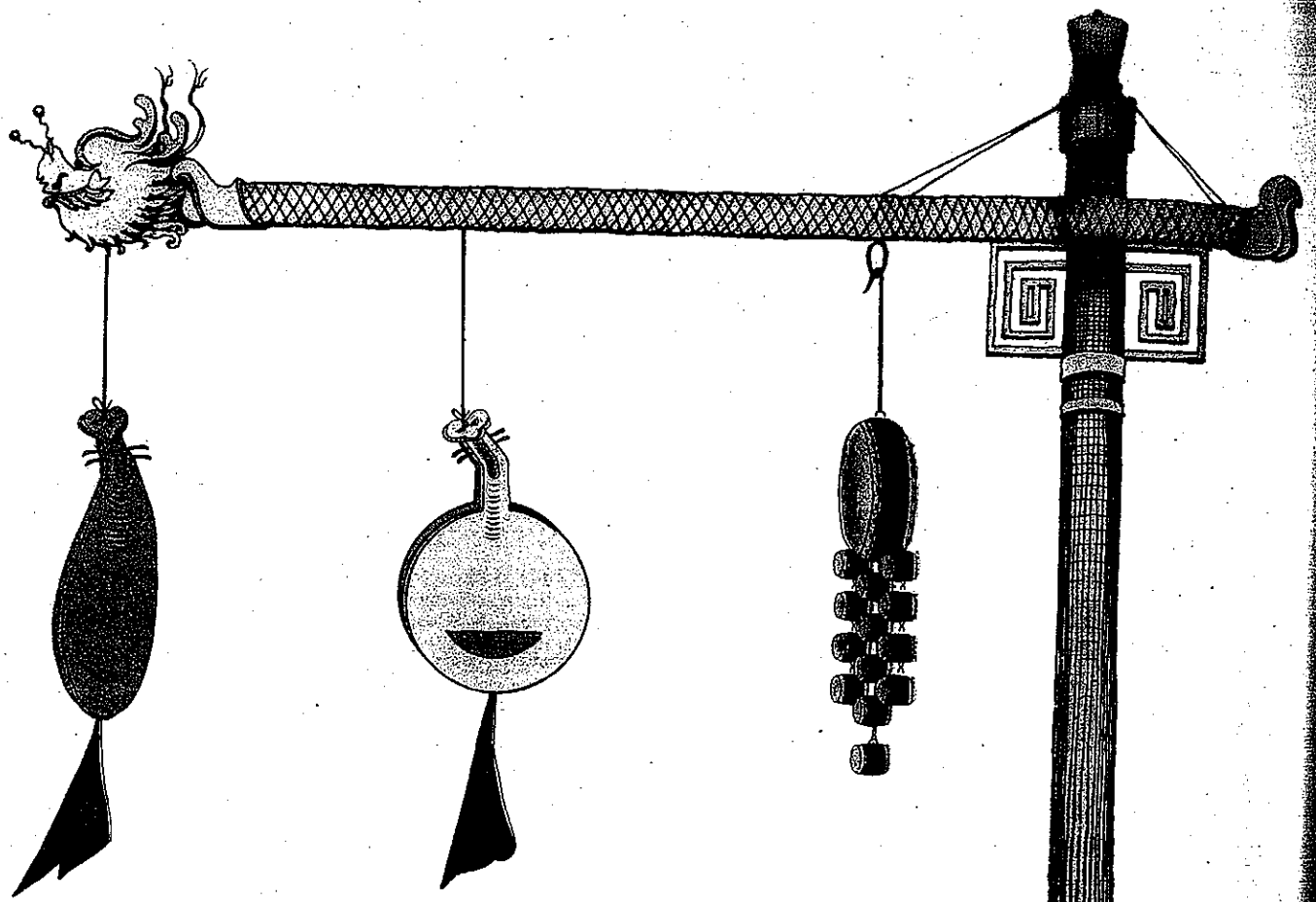
With the consideration of the next three signs we step into the atmosphere best suggested by the word, or term, "sing-song," Nos. 88 and 89 being inseparable from the thought of the "musical" feature of the Chinese dinner, better known to masculine than to feminine travellers. Sometimes these silk-cord-strung instruments accompany the voice of the Chinese geisha, the "sing-song girl"; but more frequently her song is a recitative, and the instruments fill in the intervals between singers, one of these artists being specially assigned to each guest.

The drum, of course, plays its part in all manner of devil-discouraging ceremonies, whether connected with weddings, or on the approach of and after death—which seems a curious development from its original function as the instrument by which Yu the Great became advised that one of his subjects "wished to discourse with him upon the virtues which should adorn a monarch!"

It also has its place in the "sing-song" world, and on the stage. All music, by the way, other than nuptial or funereal, comes within the meaning of this elastic term "sing-song," as it is applied by the Chinese.

#### BOWS AND ARROWS.

Two of the signs on the last page of our illustrations for this section take us into the children's world of China. The smaller of the two exhibits in the sign of the dealer in Bows and Arrows is described by the artist as a toy, which its appearance bears out clearly enough. The larger one, he declares, is used for "shooting birds."



Nos. 88, 89.  
Musical Instruments.

音樂鋪幌子

No. 90.  
Musical Instruments.

鼓鋪幌子

It is doubtful, however, if any great demand for these weapons exists to-day; though one comes on an imposing array of them, standing about eight feet in height, and ranged in a row on either side of the gateways that give entrance to the Imperial Tombs at Hsi Ling and Tung Ling. They have the look of being in use, and the attendants maintain that they are actually employed for bringing down birds, after which they are put back into their stands, and resume their functions among the relics of the past.

As an exhibit, especially when they are viewed against the background of Chinese history under the Manchus, various epochs of which are marked out in the Ching dynasty tombs, these ancient weapons, like the standards of the Bannermen, carry the mind back to the early history of the people who, with bows and arrows, spears and knives, fought so valiantly, and with such telling effect, against the bullets, European cannon and vastly superior numbers of their then apparently powerful neighbours, the Mings, during a decade of conflict.

At the time (several thousand years B.C.) when the folk whom we now know as the Chinese were settling in the Yellow River Valley, the progenitors of the Manchus,<sup>20</sup> then known as the Su-shen people, and consisting of various tribes and clans, occupied 450,000 square miles of territory extending from the Great Khingan Mountains to the sea, and including the basin of the Amur. The Su-shen (believed to have been a branch of the Eastern Huns) being disposed to cultivate their neighbours, they adopted the custom of sending a friendly mission, now and again, into the adjoining country; and the gifts borne by these emissaries to the Chinese Emperor, consisted of bows and arrows, "which for centuries afterward," says Li Ung Bing, "were regarded as the best models. For, even at a remote period the inhabitants of Manchuria were skilled in the use and manufacture of bows and arrows, and they themselves considered their workmanship good enough to be presented to the 'Son of Heaven'".

