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THE CIVILIZATION OF CHINA

By HERBERT A. GILES, M.A., LL.D.

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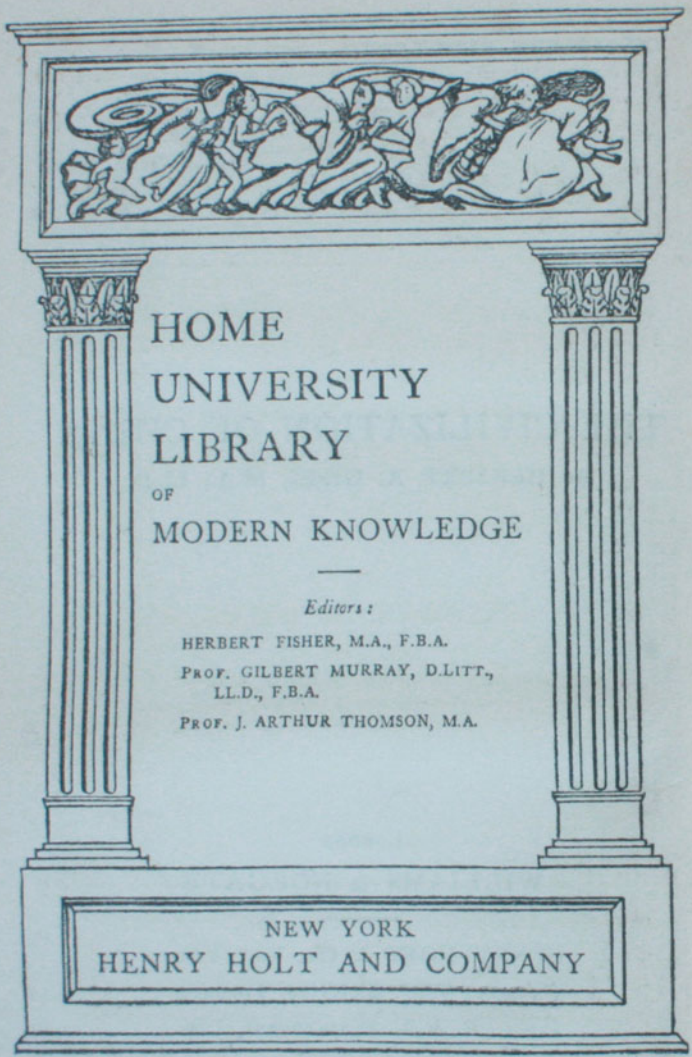

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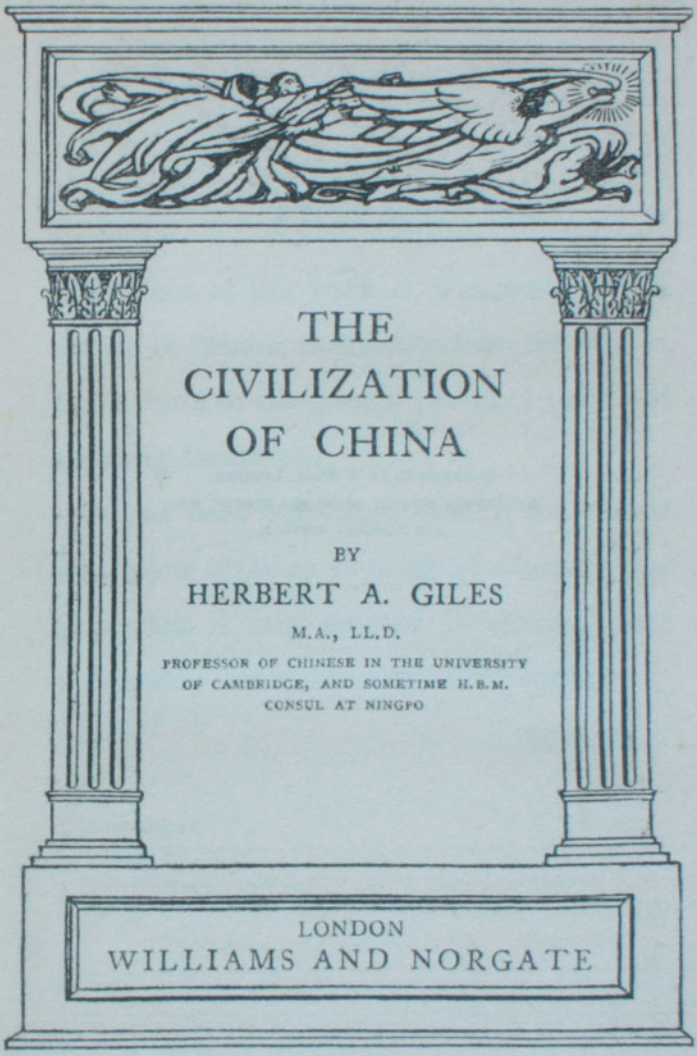

THE CIVILIZATION OF CHINA

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LONDON

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PREFACE

THE aim of this work is to suggest a rough outline of Chinese civilization from the earliest times down to the present period of rapid and startling transition.

It has been written, primarily, for readers who know little or nothing of China, in the hope that it may succeed in alluring them to a wider and more methodical survey.

H. A. G.

CAMBRIDGE,
May 12, 1911.

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THE CIVILIZATION OF CHINA

CHAPTER I

THE FEUDAL AGE

It is a very common thing now-a-days to meet people who are going to "China," which can be reached by the Siberian railway in fourteen or fifteen days. This brings us at once to the question—What is meant by the term China?

Taken in its widest sense, the term includes Mongolia, Manchuria, Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, and the Eighteen Provinces, the whole being equivalent to an area of some five million square miles, that is, considerably more than twice the size of the United States of America. But for a study of the manners and customs and modes of thought of the Chinese people, we must confine ourselves to that portion of the whole which is known to the Chinese as the "Eighteen Provinces," and to us as China Proper. This portion of the empire occupies not quite two-fifths of the whole, covering an area of somewhat more than a million and a half square miles. Its chief landmarks may be

roughly stated as Peking, the capital, in the north; Canton, the great commercial centre, in the south; Shanghai, on the east; and the Tibetan frontier on the west.

Any one who will take the trouble to look up these four points on a map, representing as they do central points on the four sides of a rough square, will soon realize the absurdity of asking a returning traveller the very much asked question, How do you like China? Fancy asking a Chinaman, who had spent a year or two in England, how he liked Europe! Peking, for instance, stands on the same parallel of latitude as Madrid; whereas Canton coincides similarly with Calcutta. Within the square indicated by the four points enumerated above will be found variations of climate, flowers, fruit, vegetables and animals—not to mention human beings—distributed in very much the same way as in Europe. The climate of Peking is exceedingly dry and bracing; no rain, and hardly any snow, falling between October and April. The really hot weather lasts only for six or eight weeks, about July and August—and even then the nights are always cool; while for six or eight weeks between December and February there may be a couple of feet of ice on the river. Canton, on the other hand, has a tropical climate, with

a long damp enervating summer and a short bleak winter. The old story runs that snow has only once been seen in Canton, and then it was thought by the people to be falling cotton-wool.

The northern provinces are remarkable for vast level plains, dotted with villages, the houses of which are built of mud. In the southern provinces will be found long stretches of mountain scenery, vying in loveliness with anything to be seen elsewhere. Monasteries are built high up on the hills, often on almost inaccessible crags; and there the well-to-do Chinaman is wont to escape from the fierce heat of the southern summer. On one particular mountain near Canton, there are said to be no fewer than one hundred of such monasteries, all of which reserve apartments for guests, and are glad to be able to add to their funds by so doing.

In the north of China, Mongolian ponies, splendid mules, and donkeys are seen in large quantities; also the two-humped camel, which carries heavy loads across the plains of Mongolia. In the south, until the advent of the railway, travellers had to choose between the sedan-chair carried on the shoulders of stalwart coolies, or the slower but more comfortable house-boat. Before steamers began to ply

on the coast, a candidate for the doctor's degree at the great triennial examination would take three months to travel from Canton to Peking. Urgent dispatches, however, were often forwarded by relays of riders at the rate of two hundred miles a day.

