ing the folded leaves of books; still more so, to employ it in the manufacture of soles for boots and shoes, though in such cases as these the weakness of human nature usually carries the day. Still, from the point of view of the Taoist faith, the risk is too serious to be overlooked. In the sixth of the ten Courts of Purgatory, through one or more of which sinners must pass after death in order to expiate their crimes on earth, provision is made for those who "scrape the gilding from the outside of images, take holy names in vain, show no respect for written paper, throw down dirt and rubbish near pagodas and temples, have in their possession blasphemous or obscene books and do not destroy them, obliterate or tear books which teach man to be good," etc., etc.

In this, the sixth Court, presided over, like all the others, by a judge, and furnished with all the necessary means and appliances for carrying out the sentences, there are sixteen different wards where different punishments are applied according to the gravity of the offence. The wicked shade may be sentenced to kneel for long periods on iron shot, or to be placed up to the neck in filth, or pounded till the blood runs out, or to have the mouth forced open with iron pincers and filled with

needles, or to be bitten by rats, or nipped by locusts while in a net of thorns, or have the heart scratched, or be chopped in two at the waist, or have the skin of the body torn off and rolled up into spills for lighting pipes, etc. Similar punishments are awarded for other crimes; and these are to be seen depicted on the walls of the municipal temple, to be found in every large city, and appropriately named the Chamber of Horrors. It is doubtful if such ghastly representations of what is to be expected in the next world have really any deterrent effect upon even the most illiterate of the masses; certainly not so long as health is present and things generally are going well. "The devil a monk" will any Chinaman be when the conditions of life are satisfactory to him.

As has already been stated, his temperament is not a religious one; and even the seductions and threats of Buddhism leave him to a great extent unmoved. He is perhaps chiefly influenced by the Buddhist menace of rebirth, possibly as a woman, or worse still as an animal. Belief in such a contingency may act as a mild deterrent under a variety of circumstances; it certainly tends to soften his treatment of domestic animals. Not only because he may some day become one himself, but also because

among the mules or donkeys which he has to coerce through long spells of exhausting toil, he may unwittingly be belabouring some friend or acquaintance, or even a member of his own particular family. This belief in rebirth is greatly strengthened by a large number of recorded instances of persons who could recall events which had happened in their own previous state of existence, and whose statements were capable of verification. Occasionally, people would accurately describe places and buildings which they could not have visited, while many would entertain a dim consciousness of scenes, sights and sounds, which seemed to belong to some other than the present life. There is a record of one man who could remember having been a horse, and who vividly recalled the pain he had suffered when riders dug their knees hard into his sides. This, too, in spite of the administration in Purgatory of a cup of forgetfulness, specially designed to prevent in those about to be reborn any remembrance of life during a previous birth.

After all, the most awful punishment inflicted in Purgatory upon sinners is one which, being purely mental, may not appeal so powerfully to the masses as the coarse tortures mentioned above. In the fifth Court, the souls of the

wicked are taken to a terrace from which they can hear and see what goes on in their old homes after their own deaths. "They see their last wishes disregarded, and their instructions disobeyed. The property they scraped together with so much trouble is dissipated and gone. The husband thinks of taking another wife; the widow meditates second nuptials. Strangers are in possession of the old estate; there is nothing to divide amongst the children. Debts long since paid are brought again for settlement, and the survivors are called upon to acknowledge false claims upon the departed. Debts owed are lost for want of evidence, with endless recriminations, abuse, and general confusion, all of which falls upon the three families—father's, mother's and wife's—connected with the deceased. These in their anger speak ill of him that is gone. He sees his children become corrupt, and friends fall away. Some, perhaps, may stroke the coffin and let fall a tear, departing quickly with a cold smile. Worse than that, the wife sees her husband tortured in gaol; the husband sees his wife a victim to some horrible disease, lands gone, houses destroyed by flood or fire, and everything in an unutterable plight —the reward of former sins."

Confucius declined absolutely to discuss the

supernatural in any form or shape, his one object being to improve human conduct in this life, without attempting to probe that state from which man is divided by death. At the same time, he was no scoffer; for although he declared that "the study of the supernatural is injurious indeed," and somewhat cynically bade his followers "show respect to spiritual beings, but keep them at a distance," yet in another passage we read: "He who offends against God has no one to whom he can pray." Again, when he was seriously ill, a disciple asked if he might offer up prayer. Confucius demurred to this, pointing out that he himself had been praying for a considerable perod; meaning thereby that his life had been one long prayer.