It was doubtless due to a justifiable faith in these weapons that the Manchus were slow to take up the use of firearms; for, although engaged in almost constant warfare with the Mings, since early in the seventeenth century, it was not until 1631, in the War of Liao-shi, that the Manchus gave evidence of at last having set their captives to the manufacture of cannon. However, it had been by strategy

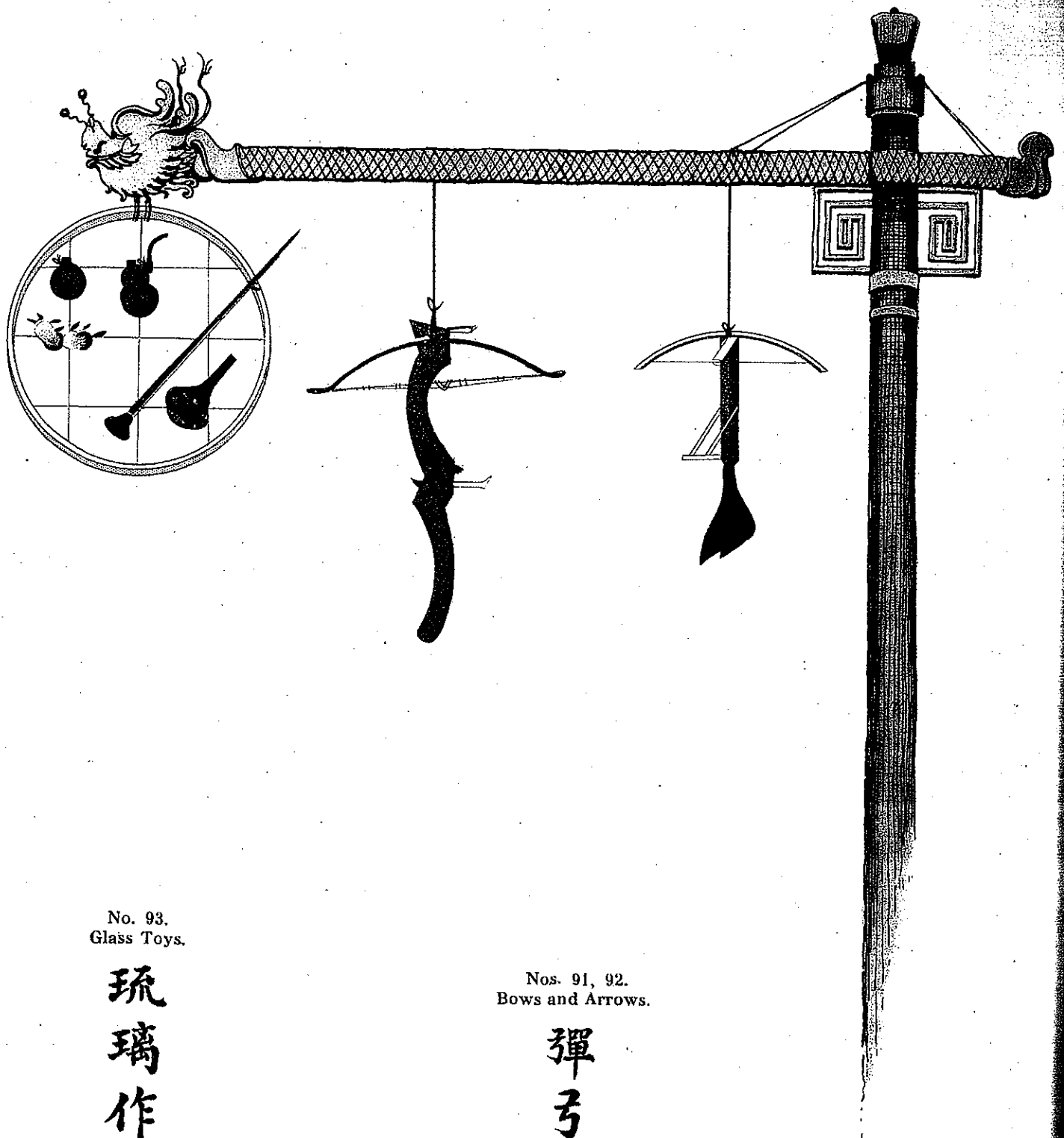
and superior generalship that the illustrious Nurhachu, the Genghis Khan of the Manchus, had throughout bested his contestants, when, after having consolidated the various clans into the first united Manchu nation (about A.D. 1618), he set about establishing the integrity of his boundaries. The incidents arising out of these quarrels, not to mention the blunders of his adversaries, spurred him ever onward on the path that years after his death in 1626, led to the final conquest of China.

When making his declaration of war, based on complaints relative to border encroachments, Nurhachu, instead of proclaiming his intentions to the Ming Emperor, caused the document, known as the Seven Hates, to be burned, "thus notifying Heaven and Earth of the justice of his cause." Whatever effect this may have had on subsequent events, it was with 60,000 Manchus, armed with bows and arrows, spears and swords—and "cloudy ladders" for scaling walls—that the invincible Nurhachu braved the bullets and cannon of 240,000 Chinese, and succeeded in carrying the war into China.

#### GLASS TOYS.

No. 93 is the sign of the dealer in a special kind of toy, and it seems not too much to say that this is one of our most appealing bits, as much in the objects portrayed, as in the picture thus presented of the Chinese child. For these daintily coloured objects are not less delicate in their construction, being made of the thinnest and most fragile of glass, in the colours indicated. That they would ever be placed in the hands of a Western child as playthings is clearly unthinkable, yet such they are to the small folk of China. Except for the long-stemmed trumpet, which is capable of emitting a note of a sort, the others are intended only to be held in the hands; and the marvel is, their capacity to content the child—and their longevity, one reflects, on noting the peach, symbol of long life, beside the water bottle, and the familiar gourd, among the other objects shown in the sign.

In spite of the gambling games that appear to absorb the interest of the street urchin, the general run of Chinese children differ little from their Western brothers and sisters, in the desire for doll-babies,



No. 93.  
Glass Toys.

琉璃作房幌子

Nos. 91, 92.  
Bows and Arrows.

彈弓鋪幌子

toy houses, and all the details of the game of "playing house." The difference lies in the fact that probably the first efforts of the small boy's hands are directed toward the making of these objects for his own and his little sisters' amusement. Of recent years toyshops have sprung up in all the large cities of China, in which the array closely resembles that of a Western shop, from the toy soldiers to mechanical trains, wagons, and motor-cars—predominantly boys' toys, though those for the little girl are also to be noted. As for her little fingers, these find early training in the making of her dollies' clothes, just as happens in the West, but her children are mostly made of wood, carved by her older brother. It is interesting, too, to find the universal "diavolo" in great favour in China. It appears in many a picture of ancient times, and is said to have been invented here; but it is much more likely to have been introduced by some of the early missionaries.