The market in Peking is supplied, among other things, with excellent mutton from a fat-tailed breed of sheep, chiefly for the large Mohammedan population; but the sheep will not live in southern China, where the goat takes its place. The pig is found everywhere, and represents beef in our market, the latter being extremely unpalatable to the ordinary Chinaman, partly perhaps because Confucius forbade men to slaughter the animal which draws the plough and contributes so much to the welfare of mankind. The staple food, the "bread" of the people in the Chinese Empire, is nominally rice; but this is too costly for the peasant of northern China to import, and he falls back on millet as its substitute. Apples, pears, grapes, melons, and walnuts grow abundantly in the north; the southern fruits are the banana, the orange, the pineapple, the mango, the pomelo, the lichee, and similar fruits of a more tropical character.

Cold storage has been practised by the Chinese for centuries. Blocks of ice are cut

from the river for that purpose; and on a hot summer's day a Peking coolie can obtain an iced drink at an almost infinitesimal cost. Grapes are preserved from autumn until the following May and June by the simple process of sticking the stalk of the bunch into a large hard pear, and putting it away carefully in the ice-house. Even at Ningpo, close to our central point on the eastern coast of China, thin layers of ice are collected from pools and ditches, and successfully stored for use in the following summer.

The inhabitants of the coast provinces are distinguished from dwellers in the north and in the far interior by a marked alertness of mind and general temperament. The Chinese themselves declare that virtue is associated with mountains, wisdom with water, cynically implying that no one is both virtuous and wise. Between the inhabitants of the various provinces there is little love lost. Northerners fear and hate southerners, and the latter hold the former in infinite scorn and contempt. Thus, when in 1860 the Franco-British force made for Peking, it was easy enough to secure the services of any number of Cantonese, who remained as faithful as though the attack had been directed against some third nationality.

The population of China has never been

exactly ascertained. It has been variously estimated by foreign travellers, Sacharoff, in 1842, placing the figure at over four hundred millions. The latest census, taken in 1902, is said to yield a total of four hundred and ten millions. Perhaps three hundred millions would be a juster estimate; even that would absorb no less than one-fifth of the human race. From this total it is easy to calculate that if the Chinese people were to march past a given point in single file, the procession would never end; long before the last of the three hundred millions had passed by, a new generation would have sprung up to continue the endless line. The census, however, is a very old institution with the Chinese; and we learn that in A.D. 156 the total population of the China of those days was returned as a little over fifty millions. In more modern times, the process of taking the census consists in serving out house-tickets to the head of every household, who is responsible for a proper return of all the inmates; but as there is no fixed day for which these tickets are returnable, the results are approximate rather than exact.

Again, it is not uncommon to hear people talking of the Chinese language as if it were a single tongue spoken all over China after a

more or less uniform standard. But the fact is that the colloquial is broken up into at least eight dialects, each so strongly marked as to constitute eight languages as different to the ear, one from another, as English, Dutch and German, or French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese. A Shanghai man, for instance, is unintelligible to a Cantonese, and so on. All officials are obliged, and all of the better educated merchants and others endeavour, if only for business purposes, to learn something of the dialect spoken at the court of Peking; and this is what is popularly known as "Mandarin." The written language remains the same for the whole empire; which merely means that ideas set down on paper after a uniform system are spoken with different sounds, just as the Arabic numerals are written uniformly in England, France and Germany, but are pronounced in a totally different manner.

The only difficulty of the spoken language, of no matter what dialect, lies in the "tones," which simply means the different intonations which may be given to one and the same sound, thus producing so many entirely different meanings. But for these tones, the colloquial of China would be absurdly easy, inasmuch as there is absolutely no such thing

as grammar, in the sense of gender, number, case, mood, tense, or any of the variations which we understand by that term. Many amusing examples are current of blunders committed by faulty speakers, such as that of the student who told his servant to bring him a goose, when what he really wanted was some salt, both goose and salt having the same sound, *yen*, but quite different intonations. The following specimen has the advantage of being true. A British official reported to the Foreign Office that the people of Tientsin were in the habit of shouting after foreigners, "Mao-tzŭ, mao-tzŭ" (pronounced *mowdza*, *ow* as in *how*), from which he gathered that they were much struck by the head-gear of the barbarian. Now, it is a fact that *mao-tzŭ*, uttered with a certain intonation, means a hat; but with another intonation it means "hairy one," and the latter, referring to the big beards of foreigners, was the meaning intended to be conveyed. This epithet is still to be heard, and is often preceded by the adjective "red."

The written characters, known to have been in use for the past three thousand years, were originally rude pictures, as of men, birds, horses, dogs, houses, the numerals (one, two, three, four), etc., etc., and it is still possible

to trace in the modified modern forms of these characters more or less striking resemblances to the objects intended. The next step was to put two or more characters together, to express by their combination an abstract idea, as, for instance, a *hand* holding a *rod* = father; but of course this simple process did not carry the Chinese very far, and they soon managed to hit on a joint picture and phonetic system, which enabled them to multiply characters indefinitely, new compounds being formed for use as required. It is thus that new characters can still be produced, if necessary, to express novel objects or ideas. The usual plan, however, is to combine existing terms in such a way as to suggest what is wanted. For instance, in preference to inventing a separate character for the piece of ordnance known as a "mortar," the Chinese, with an eye to its peculiar pose, gave it the appropriate name of a "frog gun."

Again, just as the natives and the dialects of the various parts of China differ one from another, although fundamentally the same people and the same language, so do the manners and customs differ to such an extent that habits of life and ceremonial regulations which prevail in one part of the empire do not necessarily prevail in another. Yet once more it will be found that the differences which

appear irreconcilable at first, do not affect what is essential, but apply rather to matters of detail. Many travellers and others have described as customs of the Chinese customs which, as presented, refer to a part of China only, and not to the whole. For instance, the ornamental ceremonies connected with marriage vary in different provinces; but there is a certain ceremony, equivalent in one sense to signing the register, which is almost essential to every marriage contract. Bride and bridegroom must kneel down and call God to witness; they also pledge each other in wine from two cups joined together by a red string. Red is the colour for joy, as white is the colour for mourning. Chinese note-paper is always ruled with red lines or stamped with a red picture. One Chinese official who gave a dinner-party in foreign style, even went so far as to paste a piece of red paper on to each dinner-napkin, in order to counteract the unpropitious influence of white.

Reference has been made above to journeys performed by boat. In addition to the Yangtsze and the Yellow River or Hoang ho (pronounced *Hwong haw*), two of the most important rivers in the world, China is covered with a network of minor streams, which in southern China form the chief lines of trans-

port. The Yangtsze is nothing more than a huge navigable river, crossing China Proper from west to east. The Yellow River, which, with the exception of a great loop to the north, runs on nearly parallel lines of latitude, has long been known as "China's Sorrow," and has been responsible for enormous loss of life and property. Its current is so swift that ordinary navigation is impossible, and to cross it in boats is an undertaking of considerable difficulty and danger. It is so called from the yellowness of its water, caused by the vast quantity of mud which is swept down by its rapid current to the sea; hence, the common saying, "When the Yellow River runs clear," as an equivalent of the Greek Kalends. The huge embankments, built to confine it to a given course, are continually being forced by any unusual press of extra water, with enormous damage to property and great loss of life, and from time to time this river has been known to change its route altogether, suddenly diverging, almost at a right angle. Up to the year 1851 the mouth of the river was to the south of the Shantung promontory, about lat. 34 N.; then, with hardly any warning, it began to flow to the north-east, finding an outlet to the north of the Shantung promontory, about lat. 38 N.

A certain number of connecting links have been formed between the chief lines of water communication, in the shape of artificial cuttings; but there is nothing worthy the name of canal except the rightly named Grand Canal, called by the Chinese the "river of locks," or alternatively the "transport river," because once used to convey rice from the south to Peking. This gigantic work, designed and executed in the thirteenth century by the Emperor Kublai Khan, extended to about six hundred and fifty miles in length, and completed an almost unbroken water communication between Peking and Canton. As a wonderful engineering feat it is indeed more than matched by the famous Great Wall, which dates back to a couple of hundred years before Christ, and which has been glorified as the last trace of man's handiwork on the globe to fade from the view of an imaginary person receding into space. Recent exploration shows that this wall is about eighteen hundred miles in length, stretching from a point on the seashore somewhat east of Peking, to the northern frontier of Tibet. Roughly speaking, it is twenty-two feet in height by twenty feet in breadth; at intervals of a hundred yards are towers forty feet high, the whole being built originally of brick, of

which in some parts but mere traces now remain. Nor is this the only great wall; ruins of other walls on a considerable scale have lately been brought to light, the object of all being one and the same—to keep back the marauding Tartars.