CHAPTER XII

THE OUTLOOK

THERE is a very common statement made by persons who have lived in China—among the people, but not of them—and the more superficial the acquaintance, the more emphatically is the statement made, that the ordinary Chinaman, be he prince or peasant, offers to the Western observer an insoluble puzzle in every department of his life. He is, in fact, a standing enigma; a human being, it may be granted, but one who can no more be classed than his unique monosyllabic language, which still stands isolated and alone.

This estimate is largely based upon some exceedingly false inferences. It seems to be argued that because, in a great many matters, the Chinaman takes a diametrically opposite view to our own, he must necessarily be a very eccentric fellow; but as these are mostly matters of convention, the argument is just as valid against us as against him. "Strange people, those foreigners," he may say, and actually does say; "they make their compass

point north instead of south. They take off their hats in company instead of keeping them on. They mount a horse on its left instead of on its right side. They begin dinner with soup instead of with dessert, and end it with dessert instead of with soup. They drink their wine cold instead of hot. Their books all open at the wrong end, and the lines in a page are horizontal instead of vertical. They put their guests on the right instead of on the left, though it is true that we did that until several hundred years ago. Their music, too, is so funny, it is more like noise; and as for their singing, it is only very loud talking. Then their women are so immodest; striding about in ball-rooms with very little on, and embracing strange men in a whirligig which they call dancing, but very unlike the dignified movements which our male dancers exhibit in the Confucian temple. Their men and women shake hands, though we know from our sacred Book of Rites that men and women should not even pass things from one to another, for fear their hands should touch. Then, again, all foreigners, sometimes the women also, carry sticks, which can only be for beating innocent people; and their so-called mandarins and others ride races and row boats, instead of having coolies to do these things for them. They are strange people

indeed; very clever at cunning, mechanical devices, such as fire-ships, fire-carriages, and air-cars; but extremely ferocious and almost entirely uncivilized."

Such would be a not exaggerated picture of the mental attitude of the Chinaman towards his enigma, the foreigner. From the Chinaman's imperturbable countenance the foreigner seeks in vain for some indications of a common humanity within; and simply because he has not the wit to see it, argues that it is not there. But there it is all the time. The principles of general morality, and especially of duty towards one's neighbour, the restrictions of law, and even the conventionalities of social life, upon all of which the Chinaman is more or less nourished from his youth upwards, remain, when accidental differences have been brushed away, upon a bed-rock of ground common to both East and West; and it is difficult to see how such teachings could possibly turn out a race of men so utterly in contrast with the foreigner as the Chinese are usually supposed to be. It is certain that anything like a full and sincere observance of the Chinese rules of life would result in a community of human beings far ahead of the "pure men" dreamt of in the philosophy of the Taoists.

As has already been either stated or suggested, the Chinese seem to be actuated by precisely the same motives which actuate other peoples. They delight in the possession of wealth and fame, while fully alive to the transitory nature of both. They long even more for posterity, that the ancestral line may be carried on unbroken. They find their chief pleasures in family life, and in the society of friends, of books, of mountains, of flowers, of pictures, and of objects dear to the collector and the connoisseur. Though a nation of what the Scotch would call "sober eaters," they love the banquet hour, and to a certain extent verify their own saying that "Man's heart is next door to his stomach." In centuries past a drunken nation, some two to three hundred years ago they began to come under the influence of opium, and the abuse of alcohol dropped to a minimum. Opium smoking, less harmful a great deal than opium eating, took the place of drink, and became the national vice; but the extent of its injury to the people has been much exaggerated, and is not to be compared with that of alcohol in the West. It is now, in consequence of recent legislation, likely to disappear, on which result there could be nothing but the warmest congratulations to offer, but for the

fact that something else, more insidious and more deadly still, is rapidly taking its place. For a time, it was thought that alcohol might recover its sway, and it is still quite probable that human cravings for stimulant of some kind will find a partial relief in that direction. The present enemy, however, and one that demands serious and immediate attention, is morphia, which is being largely imported into China in the shape of a variety of preparations suitable to the public demand. A passage from opium to morphia would be worse, if possible, than from the frying-pan into the fire.