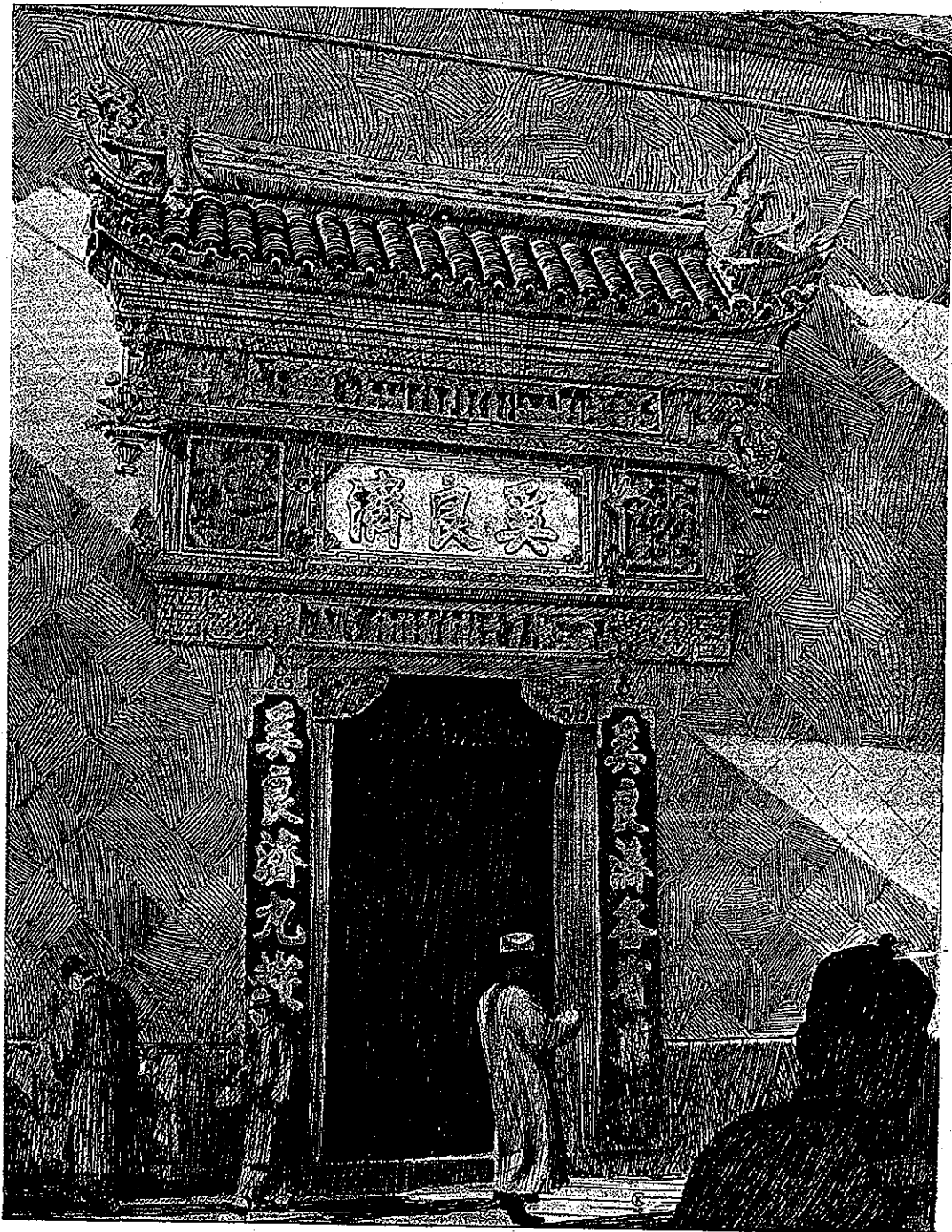
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HIS HEALTH

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A SHANGHAI MEDICINE SHOP

*Drawing by Kent Crane.*

*The characters over the door read: "Hsi Liang Tsi." "Hsi" is the name of the proprietor, and "Liang Tsi" signifies, "Saviour of human life with good medicine." The "tiao pai" at right and left of the entrance announce that Mr. Hsi sells pills, powders, ointments, and medicinal herbs from various provinces.*

## Chapter Ten:

### *Medicines—Foreign or Native?*



Of the many aspects of China which the alien mind finds difficult of assimilation, perhaps the most baffling is that involved in the question of the Chinese materia medica. By foreign and foreign-trained native physicians it is, of course, discredited wholesale; and any attempt on the part of the layman to assume an impartial attitude in the matter is likewise relentlessly discouraged. Despite which fact, the latter finds himself conjecturing as to the possible efficacy of native remedies, when considered in the light of their interrelation with other elements of racial psychology—especially in view of the unique achievement by the Chinese of an uninterrupted national existence for thousands of years.<sup>26</sup> Any suggestion of the sort, however, when given voice, is met by crushing arguments based on abnormal death rates from this or that disease, and the high rate of infant mortality which has always prevailed in China. Thus, from the point of view of the foreign-medicine world, the question of the “work to be done” admits

of no doubt whatever, and therefore is not debatable.

As to this latter item, viz., the conversion of the masses of the Chinese people from native practices to the Western school of medicine, and from ignorance of the laws of sanitation and disease-prevention to a comprehension of the individual's responsibility toward public health, it is possible and in fact easy, in a hurried tour of China, to form an extravagant estimate of the extent to which Western influence has carried thus far.

When one has been conducted over a series of spectacular monuments to this heroic concept of man's duty to man, and observes successive groups of Chinese doctors and nurses, in operating-room and laboratory; finds the appliances of Western medical practice in some of the modern prisons; learns that the Government has decreed that foreign medicines shall guard the health of the Chinese army; and takes note of plague-prevention, and public-health educational campaigns penetrating to remote villages in the most distant provinces, one is apt to come away under the impression that the new movement is more than launched—that it is, indeed, one of the established facts.

This deduction, when properly understood as presenting a long and broad perspective—as if the field were viewed from the top of a mountain—is by no means a false one. But the dimensions of the "job" assumed by the early medical missionaries, and the period of time that must elapse before the new shall have made any appreciable inroads on the old, may be judged only from closer study. In other words, it is the observer who has been brought into hand-to-hand contact with actual conditions who is in a position to recognize the present stage of the work as an exhibition of real progress that augurs well for the future.

The history of the organized efforts at introducing the school of foreign medicine into China has no real place in our pages, being a special subject, and one voluminously treated by those best qualified for the task. It is a story teeming with humorous, as well as serious, incident. But the former must be gathered in the rare "off" moments of the work-ridden medical missionaries, to whom the cut-and-dried annual reports are monumental burden enough, and productive of no desire to lighten their contents with amusing touches—obvious as it is, that these latter are the mainstay and prop of the workers in this field.

A few such sidelights, however, gleamed forth at an annual convention of the China Medical Missionary Association, held in Peking in 1920; and briefly to recount some of these would seem a not inappropriate preparation for our prospective tour of the native medicine shops. Moreover, the reader will thus be afforded a better insight into the foreign-medicine movement than is to be gained from a tour of the imposing edifice—The Peking Union Medical College—where these pathetically amusing revelations were made.

It was in the course of an address delivered by the head of another of China's impressive medical colleges, Dr. Harold Balme, of the Shantung Christian University, at Tsinanfu, that the humorous side of medical missionary work shone out so brightly. The address was one that had been awaited with interest, as it embodied the results of the first "enquiry into the scientific efficiency of mission hospitals," to which the delegates to the convention, and many others, had contributed. It had taken one year to gather and tabulate the material.

The instrument employed by Dr. Balme to extract such information as was contained in the report was the time-honoured questionnaire, which, when it descends upon the overworked missionary in its simplest form, is as the proverbial bit of red cloth to the undisciplined bull. But Dr. Balme's questionnaire was no ordinary document. It consisted of questions that went into the most hair-splitting details—as it seemed to many—and covered two sides of a sheet of paper of foolscap size. It was sent broadcast to the 300 Protestant mission hospitals in China, and afflicted the staff, nearly always undermanned, of some remote station—by courtesy termed a hospital, though frequently conducting its work in a rude shack—with such questions as these:—

"How many cubic feet of air space do you provide per patient?"

"What make of bacteriological incubator do you have?"

"Are your kitchens and latrines adequately screened?"

"What means do you use for sterilizing bedding and mattresses?"

"Is your water supply pure?" "Do you have running water laid on throughout the hospital?" and "How often do you bathe your patients?"

"Do you have electric lighting, and how is your hospital heated?"

And so on, minutely, and at great length. The first result, as was to be expected, had been a prodigious silence on all sides. Then,

little by little, came manifestations of life. In many cases, the questionnaires returned to their source with choice specimens of sarcasm written diagonally across, and no queries answered. From these it appeared that the very term "scientific efficiency," emanating as it did from one of the best-equipped plants in China, had operated to brand the innocent perpetrator with the mark of professional condescension. One of these contributions consisted of an arrow pointed at the question as to how the hospital was heated. It was the only query answered (except those asking for the name and location of the hospital) and the reply was: "By hot air from Tsinanfu!"