Over the length and breadth of their boundless empire, with all its varying climates and inhabitants, the Chinese people are free to travel, for business or pleasure, at their own sweet will, and to take up their abode at any spot without let or hindrance. No passports are required; neither is any ordinary citizen obliged to possess other papers of identification. Chinese inns are not exposed to the annoyance of domiciliary visits with reference to their clients for the time being; and so long as the latter pay their way, and refrain from molesting others, they will usually be free from molestation themselves. The Chinese, however, are not fond of travelling; they love their homes too well, and they further dread the inconveniences and dangers attached to travel in many other parts of the world. Boatmen, carters, and innkeepers have all of them bad reputations for extortionate charges; and the traveller may sometimes happen upon a "black inn," which is another name for a den of thieves. Still there have been many who

travelled for the sake of beautiful scenery, or in order to visit famous spots of historical interest; not to mention the large body of officials who are constantly on the move, passing from post to post.

Among those who believe that every nation must have reached its present quarters from some other distant part of the world, must be reckoned a few students of the ancient history of China. Coincidences in language and in manners and customs, mostly of a shadowy character, have led some to suggest Babylonia as the region from which the Chinese migrated to the land where they are now found. The Chinese possess authentic records of an indisputably early past, but throughout these records there is absolutely no mention, not even a hint, of any migration of the kind.

Tradition places the Golden Age of China so far back as three thousand years before Christ; for a sober survey of China's early civilization, it is not necessary to push farther back than the tenth century B.C. We shall find evidence of such an advanced state of civilization at that later date as to leave no doubt of a very remote antiquity.

The China of those days, known even then as the Middle Kingdom, was a mere patch on

the empire of to-day. It lay, almost lozenge-shaped, between the 34th and 40th parallels of latitude north, with the upper point of the lozenge resting on the modern Peking, and the lower on Si-an Fu in Shensi, whither the late Empress Dowager fled for safety during the Boxer rising in 1900. The ancient autocratic Imperial system had recently been disestablished, and a feudal system had taken its place. The country was divided up into a number of vassal states of varying size and importance, ruled each by its own baron, who swore allegiance to the sovereign of the Royal State. The relations, however, which came to subsist, as time went on, between these states, sovereign and vassal alike, as described in contemporary annals, often remind the reader of the relations which prevailed between the various political divisions of ancient Greece. The rivalries of Athens and Sparta, whose capitals were only one hundred and fifty miles apart—though a perusal of Thucydides makes one feel that at least half the world was involved—find their exact equivalent in the jealousies and animosities which stirred the feudal states of ancient China, and in the disastrous campaigns and bloody battles which the states fought with one another. We read of chariots and horsemanship; of

feats of arms and deeds of individual heroism; of forced marches, and of night attacks in which the Chinese soldier was gagged with a kind of wooden bit, to prevent talking in the ranks; of territory annexed and reconquered, and of the violent deaths of rival rulers by poison or the dagger of the assassin.

When the armies of these states went into battle they formed a line, with the bowmen on the left and the spearmen on the right flank. The centre was occupied by chariots, each drawn by either three or four horses harnessed abreast. Swords, daggers, shields, iron-headed clubs some five to six feet in length and weighing from twelve to fifteen pounds, huge iron hooks, drums, cymbals, gongs, horns, banners and streamers innumerable, were also among the equipment of war. Beacon-fires of wolves' dung were lighted to announce the approach of an enemy and summon the inhabitants to arms. Quarter was rarely if ever given, and it was customary to cut the ears from the bodies of the slain. Parleys were conducted and terms of peace arranged under the shelter of a banner of truce, upon which two words were inscribed—"Stop fighting."

The beacon-fires above mentioned, very useful for summoning the feudal barons to

the rescue in case of need, cost one sovereign his throne. He had a beautiful concubine, for the sake of whose company he neglected the affairs of government. The lady was of a melancholy turn, never being seen to smile. She said she loved the sound of rent silk, and to gratify her whim many fine pieces of silk were torn to shreds. The king offered a thousand ounces of gold to any one who would make her laugh; whereupon his chief minister suggested that the beacon-fires should be lighted to summon the feudal nobles with their armies, as though the royal house were in danger. The trick succeeded; for in the hurry-skurry that ensued the impassive girl positively laughed outright. Later on, when a real attack was made upon the capital by barbarian hordes, and the beacon-fires were again lighted, this time in stern reality, there was no response from the insulted nobles. The king was killed, and his concubine strangled herself.

Meanwhile, a high state of civilization was enjoyed by these feudal peoples, when not engaged in cutting each other's throats. They lived in thatched houses constructed of rammed earth and plaster, with beaten floors on which dry grass was strewn as carpet. Originally accustomed to sit on mats, they

introduced chairs and tables at an early date; they drank an ardent spirit with their carefully cooked food, and wore robes of silk. Ballads were sung, and dances were performed, on ceremonial and festive occasions; hunting and fishing and agriculture were occupations for the men, while the women employed themselves in spinning and weaving. There were casters of bronze vessels, and workers in gold, silver, and iron; jade and other stones were cut and polished for ornaments. The written language was already highly developed, being much the same as we now find it. Indeed, the chief difference lies in the form of the characters, just as an old English text differs in form from a text of the present day. What we may call the syntax of the language has remained very much the same; and phrases from the old ballads of three thousand years ago, which have passed into the colloquial, are still readily understood, though of course pronounced according to the requirements of modern speech. We can no more say how Confucius (551–479 B.C.) pronounced Chinese, than we can say how Miltiades pronounced Greek when addressing his soldiers before the battle of Marathon (490 B.C.). The "books" which were read in ancient China consisted of thin slips of wood or bamboo, on which the

characters were written by means of a pencil of wood or bamboo, slightly frayed at the end, so as to pick up a coloured liquid and transfer it to the tablets as required. Until recently, it was thought that the Chinese scratched their words on tablets of bamboo with a knife, but now we know that the knife was only used for scratching out, when a character was wrongly written.

The art of healing was practised among the Chinese in their pre-historic times, but the earliest efforts of a methodical character, of which we have any written record, belong to the period with which we are now dealing. There is indeed a work, entitled "Plain Questions," which is attributed to a legendary emperor of the Golden Age, who interrogates one of his ministers on the cause and cure of all kinds of diseases; as might be expected, it is not of any real value, nor can its date be carried back beyond a few centuries B.C.

Physicians of the feudal age classified diseases under the four seasons of the year: headaches and neuralgic affections under *spring*, skin diseases of all kinds under *summer*, fevers and agues under *autumn*, and bronchial and pulmonary complaints under *winter*. They treated the various complaints that fell under these headings by suitable doses of one

or more ingredients taken from the five classes of drugs, derived from herbs, trees, living creatures, minerals, and grains, each of which class contained medicines of five flavours, with special properties: *sour* for nourishing the bones, *acid* for nourishing the muscles, *salt* for nourishing the blood-vessels, *bitter* for nourishing general vitality, and *sweet* for nourishing the flesh. The pulse has always been very much to the front in the treatment of disease; there are at least twenty-four varieties of pulse with which every doctor is supposed to be familiar, and some eminent doctors have claimed to distinguish no fewer than seventy-two. In the "Plain Questions" there is a sentence which points towards the circulation of the blood,—"All the blood is under the jurisdiction of the heart," a point beyond which the Chinese never seem to have pushed their investigations; but of this curious feature in their civilization, later on.

It was under the feudal system, perhaps a thousand years before Christ, that the people of China began to possess family names. Previous to that time there appear to have been tribal or clan names; these however were not in ordinary use among the individual members of each clan, who were known by their personal names only, bestowed upon

them in childhood by their parents. Gradually, it became customary to prefix to the personal name a surname, adopted generally from the name of the place where the family lived, sometimes from an appellation or official title of a distinguished ancestor; places in China never take their names from individuals, as with us, and consequently there are no such names as Faringdon or Gislingham, the homes of the Fearings or Gislings of old. Thus, to use English terms, a boy who had been called "Welcome" by his parents might prefix the name of the place, Cambridge, where he was born, and call himself Cambridge Welcome, the surname always coming first in Chinese, as, for instance, in Li Hung-chang. The Manchus, it must be remembered, have no surnames; that is to say, they do not use their clan or family names, but call themselves by their personal names only.