The question has often been asked, but has never found a satisfactory answer, why and how it is that Chinese civilization has persisted through so many centuries, while other civilizations, with equal if not superior claims to permanency, have been broken up and have disappeared from the sites on which they formerly flourished. Egypt may be able to boast of a high level of culture at a remoter date than we can reach through the medium of Chinese records, for all we can honestly affirm is that the Chinese were a remarkably civilized nation a thousand years before Christ. That was some time before Greek civilization can be said to have begun; yet the Chinese

nation is with us still, and but for contact with the Western barbarian, would be leading very much the same life that it led so many centuries ago.

Some would have us believe that the bond which has held the people together is the written language, which is common to the whole Empire, and which all can read in the same sense, though the pronunciation of words varies in different provinces as much as that of words in English, French or German. Others have suggested that to the teachings of Confucius, which have outlived the competition of Taoism, Buddhism and other faiths, China is indebted for the tie which has knitted men's hearts together, and enabled them to defy any process of disintegration. There is possibly some truth in all such theories; but these are incomplete unless a considerable share of the credit is allowed to the spirit of personal freedom which seems to breathe through all Chinese institutions, and to unite the people in resistance to every form of oppression. The Chinese have always believed in the divine right of kings; on the other hand, their kings must bear themselves as kings, and live up to their responsibilities as well as to the rights they claim. Otherwise, the obligation is at an end, and their subjects

will have none of them. Good government exists in Chinese eyes only when the country is prosperous, free from war, pestilence and famine. Misgovernment is a sure sign that God has withdrawn His mandate from the emperor, who is no longer fit to rule. It then remains to replace the emperor by one who is more worthy of Divine favour, and this usually means the final overthrow of the dynasty.

The Chinese assert their right to put an evil ruler to death, and it is not high treason, or criminal in any way, to proclaim this principle in public. It is plainly stated by the philosopher Mencius, whose writings form a portion of the Confucian Canon, and are taught in the ordinary course to every Chinese youth. One of the feudal rulers was speaking to Mencius about a wicked emperor of eight hundred years back, who had been attacked by a patriot hero, and who had perished in the flames of his palace. "May then a subject," he asked, "put his sovereign to death?" To which Mencius replied that any one who did violence to man's natural charity of heart, or failed altogether in his duty towards his neighbour, was nothing more than an unprincipled ruffian; and he insinuated that it had been such a ruffian in fact, not an

emperor in the true sense of the term, who had perished in the case they were discussing. Another and most important point to be remembered in any attempt to discover the real secret of China's prolonged existence as a nation, also points in the direction of democracy and freedom. The highest positions in the state have always been open, through the medium of competitive examinations, to the humblest peasant in the empire. It is solely a question of natural ability coupled with an intellectual training; and of the latter, it has already been shown that there is no lack at the disposal even of the poorest. China, then, according to a high authority, has always been at the highest rung of the democratic ladder; for it was no less a person than Napoleon who said: "Reasonable democracy will never aspire to anything more than obtaining an equal power of elevation for all."

In order to enforce their rights by the simplest and most bloodless means, the Chinese have steadily cultivated the art of combining together, and have thus armed themselves with an immaterial, invisible weapon which simply paralyses the aggressor, and ultimately leaves them masters of the field. The extraordinary part of a Chinese boycott or strike is the absolute fidelity by which it is observed.

If the boatmen or chair-coolies at any place strike, they all strike; there are no blacklegs. If the butchers refuse to sell, they all refuse, entirely confident in each other's loyalty. Foreign merchants who have offended the Chinese guilds by some course of action not approved by those powerful bodies, have often found to their cost that such conduct will not be tolerated for a moment, and that their only course is to withdraw, sometimes at considerable loss, from the untenable position they had taken up. The other side of the medal is equally instructive. Some years ago, the foreign tea-merchants at a large port, in order to curb excessive charges, decided to hoist the Chinese tea-men, or sellers of tea, with their own petard. They organized a strict combination against the tea-men, whose tea no colleague was to buy until, by what seemed to be a natural order of events, the tea-men had been brought to their knees. The tea-men, however, remained firm, their countenances impassive as ever. Before long, the tea-merchants discovered that some of their number had broken faith, and were doing a roaring business for their own account, on the terms originally insisted on by the tea-men.