Others witheringly expressed wonder at the lack of "more important" work in some districts as compared to others, naming no names, as it were, in which the days were too crowded to leave time for "extraneous" considerations.

In the end, it was found that, out of the total of 300 Protestant mission hospitals in China, 180 had answered faithfully such queries as were found applicable; and in the spaces allotted to such as were not, equally pointed disclosures of violent contrasts in mission hospital equipment had been entered.

One of the questions, for example, had to do with the custom of permitting the Chinese patient to supply his own bedding, or whatever part of it necessity dictated. The information asked was, "If you observe this custom, what do the patients bring?" One of the replies was: "Mostly bugs!"

An example of the ire aroused by the question as to running water, was the answer: "We don't need it. The patients do all the running when they know there's a bath in prospect."

On the serious side some of the results by the investigation were as follows:<sup>27</sup>

Fifty per cent. of those replying admitted that they seldom or never bathed their patients; only 8 per cent. had access to pure water, and only 6 per cent. were equipped with running water; 34 per cent. were without nurses, foreign or Chinese, and depended entirely on the patient's friends for this branch of the work, which included the diet, over which they were thus naturally deprived of any control. Eighty per cent. had but one foreign, or one foreign-trained Chinese doctor—the term "foreign-trained" signifying "foreign-medicine-trained," and not necessarily that the Chinese doctor had been trained

abroad. (There are twenty-six medical colleges in China, thirteen of them missionary.) The same percentage, eighty, declared themselves "unable to base surgical and medical work on pathological investigation."

One bed to every 20,370 people proved to be the extent of the accommodation possible to the Protestant mission hospitals in China, but over one-third of these were not possessed of bedding; and in addition to these, the half of those more fortunate in this regard were unequipped to cope with the question of sterilization of bedding—or, indeed, of dealing with hospital linen at all. Other lacking essentials may be judged from these disclosures.

In this connection the circumstance comes to mind of a missionary arriving at headquarters in Shanghai, to seek aid for the sufferers in the area of the earthquake in Kansu province, in 1918. This was the strange phenomenon of the "walking mountain" that buried a whole countryside in its progress, and took a far greater toll of human lives than did the subsequent catastrophe in Japan. In China, however, the cataclysm had been meagerly reported in the foreign press. Such details as were known to the missionary—who had been one of the victims—reached Shanghai for the first time on his arrival, six months later; and it was not until two years after the disaster that the facts appeared in an account published by the *National Geographic Magazine*. To comprehend such a curious state of affairs one has only to consider the remote situation of the province, and some of its natural characteristics.

In fact, Kansu, next door neighbour to Tibet, and the habitat of the Chinese Moslem, is one of China's "wild" provinces, and the second largest—inaccessible, sparsely populated, and mountainous, with an elevation beginning at 5,000 feet and finishing at 20,000. It is called a "province of transit" because of the trade routes passing through; but it is without railways, navigable rivers, or roads wide enough for cart traffic, so that goods are transported by camel, mule, donkey, and even man power. The journey across consumes about the same period of time as a trip to London from Shanghai, via Suez.

The inhabitants, besides the Chinese, consist of emigrants from Mongolia, Tibet and Turkestan; a large proportion of aborigines, speaking a dialect of their own; Salar Moslems speaking Turki; Tung-siang Moslems of Mongolian speech; and Arabic-speaking Moslems; and through this welter of tongues the missionary in question had

made his way, as an evangelist, to a rude village that lay just outside the centre of the area later visited by the earthquake. For a long time his evangelistic efforts met with no success, and he attributed their failure to something within himself.

One day, while in this state of mental and spiritual discouragement, there was brought to him, in a hastily-contrived litter, the unfortunate victim of an accident. Examination disclosed a hopelessly mangled leg, and the missionary believed he saw before him a dying man. Three years of previous training for medical work told him that amputation was essential; and with nothing better than an ordinary saw, he performed the operation, which the patient survived.

Thereupon destiny mapped out his course. Immediately he was besieged with "cases," and his rude home became an "operating-room." For three years, pocket- or kitchen-knives, and saws had given him the open sesame which had eluded him before. One of his sensational "cures" had been that of the only wealthy man in the neighbourhood—a Chinese—whose gratitude led him to present the missionary with a piece of property on which were several buildings. In one of these the latter had established his "hospital." The others proved mere encumbrances, and for some time he had been puzzled for a means of removing them; though had such been offered—which decidedly they had not—he would not have ventured to use them. Then the earthquake intervened, and destroyed all.

When this dramatic recital, delivered in an even monotone—and extracted bit by bit—had come to an end, and the speaker had left, consternation reigned among his hearers; and an appeal was immediately sent out to hospitals in Shanghai, asking for the donation of discarded surgical instruments. A few days afterward, when the missionary called at headquarters, for his leavetaking, before setting out again on his long journey back to the wilds of Kansu, a wooden box stood on one of the desks. During a pause in the conversation, the lid was lifted, and he was negligently invited to "look!"—which he did, uncomprehendingly. Then, realization brought the first show of emotion; and, rendered speechless, he departed, the box under his arm, as something too precious to be entrusted to coolie carriage.

If we have seemed to stray unduly from the path marked out by our subject, it is to be hoped that the reader by patiently following us, will apprehend some of the temptations that assail the writer



who seeks faithfully to encompass any aspect of this vast and complex country and its people. Both are so bound up with geographical conditions and traditions that entice and lead the mind away from prescribed limits, that these, in the impact of Occident and Orient, lose the sharply defined outlines laid out in the beginning.

The foregoing sketches are, of course, merely a very superficial index to the foreign-medicine movement; but they will serve, perhaps to demonstrate the gap between general conditions and those prevailing in the large hospital plants, and to set the splendid Rockefeller gift in Peking at the pinnacle of achievement in China. And if the impression has not already been gained that the climb to this summit is likely to consume scores of years, perhaps it will arise in the course of the following pages devoted to an explanation of a few of the representative medicine shop signs, that, by their very existence and numbers, offer mute, but eloquent testimony to the hold which the Chinese pharmacopœia continues to maintain over the masses of the people.

Yet, again, as to this matter of making predictions in China: Directly one has fallen into this Western habit, contradictory symptoms begin to crowd for attention. There is, for example, the little known fact—whatever it may portend for the future—of the Empress Dowager herself having “seen the light,” and given material support, at a critical juncture, to that very medical work now known to fame as the institution we have just named—the Peking Union Medical College, built on the foundations laid by the London Missionary Society, and delivered over by its representative, Dr. Thomas Cochrane, amid due and impressive ceremonies at the dedication of the College in October, 1919.

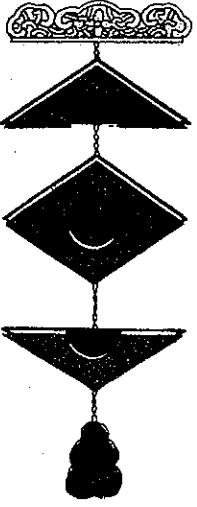
Like most tales that centre about this imagination-stirring figure of Chinese history, the story related of the Empress Dowager by Dr. Cochrane is a curiously interesting one. It goes back to the days of the Boxer Uprising, on the outbreak of which Dr. Cochrane, with his wife and baby, made a sensational escape from their mission station in Mongolia. After months of privation and great danger, the trio reached Peking, in the bare possession of their lives and nothing more, either shortly before, or after, the return of the monarch. Finding the mission in Peking in a state of ruin, Dr. Cochrane determined to make an attempt to revive the work; and that abundant need existed

for the physician's ministrations perhaps goes without saying. As a first step in this direction, a small fish shop was hired, which soon proved inadequate, so that other little centres were established. And, at about this time, Dr. Cochrane received a summons to the Palace. The Chief Eunuch, and favourite of the Empress, the notorious "Cobbler's Wax Li," lay ill and the Empress had ordered them to bring the foreign doctor.