Chinese surnames, other than place names, are derived from a variety of sources: from nature, as River, Stone, Cave; from animals, as Bear, Sheep, Dragon; from birds, as Swallow, Pheasant; from the body, as Long-ears, Squint-eye; from colours, as Black, White; from trees and flowers, as Hawthorn, Leaf, Reed, Forest; and others, such as Rich, East, Sharp, Hope, Duke, Stern, Tepid, Money, etc.

By the fifth century before Christ, the use of surnames had become definitely established for all classes, whereas in Europe surnames were not known until about the twelfth century after Christ, and even then were confined to persons of wealth and position. There is a small Chinese book, studied by every schoolboy and entitled *The Hundred Surnames*, the word "hundred" being commonly used in a generally comprehensive sense. It actually contains about four hundred of the names which occur most frequently.

About two hundred and twenty years before Christ, the feudal system came to an end. One aggressive state gradually swallowed up all the others; and under the rule of its sovereign, China became once more an empire, and such it has ever since remained. But although always an empire, the throne, during the past two thousand years, has passed many times from one house to another.

The extraordinary man who led his state to victory over each rival in turn, and ultimately mounted the throne to rule over a united China, finds his best historical counterpart in Napoleon. He called himself the First Emperor, and began by sending an army of 300,000 men to fight against an old and dreaded enemy on the north, recently identified

beyond question with the Huns. He dispatched a fleet to search for some mysterious islands off the coast, thought by some to be the islands which form Japan. He built the Great Wall, to a great extent by means of convict labour, malefactors being condemned to long terms of penal servitude on the works. His copper coinage was so uniformly good that the cowry disappeared altogether from commerce during his reign. Above all things he desired to impart a fresh stimulus to literary effort, but he adopted singularly unfortunate means to secure this desirable end; for, listening to the insidious flattery of courtiers, he determined that literature should begin anew with his reign. He therefore determined to destroy all existing books, finally deciding to spare those connected with three important departments of human knowledge: namely, (1) works which taught the people to plough, sow, reap, and provide food for the race; (2) works on the use of drugs and on the healing art; and (3) works on the various methods of foretelling the future which might lead men to act in accordance with, and not in opposition to, the eternal fitness of things as seen in the operations of Nature. Stringent orders were issued accordingly, and many scholars were put to death for concealing

books in the hope that the storm would blow over. Numbers of valuable works perished in a vast conflagration of books, and the only wonder is that any were preserved, with the exception of the three classes specified above.

In 210 B.C. the First Emperor died, and his youngest son was placed upon the throne with the title of Second Emperor. The latter began by carrying out the funeral arrangements of his father, as described about a century later by the first and greatest of China's historians :—

"In the 9th moon the First Emperor was buried in Mount Li, which in the early days of his reign he had caused to be tunnelled and prepared with that view. Then, when he had consolidated the empire, he employed his soldiery, to the number of 700,000, to bore down to the Three Springs (that is, until water was reached), and there a firm foundation was laid and the sarcophagus placed thereon. Rare objects and costly jewels were collected from the palaces and from the various officials, and were carried thither and stored in huge quantities. Artificers were ordered to construct mechanical crossbows, which, if any one were to enter,

would immediately discharge their arrows. With the aid of quicksilver, rivers were made —the Yangtsze, the Yellow River, and the great ocean—the metal being made to flow from one into the other by machinery. On the roof were delineated the constellations of the sky, on the floor the geographical divisions of the earth. Candles were made from the fat of the man-fish (walrus), calculated to last for a very long time. The Second Emperor said: 'It is not fitting that the concubines of my late father who are without children should leave him now;' and accordingly he ordered them to accompany the dead monarch to the next world, those who thus perished being many in number. When the interment was completed, some one suggested that the workmen who had made the machinery and concealed the treasure knew the great value of the latter, and that the secret would leak out. Therefore, so soon as the ceremony was over, and the path giving access to the sarcophagus had been blocked up at its innermost end, the outside gate at the entrance to this path was let fall, and the mausoleum was effectually closed, so that not one of the workmen escaped. Trees and grass were then planted around, that the spot might look like the rest of the mountain."

The career of the Second Emperor finds an apt parallel in that of Richard Cromwell, except that the former was put to death, after a short and inglorious reign. Then followed a dynasty which has left an indelible mark upon the civilization as well as on the recorded history of China. A peasant, by mere force of character, succeeded after a three-years' struggle in establishing himself upon the throne, 206 B.C., and his posterity, known as the House of Han, ruled over China for four hundred years, accidentally divided into two nearly equal portions by the Christian era, about which date there occurred a temporary usurpation of the throne which for some time threatened the stability of the dynasty in the direct line of succession. To this date, the more northern Chinese have no prouder title than that of a " son of Han."

During the whole period of four hundred years the empire cannot be said to have enjoyed complete tranquillity either at home or abroad. There were constant wars with the Tartar tribes on the north, against whom the Great Wall proved to be a somewhat ineffectual barrier. Also with the Huns, the forbears of the Turks, who once succeeded in shutting up the founder of the dynasty in one of his own cities, from which he only

escaped by a stratagem to be related in another connexion. There were in addition wars with Korea, the ultimate conquest of which led to the discovery of Japan, then at a low level of civilization and unable to enter into official relations with China until A.D. 57, when an embassy was sent for the first time. Those who are accustomed to think of the Chinese as an eminently unwarlike nation will perhaps be surprised to hear that before the end of the second century B.C. they had carried their victorious arms far away into Central Asia, annexing even the Pamirs and Kokand to the empire. The wild tribes of modern Yünnan were reduced to subjection, and their territory may further be considered as added from about this period.

At home, the eunuchs gave an immense deal of trouble by their restless spirit of intrigue; besides which, for nearly twenty years the Imperial power was in the hands of a famous usurper, named Wang Mang (pronounced *Wahng Mahng*), who had secured it by the usual means of treachery and poison, to lose it on the battle-field and himself to perish shortly afterwards in a revolt of his own soldiery. But the most remarkable of all events connected with the Han dynasty was the extended revival of learning and

authorship. Texts of the Confucian Canon were rescued from hiding-places in which they had been concealed at the risk of death; editing committees were appointed, and immense efforts were made to repair the mischief sustained by literature at the hands of the First Emperor. The scholars of the day expounded the teachings of Confucius as set forth in these texts; and although their explanations were set aside in the twelfth century, when an entirely new set of interpretations became (and remain) the accepted standard for all students, it is mostly due to those early efforts that the Confucian Canon has exercised such a deep and lasting influence over the minds of the Chinese people. Unfortunately, it soon became the fashion to discover old texts, and many works are now in circulation which have no claim whatever to the antiquity to which they pretend.

During the four hundred years of Han supremacy the march of civilization went steadily forward. Paper and ink were invented, and also the camel's-hair brush, both of which gave a great impetus to the arts of writing and painting, the latter being still in a very elementary stage. The custom of burying slaves with the dead was abolished early in the dynasty. The twenty-seven

months of mourning for parents—nominally three years, as is now again the rule—was reduced to a more manageable period of twenty-seven days. Literary degrees were first established, and perpetual hereditary rank was conferred upon the senior descendant of Confucius in the male line, which has continued in unbroken succession down to the present day. The head of the Confucian clan is now a duke, and resides in a palace, taking rank with, if not before, the highest provincial authorities.

The extended military campaigns in Central Asia during this period brought China into touch with Bactria, then an outlying province of ancient Greece. From this last source, the Chinese learnt many things which are now often regarded as of purely native growth. They imported the grape, and made from it a wine which was in use for many centuries, disappearing only about two or three hundred years ago. Formerly dependent on the sun-dial alone, the Chinese now found themselves in possession of the water-clock, specimens of which are still to be seen in full working order, whereby the division of the day into twelve two-hour periods was accurately determined. The calendar was regulated anew, and the science of music was reconstructed; in fact,

modern Chinese music may be said to approximate closely to the music of ancient Greece. Because of the difference of scale, Chinese music does not make any appeal to Western ears; at any rate, not in the sense in which it appealed to Confucius, who has left it on record that after listening to a certain melody he was so affected as not to be able to taste meat for three months.