There is no longer any doubt that China

is now in the early stages of serious and important changes. Her old systems of education and examination are to be greatly modified, if not entirely remodelled. The distinctive Chinese dress is to be shorn of two of its most distinguishing features—the *queue* of the man and the small feet of the woman. The coinage is to be brought more into line with commercial requirements. The administration of the law is to be so improved that an honest demand may be made—as Japan made it some years back—for the abolition of extra-territoriality, a treaty obligation under which China gives up all jurisdiction over resident foreigners, and agrees that they shall be subject, civilly and criminally alike, only to their own authorities. The old patriarchal form of government, autocratic in name but democratic in reality, which has stood the Chinese people in such good stead for an unbroken period of nearly twenty-two centuries, is also to change with the changes of the hour, in the hope that a new era will be inaugurated, worthy to rank with the best days of a glorious past.

And here perhaps it may be convenient if a slight outline is given of the course marked out for the future. China is to have a "constitution" after the fashion of most

foreign nations; and her people, whose sole weapon of defence and resistance, albeit one of deadly efficiency, has hitherto been combination of the masses against the officials set over them, are soon to enjoy the rights of representative government. By an Imperial decree, issued late in 1907, this principle was established; and by a further decree, issued in 1908, it was ordered that at the end of a year provincial assemblies, to deliberate on matters of local government, were to be convened in all the provinces and certain other portions of the empire, as a first step towards the end in view. Membership of these assemblies was to be gained by election, coupled with a small property qualification; and the number of members in each assembly was to be in proportion to the number of electors in each area, which works out roughly at about one thousand electors to each representative. In the following year a census was to be taken, provincial budgets were to be drawn up, and a new criminal code was to be promulgated, on the strength of which new courts of justice were to be opened by the end of the third year. By 1917, there was to be a National Assembly or Parliament, consisting of an Upper and Lower House, and a prime minister was to be appointed.

On the 14th of October 1909 these provincial assemblies met for the first time. The National Assembly was actually opened on the 3rd of October 1910; and in response to public feeling, an edict was issued a month later ordering the full constitution to be granted within three years from date. It is really a single chamber, which contains the elements of two. It is composed of about one hundred members, appointed by the Throne and drawn from certain privileged classes, including thirty-two high officials and ten distinguished scholars, together with the same number of delegates from the provinces. Those who obtain seats are to serve for three years, and to have their expenses defrayed by the state. It is a consultative and not an executive body; its function is to discuss such subjects as taxation, the issue of an annual budget, the amendment of the law, etc., all of which subjects are to be approved by the emperor before being submitted to this assembly, and also to deal with questions sent up for decision from the provincial assemblies. Similarly, any resolution to be proposed must be backed by at least thirty members, and on being duly passed by a majority, must then be embodied in a memorial to the Throne. For passing and

submitting resolutions which may be classed under various headings as objectionable, the assembly can at once be dissolved by Imperial edict.

There are, so far, no distinct parties in the National Assembly, that is, as regards the places occupied in the House. Men of various shades of opinion, Radicals, Liberals and Conservatives, are all mixed up together. The first two benches are set aside for representatives of the nobility, with precedence from the left of the president round to his right. Then come officials, scholars and leading merchants on the next two benches. Behind them, again, on four rows of benches, are the delegates from the provincial assemblies. There is thus a kind of House of Lords in front, with a House of Commons, the representatives of the nation, at the back. The leanings of the former class, as might be supposed, are mostly of a conservative tendency, while the sympathies of the latter are rather with progressive ideas; at the same time, there will be found among the Lords a certain sprinkling of Radicals, and among the Commons not a few whose views are of an antiquated, not to say reactionary, type.

With the above scheme the Chinese people

are given to understand quite clearly that while their advice in matters concerning the administration of government will be warmly welcomed, all legislative power will remain, as heretofore, confined to the emperor alone. At the first blush, this seems like giving with one hand and taking away with the other; and so perhaps it would work out in more than one nation of the West. But those who know the Chinese at home know that when they offer political advice they mean it to be taken. The great democracy of China, living in the greatest republic the world has ever seen, would never tolerate any paltering with national liberties in the present or in the future, any more than has been the case in the past. Those who sit in the seats of authority at the capital are far too well acquainted with the temper of their countrymen to believe for a moment that, where such vital interests are concerned, there can be anything contemplated save steady and satisfactory progress towards the goal proposed. If the ruling Manchus seize the opportunity now offered them, then, in spite of simmering sedition here and there over the empire, they may succeed in continuing a line which in its early days had a glorious record of achievement, to the great advantage of the

Chinese nation. If, on the other hand, they neglect this chance, there may result one of those frightful upheavals from which the empire has so often suffered. China will pass again through the melting-pot, to emerge once more, as on all previous occasions, purified and strengthened by the process.

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