An interesting point, and one that led later, to the doctor's appointment as physician in charge of the health of all the Palace eunuchs! But its present application is, that the first summons had set him to thinking, and as a result, Dr. Cochrane was inspired to do a most unique thing. Feeling that an appeal to the Empress for aid in his work of reconstruction could do no harm, and might be productive of results, he determined to chance it. Whereupon he actually committed the unheard-of act of addressing a personal letter to the Throne itself—the only time, it is said, that the Empress Dowager was ever so approached by a foreigner.

Dire consequences might have followed, and doubtless would have done, in the old days. But the Old Buddha had imbibed many a bitter lesson in the course of that memorable crusade against the foreigner, and her response to the appeal was the gift of something like Tls. 60,000. Nor was this all. Dr. Cochrane was summoned in audience on several occasions, subsequently, on matters relating to his professional duties at the Palace; and further manifestations of imperial favour toward the restoration of the mission property, whenever asked for, were found forthcoming—as when the removal of undesirable adjacent buildings was besought, and graciously granted.

There is just one word more as to the relative status of native and foreign medicines in Chinese regard, that should be spoken before turning to the consideration of the subject of native medicines. This is the fact, reported equally by foreign-trained native and foreign doctors, that faith in the efficacy of native remedies undermines the efforts of army and hospital alike, by the surreptitious use of these in conjunction with the Western, whenever opportunity offers; and that these latter are not difficult to find is conceivable enough, after what has been said of the handicaps under which so many of the mission stations are pursuing their tasks.



No. 94.  
The Apothecary's Shop.

藥鋪幌子

No. 95.  
The Eye Doctor.

眼藥鋪幌子

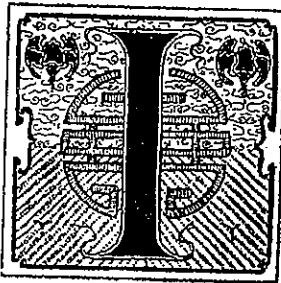
No. 96.  
The Midwife.

收生產婆幌子

## Chapter Eleven:

### *Native Medicine Shops.*

My wife's little daughter once fell very ill,  
And we called for a doctor to give her a pill.  
He wrote a prescription, which now we will give her,  
In which he has ordered a mosquito's liver;  
And then, in addition, the heart of a flea,  
And a half-pound of fly wings to make her some tea.<sup>28</sup>  
*Chinese Nursery Rhyme.*



IN China, when the Western mind does not, from the first, react violently against Oriental custom—which frequently enough happens, to the great discomfort of its possessor—it soon begins to acquire the faculty of unlearning, or at least of adapting, habits of thought springing from an heredity and training which the new surroundings do their best to set at naught. It is not surprising, therefore, if native medicines take their place among the features of Chinese life which are accepted as a matter of course—or perhaps, perforce, speaking from the standpoint of the foreign “missy,” who has found that it avails her nothing at all to be otherwise minded on the subject. In other words, the householder may avail herself of the provisions, where they exist, for the periodic inspection and general treatment of her servants, while, at the same time, looking with no hostile eye on their resort to the simples and ointments to which they attach much more importance. In fact, it is within the experience of most of these that disorders disappear

almost miraculously under native treatment, after having refused to yield to the most approved of modern methods. And tales are not wanting of foreigners themselves having successful recourse to these remedies,

Even the foreign physician testifies to an arresting experience, now and then, as notably one such scientist, returning to Shanghai after ten years spent in the interior, who expressed his surprise at having discovered that it is "old custom" in China to drape the bed of a smallpox patient with red curtains. The malaria-breeding mosquito, he found, was well-recognized, and was hunted by children in the country districts, who were rewarded by their mothers at the rate of so much per insect brought home.

It is perhaps quite unnecessary to mention here, that the study of medicine was not included in the educational provisions of Imperial China, the existing schools devoted to the purpose being part of the system borrowed from the West. Thus, according to Chinese custom a man's vocation was and is determined by that of his forebears, and hence, he is a doctor simply and solely for the reason that his father and grandfather had chosen this line of work. His endowments appear to his patients to border closely on the magical, at least so far as diagnosis is concerned. For example, it is not for him to ask for a recital of symptoms, this custom on the part of the foreign physician being regarded as a confession of weakness that seriously impairs the confidence of the patient at the very outset. The Chinese method is for the patient to remain silent, while the doctor places three fingers on the pulse and proceeds with the history of the case, recounting the symptoms, from the earliest to the last, the number of days the patient has not eaten—always a much-emphasized point—and the duration of specific derangements. When these are not accurate, it only proves that the doctor is not a "goodee" one, and the patient seeks another—the feeling being that these things the doctor must know, without being told. Otherwise, of what use to allow him to prescribe?

These sentiments it is possible to gather quite readily from the "man in the street" who feels assured that he may speak frankly, and it will be found that the prevailing opinion among this class is: "Chinese medicine for the Chinese man." A typical illustration of this point is provided by the very common malady in China, trachoma.

The Number One Boy, for example, on the appearance of the first symptoms, is required by his master to visit the dispensary; and, as he would remark, what happens? The foreign doctor, in the eye department, confronted with the most obvious sort of evidence, descends to the inconsequent. "What's the matter with you?" he asks, and the Chinese, with his sense of the ridiculous stirred to the pitch that excludes everything else, says to himself: "What for you ask *me*? You no can see?" The battle is lost before the fight has properly begun. Yet this antagonism is as nothing compared to that which arises when his dispensary experience is received at the hands of one of his own race. Here, the absolute irreducible limit is held to be discovered, and the state of mind of the patient is too involved with native thought processes to be fathomed by a mere foreigner.

The fee of the generality of Chinese doctors ranges all the way from twenty cents to one dollar, the former being the average, and the latter that of the "very goodee" doctor. Real high water mark, however, is said to reach sums approximating the fees paid to foreign specialists. The prescription emanating from the former type of practitioner entails the expenditure of ten cents, on the average, and frequently only of a number of coppers. The Chinese worker being probably the most improvident in the world, everything depends on his ability to return to his task, and hence speed is the first requirement demanded in the curative operation of medicines. It is precisely on this point that the foreign householder learns to yield, reflecting that, whatever they may be, native remedies appear to possess the quality of rapid repair, and hence of practical non-interference with the domestic machinery.