CHAPTER II

LAW AND GOVERNMENT

In the earliest ages of which history professes to take cognizance, persons who wished to dispose of their goods were obliged to have recourse to barter. By and by shells were adopted as a medium of exchange, and then pieces of stamped silk, linen, and deerskin. These were followed by circular discs of copper, pierced with a round hole, the forerunners of the ordinary copper coins of a century or two later, which had square holes, and bore inscriptions, as they still do in the present day. Money was also cast in the shape of "knives" and of "trousers," by which names specimens of this early coinage (mostly fakes) are known to connoisseurs. Some of these were beautifully finished, and even inlaid with gold. Early in the ninth century, bills of exchange came into use; and from the middle of the twelfth century paper money became quite common, and is still in general use all over China, notes being issued in some places for amounts less even than a shilling.

Measures of length and capacity were fixed by the Chinese after an exceedingly simple process. The grain of millet, which is fairly uniform in size, was taken as the unit of both. Ten of these grains, laid end-ways, formed the inch, ten of which made a foot, and ten feet a *chang*. The decimal system has always prevailed in China, with one curious exception: sixteen ounces make a pound. How this came to be so does not appear to be known; but in this case it is the pound which is the unit of weight, and not the lower denomination. The word which for more than twenty centuries has signified "pound" to the Chinese, was originally the rude picture of an axe-head; and there is no doubt that axe-heads, being all of the same size, were used in weighing commodities, and were subsequently split, for convenience' sake, into sixteen equal parts, each about one-third heavier than the English ounce. For measures of capacity, we must revert to the millet-grain, a fixed number of which set the standard for Chinese pints and quarts. The result of this rule-of-thumb calculation has been that weights and measures vary all over the empire, although there actually exist an official foot, pound and pint, as recognized by the Chinese government. In one and the same city a tailor's foot will differ

from a carpenter's foot, an oilman's pint from a spirit-merchant's pint, and so on. The final appeal is to local custom.

With the definitive establishment of the monarchy, two hundred years before the Christian era, a system of government was inaugurated which has proceeded, so far as essentials are concerned, upon almost uniform lines down to the present day.

It is an ancient and well-recognized principle in China, that every inch of soil belongs to the sovereign; consequently, all land is held on consideration of a land-tax payable to the emperor, and so long as this tax is forthcoming, the land in question is practically freehold, and can be passed by sale from hand to hand for a small conveyancing fee to the local authorities who stamp the deeds. Thus, the foreign concessions or settlements in China were not sold or parted with in any way by the Chinese; they were "leased in perpetuity" so long as the ground-rent is paid, and remain for all municipal and such purposes under the uncontrolled administration of the nation which leased them. The land-tax may be regarded as the backbone of Chinese finance; but although nominally collected at a fixed rate, it is subject to fluctuations due to bad harvests and like visita-

tions, in which cases the tax is accepted at a lower rate, in fact at any rate the people can afford to pay.

The salt and other monopolies, together with the customs, also contribute an important part of China's revenue. There is the old native customs service, with its stations and barriers all over the empire, and the foreign customs service, as established at the treaty ports only, in order to deal with shipments on foreign vessels trading with China. The traditional and well-marked lines of taxation are freely accepted by the people; any attempt, however, to increase the amounts to be levied, or to introduce new charges of any kind, unless duly authorized by the people themselves, would be at once sternly resisted. As a matter of fact, the authorities never run any such risks. It is customary, when absolutely necessary, and possibly desirable, to increase old or to introduce new levies, for the local authorities to invite the leading merchants and others concerned to a private conference; and only when there is a general consent of all parties do the officials venture to put forth proclamations saying that such and such a tax will be increased or imposed, as the case may be. Any other method may lead to dis-

astrous results. The people refuse to pay; and coercion is met at once by a general closing of shops and stoppage of trade, or, in more serious cases, by an attack on the official residence of the offending mandarin, who soon sees his house looted and levelled with the ground. In other words, the Chinese people tax themselves.

The nominal form of government, speaking without reference to the new constitution which will be dealt with later on, is an irresponsible autocracy; its institutions are likewise autocratic in form, but democratic in operation. The philosopher, Mencius (372–289 B.C.), placed the people first, the gods second, and the sovereign third, in the scale of national importance; and this classification has sunk deep into the minds of the Chinese during more than two thousand years past. What the people in China will not stand is injustice; at the same time they will live contentedly under harsh laws which they have at one time or another imposed upon themselves.

Each of the great dynasties has always begun with a Penal Code of its own, based upon that of the outgoing dynasty, but tending to be more and more humane in character as time goes on. The punishments in old

days were atrocious in their severity; the Penal Code of the present dynasty, which came into force some two hundred and fifty years ago, has been pronounced by competent judges to take a very high rank indeed. It was introduced to replace a much harsher code which had been in operation under the Ming dynasty, and contains the nominally immutable statute laws of the empire, with such modifications and restrictions as have been authorized from time to time by Imperial edict. Still farther back in Chinese history, we come upon punishments of ruthless cruelty, such as might be expected to prevail in times of lesser culture and refinement. Two thousand years ago, the Five Punishments were—branding on the forehead, cutting off the nose, cutting off the feet, mutilation, and death; for the past two hundred and fifty years, these have been—beating with the light bamboo, beating with the heavy bamboo, transportation for a certain period, banishment to a certain distance, and death, the last being subdivided into strangling and decapitation, according to the gravity of the offence.

Two actual instruments of torture are mentioned, one for compressing the anklebones, and the other for squeezing the fingers,

to be used if necessary to extort a confession in charges of robbery and homicide, confession being regarded as essential to the completion of the record. The application, however, of these tortures is fenced round in such a way as to impose great responsibility upon the presiding magistrate; and in addition to the risk of official impeachment, there is the more dreaded certainty of loss of influence and of popular esteem. Mention is made in the code of the so-called "lingering death," according to which first one arm is chopped off, then the other; the two legs follow in the same way; two slits are made on the breast, and the heart is torn out; decapitation finishes the proceedings. It is worthy of note that, although many foreigners have been present from time to time at public executions, occasionally when the "lingering death" has been announced, not one has established it as a fact beyond a doubt that such a process has ever been carried out. Not only that; it is also well known that condemned criminals are allowed to purchase of themselves, or through their friends, if they have any, spirits or opium with which to fortify their courage at the last moment. There is indeed a tradition that stupefying drinks are served out by the

officials to the batches of malefactors as they pass to the execution ground at Peking. It would still remain to find executioners capable of performing in cold blood such a disgusting operation as the "lingering death" is supposed to be. The ordinary Chinaman is not a fiend; he does not gloat in his peaceful moments, when not under the influence of extreme excitement, over bloodshed and cruelty.

The generally lenient spirit in which the Penal Code of China was conceived is either widely unknown, or very often ignored. For instance, during the excessive summer heats certain punishments are mitigated, and others remitted altogether. Prompt surrender and acknowledgment of an offence, before it is otherwise discovered, entitles the offender, with some exceptions, to a full and free pardon; as also does restitution of stolen property to its owner by a repentant thief; while a criminal guilty of two or more offences can be punished only to the extent of the principal charge. Neither are the near relatives, nor even the servants, of a guilty man, punishable for concealing his crime and assisting him to escape. Immense allowances are made for the weakness of human nature, in all of which may be detected the tempering

doctrines of the great Sage. A feudal baron was boasting to Confucius that in his part of the country the people were so upright that a son would give evidence against a father who had stolen a sheep. "With us," replied Confucius, "the father screens the son, and the son screens the father; that is real uprightness." To another questioner, a man in high authority, who complained of the number of thieves, the Master explained that this was due to the greed of the upper classes. "But for this greed," he added, "even if you paid people to steal, they would not do so." To the same man, who inquired his views on capital punishment, Confucius replied: "What need is there for capital punishment at all? If your aims are worthy, the people also will be worthy."

There are many other striking features of the Penal Code. No marriage, for instance, may be contracted during the period of mourning for parents, which in theory extends to three full years, but in practice is reckoned at twenty-seven months; neither may musical instruments be played by near relatives of the dead. During the same period, no mandarin may hold office, but must retire into private life; though the observance of this rule is often dispensed with in the case

of high officials whose presence at their posts may be of considerable importance. In such cases, by special grace of the emperor, the period of retirement is cut down to three months, or even to one.

The death of an emperor is followed by a long spell of national tribulation. For one hundred days no man may have his head shaved, and no woman may wear head ornaments. For twelve months there may be no marrying or giving in marriage among the official classes, a term which is reduced to one hundred days for the public at large. The theatres are supposed to remain closed for a year, but in practice thay shut only for one hundred days. Even thus great hardships are entailed upon many classes of the community, especially upon actors and barbers, who might be in danger of actual starvation but for the common-sense of their rulers coupled with the common rice-pot at home.

The law forbidding marriage between persons of the same surname is widely, but not universally, in operation. No Smith may marry a Smith; no Jones may marry a Jones; the reason of course being that all of the same surname are regarded as members of the same family. However, there are large

districts in certain parts of China where the people are one and all of the same surname, and where it would be a great hardship—not to mention the impossibility of enforcing the law—if intermarriages of the kind were prohibited. Consequently, they are allowed, but only if the contracting parties are so distantly related that, according to the legal table of affinity, they would not wear mourning for one another in case of death—in other words, not related at all. The line of descent is now traced through the males, but there is reason to believe that in early days, as is found to be often the case among uncivilized tribes, the important, because more easily recognizable, parent was the mother. Thus it is illegal for first cousins of the same surname to marry, and legal if the surnames are different; in the latter case, however, centuries of experience have taught the Chinese to frown upon such unions as undesirable in the extreme.

The Penal Code forbids water burial, and also cremation; but it is permitted to the children of a man dying at a great distance to consume their father's corpse with fire if positively unable to bring it back for ordinary burial in his native district. The idea is that with the aid of fire immediate

communication is set up with the spirit-world, and that the spirit of the deceased is thus enabled to reach his native place, which would be impossible were the corpse to remain intact. Hence the horror of dying abroad, common to all Chinese, and only faced if there is a reasonable probability that their remains will be carried back to the ancestral home.

In spite of the above law, the cremation of Buddhist priests is universal, and the practice is tolerated without protest. Priests who are getting on in years, or who are stricken with a mortal disease, are compelled by rule to move into a certain part of their monastery, known as the Abode of a Long Old Age, in which they are required—not to die, for death does not come to a good priest, but—to enter into Nirvāna, which is a sublime state of conscious freedom from all mental and physical disturbance, not to be adequately described in words. At death, the priest is placed in a chair, his chin supported by a crutch, and then put into a wooden box, which on the appointed day is carried in procession, with streaming banners, through the monastery, and out into the cremation-ground attached, his brother priests chanting all the while that portion of the Buddhist liturgies set

apart as the service for the dead, but which being in Pāli, not a single one of them can understand. There have, of course, been many highly educated priests at one time and another during the long reign of Buddhism in China; but it is safe to say that they are no longer to be met with at the present day. The Buddhist liturgies have been written out in Chinese characters which reproduce the sounds of the original Indian language, and these the priests learn by heart without understanding a word of the meaning. The box with the dead man in it is now hoisted to the top of a funeral pyre, which has been well drenched with oil, and set alight; and when the fire has burnt out, the ashes are reverently collected and placed in an urn, which is finally deposited in a mausoleum kept for that purpose.

Life is remarkably safe in China. No man can be executed until his name has been submitted to the emperor, which of course means to his ministers at the capital. The Chinese, however, being, as has been so often stated, an eminently practical people, understand that certain cases admit of no delay; and to prevent the inevitable lynching of such criminals as kidnappers, rebels, and others, caught red-handed, high officials are entrusted

with the power of life and death, which they can put into immediate operation, always taking upon themselves full responsibility for their acts. The essential is to allay any excitement of the populace, and to preserve the public peace.

In the general administration of the law great latitude is allowed, and injustice is rarely inflicted by a too literal interpretation of the Code. Stealing is of course a crime, yet no Chinese magistrate would dream of punishing a hungry man for simple theft of food, even if such a case were ever brought into court. Cake-sellers keep a sharp eye on their wares; farmers and market-gardeners form associations for mutual protection, and woe to the thief who gets caught—his punishment is short and sharp. Litigation is not encouraged, even by such facilities as ought to be given to persons suffering wrongs; there is no bar, or legal profession, and persons who assist plaintiffs or defendants in the conduct of cases, are treated with scant courtesy by the presiding magistrate and are lucky if they get off with nothing worse. The majority of commercial cases come before the guilds, and are settled without reference to the authorities. The ordinary Chinese dread a court of justice, as a place in which both

parties manage to lose something. "It is not the big devil," according to the current saying, "but the little devils" who frighten the suitor away. This is because official servants receive no salary, but depend for their livelihood on perquisites and tips; and the Chinese suitor, who is a party to the system, readily admits that it is necessary "to sprinkle a little water."

Neither do any officials in China, high or low, receive salaries, although absurdly inadequate sums are allocated by the Government for that purpose, for which it is considered prudent not to apply. The Chinese system is to some extent the reverse of our own. Our officials collect money and pay it into the Treasury, from which source fixed sums are returned to them as salaries. In China, the occupants of petty posts collect revenue in various ways, as taxes or fees, pay themselves as much as they dare, and hand up the balance to a superior officer, who in turn pays himself in the same sense, and again hands up the balance to his superior officer. When the viceroy of a province is reached, he too keeps what he dares, sending up to the Imperial exchequer in Peking just enough to satisfy the powers above him. There is thus a continual check by the higher grade

upon the lower, but no check on such extortion as might be practised upon the tax-payer. The tax-payer sees to that himself. Speaking generally, it may be said that this system, in spite of its unsatisfactory character, works fairly well. Few officials overstep the limits which custom has assigned to their posts, and those who do generally come to grief. So that when the dishonesty of the Chinese officials is held up to reprobation, it should always be remembered that the financial side of their public service is not surrounded with such formalities and safeguards as to make robbery of public money difficult, if not almost impossible. It is, therefore, all the more cheering when we find, as is frequently the case, retiring or transferred mandarins followed by the good wishes and affection of the people over whom they have been set to rule.

Until quite recently, there has been no such thing in China as municipal administration and rating, and even now such methods are only being tentatively introduced in large cities where there are a number of foreign residents. Occupants of houses are popularly supposed to "sweep the snow from their own doorsteps," but the repair of roads, bridges, drains, etc., has always been left to the casual philanthropy of wealthy individuals,

who take these opportunities of satisfying public opinion in regard to the obligations of the rich towards the poor. Consequently, Chinese cities are left without efficient lighting, draining, or scavengering; and it is astonishing how good the health of the people living under these conditions can be. There is no organized police force; but cities are divided into wards, and at certain points barriers are drawn across the streets at night, with perhaps one watchman to each. It is not considered respectable to be out late at night, and it is not safe to move about without a lantern, which is carried, for those who can afford the luxury, by a servant preceding them.

One difference between life in China and life in this country may be illustrated to a certain extent in the following way. Supposing a traveller, passing through an English village, to be hit on the head by a stone. Unless he can point out his assailant, the matter is at an end. In China, all the injured party has to do is to point out the village—or, if a town, the ward—in which he was assaulted. Then the headman of such town or ward is summoned before the authorities and fined, proportionately to the offence, for allowing rowdy behaviour in his

district. The headman takes good care that he does not pay the fine himself. In the same way, parents are held responsible for the acts of their children, and householders for those of their servants.

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND SUPERSTITION

THE Chinese are emphatically not a religious people, though they are very superstitious. Belief in a God has come down from the remotest ages, but the old simple creed has been so overlaid by Buddhism as not to be discernible at the present day. Buddhism is now the dominant religion of China. It is closely bound up with the lives of the people, and is a never-failing refuge in sickness or worldly trouble. It is no longer the subtle doctrine which was originally presented to the people of India, but something much more clearly defined and appreciable by the plainest intellect. Buddha is the saviour of the people through righteousness alone, and Buddhist saints are popularly supposed to possess intercessory powers. Yet reverence is always wanting; and crowds will laugh and talk, and buy and sell sweetmeats, in a Buddhist temple, before the very eyes of the most sacred images. So long as divine intervention is not required, an ordinary Chinaman is content

to neglect his divinities; but no sooner does sickness or financial trouble come upon the family, than he will hurry off to propitiate the gods.