But it is on glancing over the Chinese pharmacopœia, and finding the large number of familiar entries set down therein, that the layman is rendered still more confused as to the fundamental elements of the native-*versus*-foreign-medicines conflict, and recognizes the problem as one based, evidently, largely on method. Nothing bears out this state of mind so eloquently as that choice bit of philosophy composed by the famous Sung poet, Po Chu I, at the age of 61, thirteen years before his death, in A.D. 846, in which are mentioned remedies and health-conserving discretions thus shown to be common knowledge among the Chinese of that day. The revelations occur under the title, "Thinking of the Past,"<sup>29</sup> and run as follows:

"In an idle hour I thought of former days;  
 And former friends seemed to be standing in the room.  
 And then I wondered 'Where are they now?'  
 Like fallen leaves they have tumbled to the Nether Springs.  
 Han Yü [another famous poet] swallowed his sulphur pills,  
 Yet a single illness carried him straight to the grave.  
 Yüan Chen smelted autumn stone (carbamide crystals)  
 But before he was old, his strength crumbled away.  
 Master Tu possessed the 'Secret of Health':  
 All day long he fasted from meat and spice.  
 The Lord Ts'ui, trusting a strong drug,  
 Through the whole winter wore his summer coat.  
 Yet—some by illness and some by sudden death . . . . .  
 All vanished ere their middle years were passed.  
 Only I, who have never dieted myself  
 Have thus protracted a tedious span of age,  
     I, who in young days  
 Yielded lightly to every lust and greed;  
 Whose palate craved only for the richest meat  
 And knew nothing of bismuth or calomel.  
 When hunger came I gulped steaming food;  
 When thirst came, I drank from the frozen stream.  
 With verse I served the spirits of my Five Guts;  
 With wine I watered the three Vital Spots."

Among other familiar names in the list of drugs used by the Chinese—which is far too lengthy to quote in full—may be mentioned: aconite, asafoetida, digitalis, camphor, angelica, cardamum, cubebs, dragon's blood (made from a species of rattan) and fritillary. The castor bean plant, too, is everywhere in evidence in the Chinese countryside, though it is not a native custom to extract the oil.

The British Maritime Customs' List of Chinese Medicines, and that of Sir Alexander Hosie, enumerate 220 various kinds, of which 189 are vegetable, all grown in one province—Szechuen. But the remedies the Chinese use most of all, if the display in the apothecary's shop is any indication—and herein lies, doubtless, the crux of the whole matter—are made from dried centipedes, scorpions, silkworms, beetles, excuviae of cicadae, toad bile, bats' dung, cantharides, bears'

galls, hedgehogs' skins, stags' antlers, and tigers' bones, though, as has been mentioned, all parts of this animal are used medicinally, and certain of them are believed to be especially efficacious in children's diseases. The ubiquitous lotus figures here, also, as it does in the list of foods—root, stem, leaves and seeds. A few of the minerals listed are realgar, zinc bloom, fossil teeth, brown mica, cinnabar ore, and clay. But, in the last analysis, it is evident from observation and inquiry, that native faith accords a pre-eminent place to the centipedes, scorpions, toads and animal parts, as curative agents. These, together with the roots and herbs, are referred to as "organic matter," the body's deficient supply of which causes disease.

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Among the rare old volumes on China that line the shelves of the library of the Royal Asiatic Society's China Branch in Shanghai, there is one, published in 1800, that so vividly portrays the China of those days, that one is tempted to quote from sundry references to Chinese medicines and medical practice observed by the author. The text, in French and English, elucidates a series of quaint illustrations of costumes and incidents encountered on the streets; and throughout the volume one imbibes the atmosphere of a period when the foreigner made his way through the Celestial Empire almost, and sometimes, actually at the peril of his life—in which respect, one may pause to remark, Chinese history appears, at the present time, to be striving to repeat itself. The title page of the book (condensed) reads:

"COSTUMES DE LA CHINE,"

George Henry Mason, Écuyer,

Major du ci-devant 102<sup>me</sup> régiment de sa Majesté,

à Londres,

W. Millar, Old Bond Street

M D C C C .

"In China," says Major Mason, "anyone may practice physic, and the Chinese have many peculiar practices. The pulse, for example, is felt in various parts of the body . . . . ."



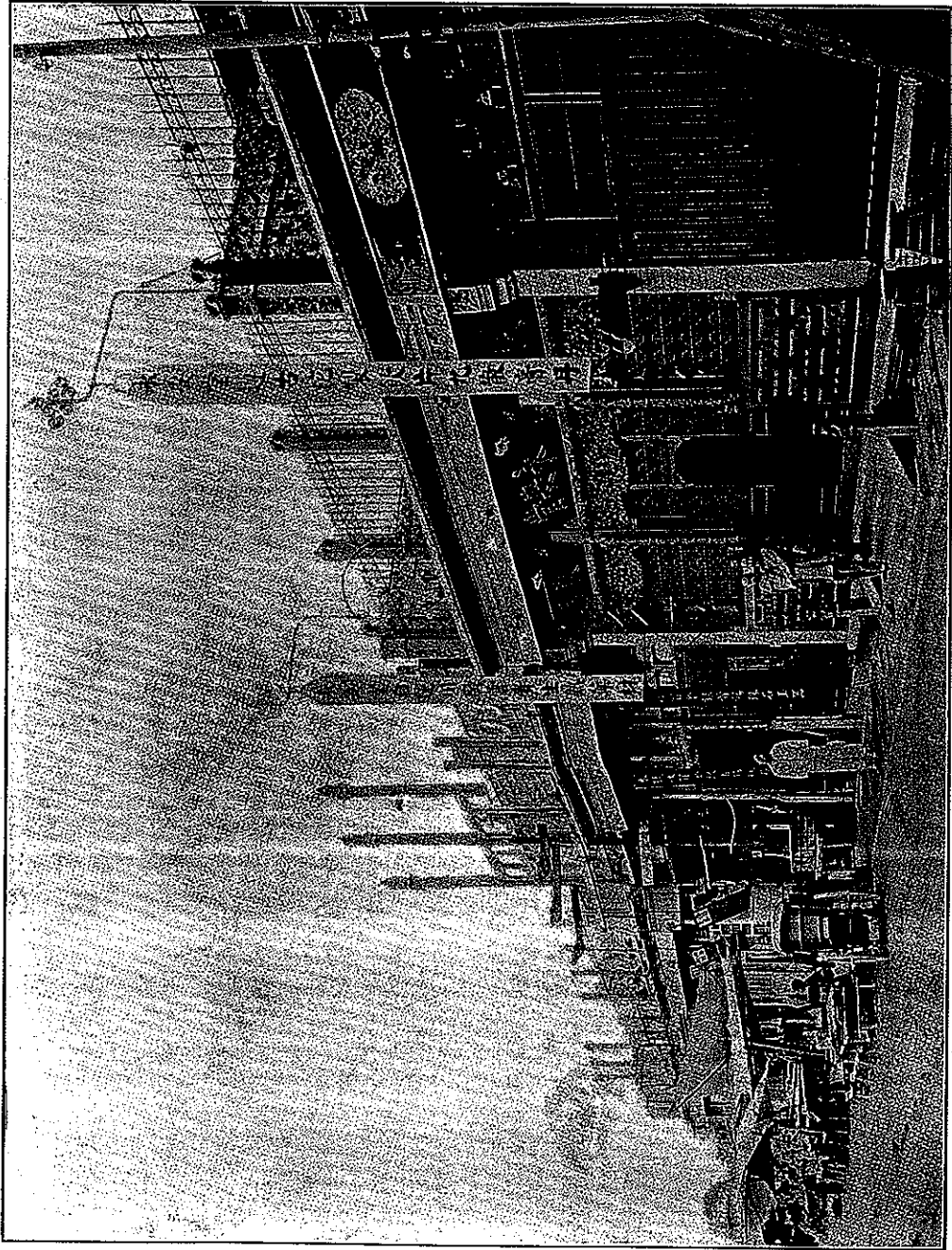
"In case of death by violence, the corpse is taken out of the ground, washed in vinegar, and after this a large fire is kindled in a pit dug on purpose, six feet long, three in width, and the same in depth.

"This fire is continually augmented until the surrounding earth becomes as hot as an oven. The remaining fire is then taken from the pit, a large quantity of wine is poured into it, and it is covered with a hurdle made of osier twigs, upon which the body is stretched out at full length. A cloth is thrown over all in the form of an arch, in order that the steam may act upon it in every direction. At the expiration of two hours this cloth is taken off, and it is asserted that if any blows have been given they will appear upon the body, in whatever state it may be. The same experiment is extended even to bones stripped of their flesh. The Chinese assure us that if the blows have been so severe as to occasion death this process causes the marks to appear upon the bones, although none of them may be broken or visibly injured."

It is not, however, wholly in the pursuit of earthly justice that such proceedings were instituted; for it is highly important that the soul of a person who has met his death by violence, shall be aided by his relatives in the duty devolving upon it of avenging the act of murder. The soul, in order to be reincarnated, must deliver up the assassin to the judges of the Infernal regions, and to assist it in this momentous work, charms and talismans must be worn, or burned, by the family, in which the deed is denounced, the weapon execrated, and the rebirth besought.

One of the illustrations included in Major Mason's volume depicts a typical street vendor, with carrying pole across one shoulder, from which swing a covered basket on the one side; and on the other, a flat, rimmed, circular board, on which are set jars of various sizes.

"Vipers," says the text, in explanation "are used medicinally in China, and are sold on the streets in baskets, alive, or, in jars and tubs, made into a broth. The shops where they are sold display a sign that consists of a long board bearing black or gilt characters upon a red ground, which denote the articles to be dispensed within, and the master's name, to which the words *Pu Hu*: 'He will not cheat you' are frequently subjoined. Sometimes the itinerant vendor carries the same sort of sign."



*An Apothecary's shop, with inscribed signs and banners, as well as "Huang Tze."*

By this time the reader will have become so familiar with the classification of Chinese shop signs as to have immediately placed the one just described among the *tiao pai*, mentioned in an early chapter, where medicine shops were seen to figure as "Increasing Riches," or, as the "Temple of the Happy Mean"; while an eye doctor maintained the "Most Pleasant Hall," and his competitor called himself the "Half-Awakened." It is superfluous to mention that the doctor's sign, similarly, would be a character-bearing board.

#### THE APOTHECARY'S SHOP.

We must now, however, proceed with our tour of the region of the more picturesque devices, through which ancient China reveals herself to the twentieth century eye.

Our first emblem, No. 94, is the apothecary's sign—one that is seen oftener, perhaps, than any other in Peking. In its component parts, it is easily one of the most interesting. It represents one of the Chinese panaceas, and its explanation is this:

Stowed away in a compartment within the shop are heaps of white cotton cloths, cut square, and neatly folded across, on the diagonal. A purchaser enters, asks for a particular plaster, and is given it, in the form of a hard cake that has to be warmed for spreading. With this he receives a square of the cloth, the centre of which he will, on reaching home, cover with a more or less rounded portion of the melted salve, and then wrap the whole around the affected part. These items, as the reader will now perceive, compose the apothecary's sign. The central square represents the cloth, unfolded, and with the ointment spread, ready for use. Above and below it, the diagonally folded cloth is indicated. There can surely be no two opinions as to the superior usefulness of such a sign over the written one, which would have no meaning whatever to the large majority of native passers-by.

#### THE EYE DOCTOR.

In Sign No. 95 we have further evidence of the fact that in China, as in the West, the treatment of the eye is specialized in. The faint streaks of white dimly outlined against the red cords in the eye

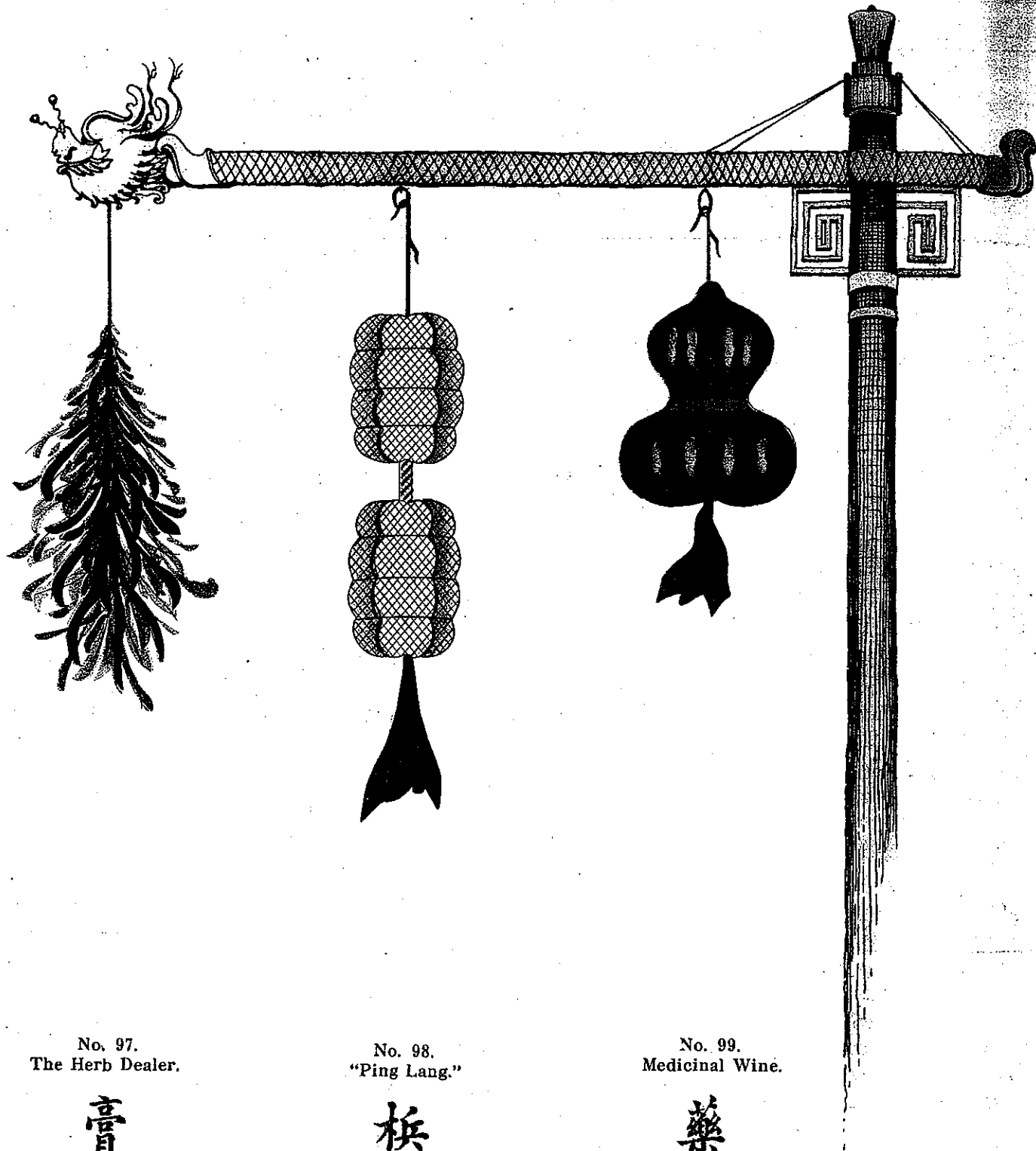
doctor's sign are meant to indicate the Chinese "dropper," which consists of a length of straw, such as the Westerner uses in taking his iced drinks. The doctor dispenses a certain white powder whose efficacy is tested, first of all, in all cases. This is probably the one made from the "Eight Precious Articles!" When it proves itself insufficient, the patient is given a prescription which he carries to the shop we have just described. Usually this document calls for a preparation made from the fritillary lily; and, in the opinion of foreign doctors, it will be equally ineffectual, eye disorders—and especially trachoma—being among the commonest maladies of the Chinese, who appear to accept blindness as one of the forms of the inevitable.