He accomplishes this through the aid of the priests, who receive his offerings of money, and light candles or incense at the shrine of the deity to be invoked. Buddhist priests are not popular with the Chinese, who make fun of their shaven heads, and doubt the sincerity of their convictions as well as the purity of their lives. "No meat nor wine may enter here" is a legend inscribed at the gate of most Buddhist temples, the ordinary diet as served in the refectory being strictly vegetarian. A tipsy priest, however, is not an altogether unheard-of combination, and has provided more than one eminent artist with a subject for an interesting picture.

Yet the ordeal through which a novice must pass before being admitted to holy orders is a severe tax upon nerve and endurance. In the process of a long ritual, at least three, and even so many as nine, pastilles are placed upon the bald scalp of the head. These are then lighted, and allowed to burn down into the skin until permanent scars have been formed, the unfortunate novice being supported on both sides by priests who encourage

him all the time to bear what must be excruciating pain. The fully qualified priest receives a diploma, on the strength of which he may demand a day and a night's board and lodging from the priests of any temple all over the empire.

At a very early date Buddhism had already taken a firm hold on the imagination of Chinese poets and painters, the latter of whom loved to portray the World-honoured One in a dazzling hue of gold. A poet of the eighth century A.D., who realized for the first time the inward meaning of the Law, as it is called, ended a panegyric on Buddhism with the following lines :—

> O thou pure Faith, had I but known thy scope,
> The Golden God had long since been my hope!

Taoism is a term often met with in books about China. We are told that the three religions of the people are Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, this being the order of precedence assigned to them in A.D. 568. Confucianism is of course not a religion at all, dealing as it does with duty towards one's neighbour and the affairs of this life only; and it will be seen that Taoism, in its true sense, has scarcely a stronger claim. At a very remote day, some say a thousand, and others

six hundred, years before the Christian era, there flourished a wise man named Lao Tzŭ, which may be approximately pronounced as *Loudza* (*ou* as in *loud*), and understood to mean the Old Philosopher. He was a very original thinker, and a number of his sayings have been preserved to us by ancient authors, whom they had reached by tradition; that is to say, the Old Philosopher never put his doctrines into book form. There is indeed in existence a work which passes under his name, but it is now known to be a forgery, and is generally discarded by scholars.

The great flaw in the teaching of the Old Philosopher was its extremely unpractical character, its unsuitability to the needs of men and women engaged in the ordinary avocations of life. In one sense he was an Anarchist, for he held that the empire would fare better if there were no government at all, the fact being that violence and disorder had always been conspicuous even under the best rulers. Similarly, he argued that we should get along more profitably with less learning, because then there would be fewer thieves, successful thieving being the result of mental training. It is not necessary to follow him to his most famous doctrine, namely, that of doing nothing, by which

means, he declared, everything could be done, the solution of which puzzle he left everybody to find out for himself. Among his quaint sayings will be found several maxims of a very different class, as witness his injunction, "Requite evil with kindness," and "Mighty is he who conquers himself." Of the latter, the following illustration is given by a commentator. Two men meeting in the street, one said to the other, "How fat you have grown!" "Yes," replied his friend, "I have lately won a battle." "What do you mean?" inquired the former. "Why, you see," said the latter, "so long as I was at home, reading about ancient kings, I admired nothing but virtue; then, when I went out of doors, I was attracted by the charms of wealth and power. These two feelings fought inside me, and I began to lose flesh; but now love of virtue has conquered, and I am fat."

The teachings of the Old Philosopher were summed up in the word *Tao*, pronounced as *tou(t)*, which originally meant a road, a way; and as applied to doctrines means simply the right way or path of moral conduct, in which mankind should tread so as to lead correct and virtuous lives. Later on, when Buddhism was introduced, this Taoism, with all its paradoxes and subtleties, to which alchemy and

the concoction of an elixir of life had been added, gradually began to lose its hold upon the people; and in order to stem the tide of opposition, temples and monasteries were built, a priesthood was established in imitation of the Buddhists, and all kinds of ceremonies and observances were taken from Buddhism, until, at the present day, only those who know can tell one from the other.

Although alchemy, which was introduced from Greece, via Bactria, in the second century B.C., has long ceased to interest the Chinese public, who have found out that gold is more easily made from the sweat of the brow than from copper or lead; and although only a few silly people now believe that any mixture of drugs will produce an elixir of life, able to confer immortality upon those who drink it; nevertheless, Taoism still professes to teach the art of extending life, if not indefinitely, at any rate to a considerable length. This art would probably go some way towards extending life under any circumstances, for it consists chiefly in deep and regular breathing, preferably of morning air, in swallowing the saliva three times in every two hours, in adopting certain positions for the body and limbs, which are also strengthened by gymnastic exercises, and finally, as borrowed from

the Buddhists, in remaining motionless for some hours a day, the eyes shut, and the mind abstracted as much as possible from all surrounding influences. The upshot of these and other practices is the development of "the pure man," on which Chuang Tzŭ (*Chwongdza*), a Taoist philosopher of the third and fourth centuries B.C., to be mentioned again, writes as follows: "But what is a pure man? The pure men of old acted without calculation, not seeking to secure results. They laid no plans. Therefore, failing, they had no cause for regret; succeeding, no cause for congratulation. And thus they could scale heights without fear; enter water without becoming wet, and fire without feeling hot. The pure men of old slept without dreams, and waked without anxiety. They ate without discrimination, breathing deep breaths. For pure men draw breath from their heels; the vulgar only from their throats."

Coupled with what may be called intellectual Taoism, as opposed to the grosser form under which this faith appeals to the people at large, is a curious theory that human life reaches the earth from some extraordinarily dazzling centre away in the depths of space, "beyond the range of conceptions." This centre ap-

pears to be the home of eternal principles, the abode of a First Cause, where perfectly spotless and pure beings "drink of the spiritual and feed on force," and where likeness exists without form. To get back to that state should be the object of all men, and this is only to be attained by a process of mental and physical purification prolonged through all conditions of existence. Then, when body and soul are fitted for the change, there comes what ordinary mortals call death; and the pure being closes his eyes, to awake forthwith in his original glory from the sleep which mortals call life.

For many centuries Buddhism and Taoism were in bitter antagonism. Sometimes the court was Buddhist, sometimes Taoist; first one faith was suppressed altogether, then the other; in A.D. 574 both were abolished in deference to Confucianism, which, however, no emperor has ever dared to interfere with seriously. At present, all the "three religions" flourish happily side by side.

The Chinese believe firmly in the existence of spirits, which they classify simply as good and evil. They do not trouble their heads much about the former, but they are terribly afraid of the latter. Hideous devils infest dark corners, and lie in wait to injure unfor-

tunate passers-by, often for no cause whatever. The spirits of persons who have been wronged are especially dreaded by those who have done the wrong. A man who has been defrauded of money will commit suicide, usually by poison, at the door of the wrongdoer, who will thereby first fall into the hands of the authorities, and if he escapes in that quarter, will still have to count with the injured ghost of his victim. A daughter-in-law will drown or hang herself to get free from, and also to avenge, the tyranny or cruelty of her husband's mother. These acts lead at once to family feuds, which sometimes end in bloodshed; more often in money compensation; and the known risk of such contingencies operates as a wholesome check upon aggressive treatment of the weak by the strong.

Divination and fortune-telling have always played a conspicuous part in ordinary Chinese life. Wise men, of the magician type, sit at stalls in street and market-place, ready for a small fee to advise those who consult them on any enterprise to be undertaken, even of the most trivial kind. The omens can be taken in various ways, as by calculation based upon books, of which there is quite a literature, or by drawing lots inscribed with mystic signs, to be interpreted by the fortune-teller. Even

at Buddhist temples may be found two kidney-shaped pieces of wood, flat on one side and round on the other, which are thrown into the air before an altar, the results—two flats, two rounds, or one of each—being interpreted as unfavourable, medium, and very favourable, respectively.

Of all Chinese superstitions, the one that has been most persistent, and has exerted the greatest influence upon national life, is the famous Wind-and-Water system (*fêng shui*) of geomancy. According to the principles which govern this system, and of which quite a special literature exists, the good or evil fortunes of individuals and the communities are determined by the various physical aspects and conditions which surround their everyday life. The shapes of hills, the presence or absence of water, the position of trees, the height of buildings, and so forth, are all matters of deep consideration to the professors of the geomantic art, who thrive on the ignorance of superstitious clients. They are called in to select propitious sites for houses and graves; and it often happens that if the fortunes of a family are failing, a geomancer will be invited to modify in some way the arrangement of the ancestral graveyard. Houses in a Chinese street are never

built up so as to form a line of uniform height; every now and again one house must be a little higher or a little lower than its neighbour, or calamity will certainly ensue. It is impossible to walk straight into an ordinary middle-class dwelling-house. Just inside the front door there will be a fixed screen, which forces the visitor to turn to the right or to the left; the avowed object being to exclude evil spirits, which can only move in straight lines.

Mention of the ancestral graveyard brings to mind the universal worship of ancestors, which has been from time immemorial such a marked feature of Chinese religious life. At death, the spirit of a man or woman is believed to remain watching over the material interests of the family to which the deceased had belonged. Offerings of various kinds, including meat and drink, are from time to time made to such a spirit, supposed to be particularly resident in an ancestral tablet which is preserved in the ancestral hall—or cupboard, as the case may be. These offerings are made for the special purpose of conciliating the spirit, and of obtaining in return a liberal share of the blessings and good things of this life. This is the essential feature of the rite, and this it is which makes the rite an act of worship pure and simple; so that only super-

ficial observers could make the mistake of classifying ancestral worship, as practised in China, with such acts as laying wreaths upon the tombs of deceased friends and relatives.

With reference to the spirit or soul, the Chinese have held for centuries past that the soul of every man is twofold; in a popular acceptation it is sometimes regarded as threefold. One portion is that which expresses the visible personality, and is permanently attached to the body; the other has the power of leaving the body, carrying with it an appearance of physical form, which accounts for a person being seen in two different places at once. Cases of catalepsy or trance are explained by the Chinese as the absence from the body of this portion of the soul, which is also believed to be expelled from the body by any violent shock or fright. There is a story of a man who was so terrified at the prospect of immediate execution that his separable soul left his body, and he found himself sitting on the eaves of a house, from which point he could see a man bound, and waiting for the executioner's sword. Just then, a reprieve arrived, and in a moment he was back again in his body. Mr. Edmund Gosse, who can hardly have been acquainted with the Chinese

view, told a similar story in his *Father and Son*: "During morning and evening prayers, which were extremely lengthy and fatiguing, I fancied that one of my two selves could flit up, and sit clinging to the cornice, and look down on my other self and the rest of us."

In some parts of China, planchette is frequently resorted to as a means of reading the future, and adapting one's actions accordingly. It is a purely professional performance, being carried through publicly before some altar in a temple, and payment made for the response. The question is written down on a piece of paper, which is burnt at the altar apparently before any one could gather knowledge of its contents; and the answer from the god is forthwith traced on a tray of sand, word by word, each word being obliterated to make room for the next, by two men, supposed to be ignorant of the question, who hold the ends of a V-shaped instrument from the point of which a little wooden pencil projects at right angles.

Another method of extracting information from the spirits of the unseen world is nothing more nor less than hypnotism, which has long been known to the Chinese, and is mentioned in literature so far back as the middle of the

seventeenth century. With all the paraphernalia of altar, candles, incense, etc., a medium is thrown into a hypnotic condition, during which his body is supposed to be possessed by a spirit, and every word he may utter to be divinely inspired. An amusing instance is recorded of a medium who, while under hypnotic influence, not only blurted out the pecuniary defalcations of certain men who had been collecting in aid of temple restoration, but went so far as to admit that he had had some of the money himself.

This same influence is also used in cases of serious illness, but always secretly, for such practices, as well as dark *séances* for communicating with spirits, are strictly forbidden by the Chinese authorities, who regard the employment of occult means as more likely to be subversive of morality than to do any good whatever to a sick person, or to any one else. All secret societies of any sort or kind are equally under the ban of the law, the assumption—a very justifiable one—being that the aim of these societies is to upset the existing order of political and social life. The Heaven-and-Earth Society is among the most famous, and the most dreaded, partly perhaps because it has never been entirely suppressed. The lodges of this fraternity, the oath of

fidelity, and the ceremonial of admission, remind one forcibly of Masonry in the West; but the points of contact are merely coincidences, and there does not appear to be any real connexion.

Among the most curious of all these institutions is the Golden Orchid Society, the girl-members of which swear never to marry, and not only threaten, but positively commit suicide upon any attempt at coercion. At one time this society became such a serious menace that the authorities were compelled to adopt severe measures of repression.

Another old-established society is that of the Vegetarians, who eat no meat and neither smoke nor drink. From their seemingly harmless ranks it is said that the Boxers of 1900 were largely recruited.

For nearly twenty-five centuries the Chinese have looked to Confucius for their morals. Various religions have appealed to the spiritual side of the Chinese mind, and Buddhism has obtained an ascendancy which will not be easily displaced; but through all this long lapse of time the morality of China has been under the guidance of their great teacher, Confucius (551–479 B.C.), affectionately known to them as the "uncrowned king," and recently raised to the rank of a god.

His doctrines, in the form sometimes of maxims, sometimes of answers to eager inquirers, were brought together after his death—we do not know exactly how soon—and have influenced first and last an enormous proportion of the human race. Confucius taught man's duty to his neighbour; he taught virtue for virtue's sake, and not for the hope of reward or fear of punishment; he taught loyalty to the sovereign as the foundation stone of national prosperity, and filial piety as the basis of all happiness in the life of the people. As a simple human moralist he saw clearly the limitations of humanity, and refused to teach his disciples to return good for evil, as suggested by the Old Philosopher, declaring without hesitation that evil should be met by justice. The first systematic writer of Chinese history, who died about 80 B.C., expressed himself on the position and influence of Confucius in terms which have been accepted as accurate for twenty centuries past: "Countless are the princes and prophets that the world has seen in its time—glorious in life, forgotten in death. But Confucius, though only a humble member of the cotton-clothed masses, remains with us after numerous generations. He is the model for such as would be wise. By all, from the Son of Heaven down to

the meanest student, the supremacy of his principles is freely and fully admitted. He may indeed be pronounced the divinest of men."

The Son of Heaven is of course the Emperor, who is supposed to be God's chosen representative on earth, and responsible for the right conduct and well-being of all committed to his care. Once every year he proceeds in state to the Temple of Heaven at Peking; and after the due performance of sacrificial worship he enters alone the central raised building with circular blue-tiled roof, and there places himself in communication with the Supreme Being, submitting for approval or otherwise his stewardship during the preceding twelve months. Chinese records go so far as to mention letters received from God. There is a legend of the sixth century A.D., which claims that God revealed Himself to a hermit in a retired valley, and bestowed on him a tablet of jade with a mysterious inscription. But there is a much more circumstantial account of a written communication which in A.D. 1008 descended from heaven upon Mount T'ai, the famous mountain in Shantung, where a temple has been built to mark the very spot. The emperor and his courtiers regarded this letter with profound reverence and awe, which

roused the ire of a learned statesman of the day. The latter pointed out that Confucius, when asked to speak, so that his disciples might have something to record, had bluntly replied: "Does God speak? The four seasons pursue their courses and all things are produced; but does God say anything?" Therefore, he argued, if God does not speak to us, still less will He write a letter.

The fact that the receipt of such a letter is mentioned in the dynastic history of the period must not be allowed to discredit in any way the general truth and accuracy of Chinese annals, which, as research progresses, are daily found to be far more trustworthy than was ever expected to be the case. We ourselves do not wholly reject the old contemporary chronicles of Hoveden and Roger of Wendover because they mention a letter from Christ on the neglect of the Sabbath.

In Chinese life, social and political alike, filial piety may be regarded as the keystone of the arch. Take that away, and the superstructure of centuries crumbles to the ground. When Confucius was asked by one of his disciples to explain what constituted filial piety, he replied that it was a difficult obligation to define; while to another disciple he was able to say without hesitation that the mere