#### THE MIDWIFE.

No. 96 is the sign of a practitioner, humble, but one of the busiest—the Chinese midwife, patron of the "Garden of Perpetual Spring." Though she achieves the dignity of a character-bearing signboard, her device resembles that of the dealer in medicines made from the viper, both being square, while the "regular" practitioner's is oblong, with gold characters, on black. Nevertheless, in the more than ordinary importance attached to posterity in China, her function is a significant one. Ages ago one of the sisterhood was deified and her image, seated upon that of a crouching tiger is worshipped in the temples, where *Kuan Yin* (Mother of Mercy) is besought by the childless wife, in prayer for the blessing of maternity. The "Goddess of Midwifery" is the intercessionaire on behalf of ailing children.

#### THE DEALER IN HERBS.

No. 97, which resembles the active principle of the feather duster, is meant to represent the leaves of the plant from which the ointment or plaster is made that forms the black circle in the apothecary's sign. The herb is also made up into a lotion, and in this form, produces the stains on face or neck, which are among the familiar outward and visible features of the ordinary Chinese. The remedy in this case, is applied by means of a piece of paper, which adheres to the aching temple or throat, until the wind, or some other agency, carries it away.



No. 97.  
The Herb Dealer.

膏藥幌子

No. 98.  
"Ping Lang."

栳榔幌子

No. 99.  
Medicinal Wine.

藥酒幌子

## "PING LANG"—CHINESE BETEL.

In No. 98 we come to one of the least picturesque of our emblems; yet it is one replete with suggestiveness, connoting a succession of scenes typical of native life in the South Sea and Philippine Islands, Indo-China, and Malay. It is the sign of the dealer in *ping lang*, which is the Chinese name for an astringent extract made from parts of the Areca palm, the tree that bears the betel nut, is indigenous to the East Indies and the Philippines, and thence was introduced into China. It is now grown in Hainan and other districts of the south. Preparations made from various parts of the tree have a number of uses. In some forms it is employed for digestive affections, and is much used in cases of cholera; while the infusion is highly regarded as efficacious against malaria. Ointments and lotions are made from the bark, and in the shops where the sign is displayed, bits of the wood are sold, which the Chinese chew for its medicinal effect.

The habit of betel-nut chewing obtained a considerable hold on the Chinese half a century ago, especially in the districts where the tree is grown. The betel nut was even given a place in the social customs of the people, similar to that which it occupies among the natives of Indo-China and other countries addicted to this vice. But while the lingering remnants of its social functions are still to be observed in the vicinity of Amoy and Foochow, as will be shown in the description of a funeral procession in our next section, the habit of betel-nut chewing has practically disappeared.

This fact, in view of the very general uses of the Areca palm in all parts of China, is interesting, in the light of an article that appeared some time ago in a French periodical published in Saigon, wherein the writer expressed the regret of the French colonists of Indo-China at their failure to cure the people of Annam of this unsightly habit, which leaves its marks on walls and houses and even interior furnishings in that country—not to speak of its effect on the mouth of the habitué.

On the one hand, said the writer, the colonists had had to contend against the common belief among the natives, that the betel nut is endowed with health-promoting powers; and that, above all, it is an infallible preventive against toothache. As this malady is unknown in Annam, and as, furthermore, French physicians there have credited

the betel nut with tonic qualities demanded by climatic conditions of the most enervating kind, there would seem to be some foundation in fact for these beliefs.

As the betel is chewed in Annam, the leaf is used as a wrapper, on which is spread, first, a layer of the native pepper, then a small quantity of lime, and on this a bit of the nut. The whole is then rolled up into a ball and laid against the gums, where it is pressed and chewed. Its first effect is to redden the mouth and gums, as if they were suffused in blood. Afterward these surfaces turn black, and have a glazed look. This coating doubtless prevents erosion and explains the native's immunity from toothache.

There is some difference of opinion as to the origin of the Chinese name for the betel, which the Malays call *pinang*. *Ping lang*, the Chinese words, may also be written with the characters meaning "honoured guest," and one authority maintains this to be their correct meaning, on the ground that one of the most rigid of the national customs of Annam requires that the box of betel must be presented to a visitor, even before the hospitable cup of tea is offered; and to a casual caller, as well, though he merely knock upon the door, to make inquiry of some sort. This custom constitutes the other serious feature of the French colonists' problem. In South China, the betel nut came to figure, also, as a conciliatory offering; and the participants in a quarrel were wont to send an enwrapped section of it, the one to the other, which etiquette demanded must be accepted, perforce.

#### MEDICINAL WINE.

Once more, in No. 99, we encounter the Red Gourd, again the sign of a wine-dealer; but here, the calabash being slashed vertically, and banded round its middle with a stripe of green, it stands for "medicinal wine"; and in this guise attests the peculiar Chinese custom of using wine as the conveyance for the drugs prescribed. Here is the third of the important functions of Chinese wines. From the point of view of utility, it probably deserves a place at the head of the list, for while certain varieties of so-called "medicinal wines" are made from aromatic herbs, a large share of the fermented wine produced annually is devoted to medicinal purposes. The extent to which this practice tends to influence the wine-making industry may

be judged from the Customs figures for a single port—that of Canton, which in some years, imports in the neighbourhood of 800 tons of liquors, fermented and distilled, fully half of which quantity is listed as “medicated.” Most of the medicine shops are equipped with stills, and the liquors dispensed are re-distilled and much stronger than the ordinary variety. Rectification of spirits, as was to be assumed from our previous account of Chinese methods, is not provided for in the processes of manufacture.

The ginseng, “Root of Life,” to which the Chinese attribute the powers with which monkey glands and other more recent discoveries are credited in the West, is steeped in brandy, *Shao Chiu*, the fiery potency of the liquor being depended on to extract the substance of perpetual youth. It is this draught that represents the real Chinese elixir of life, whatever ancient tradition may have had to say of the properties of jade and gold, and the waters of the magic springs.

The most persistent of pursuits has ever been this quest for perennial youth, among the Chinese, whether merchant, poet, philosopher, or monk. But, by long odds, the most practical of the dreams inspired by the “root of life” are realized by the hunter, burrowing among the undergrowth in the forests of Manchuria and Siberia, with all the secrecy and persistence of the gold digger, gathering in with grunts of disapproval, the roots of mediocre size and shape, while ever on the alert for one that bears the form of a man’s body. This constitutes the ginseng-digger’s “strike,” and when he makes it the hunter hunts no more. Assuming that the gods who watch over the destinies of such as he, permit of his safe arrival at the “assayer’s,” which rarely enough they do, for such prizes usually take their toll of three or four lives, at least, before finally reaching this headquarters—he immediately packs his few belongings and makes tracks for his home town, a rich man. Perhaps, if he be wise, and courageous enough to chance it, he will carry his fortune in its original form, to some city like Shanghai, where it would yield him an infinitely greater sum—especially if he have it “mounted” in a glass-topped box, lined in red velvet, as these precious objects are customarily exhibited.



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HIS FUTURE STATE

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