

greatest atrocities, until his evil actions recoiled upon himself. His wicked and unprincipled heart induced him to perpetrate a diabolical act in his own household, which so exasperated his son Moo-te, a lad only sixteen years of age, but in every way worthy of his sire, that while the former lay ill in bed, he abused him in foul language, murdered him, and then sent off a messenger to slay his brother, accompanied by a document he had forged in his father's name, setting forth that his brother, Yew-wan, was a rebellious and disobedient son, but that Moo-te was faithful and dutiful. The army was also thereby commanded to destroy Yew-wan, and to deliver the control of their actions and of the nation to Moo-te.

In the drawing up of this paper it is supposed that he had been aided by one of the leading generals. By liberal donations to the troops, and with the help of this instrument, he ascended the throne, and then wasted ten years in the most profligate manner, until, in the twenty-sixth year of his age, he committed suicide on hearing of the approach of an enemy who was marching towards his head-quarters to give him battle for his empire.

Thus terminated the After Liang Dynasty, and with its memories faded from my mind all external impressions, for I had launched into and was gently sailing along the margin of the Lethean Sea, when *whirr*—

The weak-eyed bat,
With short shrill shriek, flits by on leathern wing,

but not without giving me a thorough start-up, which nearly went to upset bed-board, manger, and occupant; completely alarmed my equine neighbours, and drew forth a stern round of grumbling, swearing, and ill-natured remarks from the Jehu. He sprung out of the cart to secure the animals, which broke away and went scampering over the place, then betook himself to the dormitory of the landlord and his

assistants in order to obtain the services of a watchman, as he seemed to dislike being disturbed, and was influenced by much nervous anxiety on the score of thieves and murderers.

Our nocturnal disturber, the bat, the emblem of longevity, painted and inscribed on lantern, congratulatory billet, funebreal garniture and household decoration, and entitled here:—the ‘heavenly mouse’ or ‘rat,’ the ‘fairy’ or ‘flying rat,’ the ‘night swallow,’ and the ‘belly wings,’ flies, it is affirmed, with its head downwards, because its brain is heavier than its body, and only ventures out when the cruel hawk it so dreads during the day has gone to its nest:—this little dusky visitor was but the *avant courier* of a small colony of the *Vespertilionidæ*, the various members of which came skimming and fluttering close to my face, and curled under the eaves of the huts in the most erratic and confused manner.

I watched them for a long time with sleepy admiration; for though the Chinese have given them such fantastic but not inappropriate names, they have not been made by them objects of superstitious reverence, nor have the repulsive habits of ‘Wandering Willie’ created any feelings of disgust or disfavour. When the Greeks borrowed their unprepossessing form to represent their terror-inspiring harpies, adding the demoniacal face of a woman; when, by the Mosaical law, the bat was classed among the forbidden and unclean animals; and when, in the middle ages, magicians, wizards, and ‘uncanny’ folk were believed to make it their confidant, and the evil one could not be fitly represented unless he had borrowed from them a pair of leathern wings, the sons of Fohi and Han had compassionately taken this harmless creature under their care. To preserve it from harm they clothed it in the traditional garb of antiquity, and made it the type of what is to them, perhaps, the most sacred and best courted of all other terrestrial, and, maybe, celestial favours in China—long life.

In spite of the heat, the steam, and the stench, the flickering motions of my nocturnal visitor became less and less frequent and interesting; the hollow-sounding click of the watchman's bamboo beater, produced by the terrified carter, grew fainter and less obtrusive; the hum of the mosquitos became rather pleasant than otherwise; the comet appeared to fade into thick fleecy clouds which descended earthwards, bringing with them a respireable atmosphere and balmy zephyrs to fan the feverish beings below, and—and I fell asleep—into a sleep as sound as that enjoyed by either of the seven noble youths of Ephesus, though not so long.

My repose was not extended to 187 years—or minutes. An unfriendly Chanticleer, perched on a beam not far from me, suddenly set up his *reveille* with most startling effect.

CHAPTER IV.

LONG BILLS — MOSQUITO TACTICS — RAISED VILLAGES AND LONELY COUNTRY — A WATERY DISTRICT — MILITARY STATION — CHINESE SOLDIERS, THEIR QUALITIES AND TRADITIONS — ENDURANCE OF PAIN — THE NUMBER-ONE DOCTOR — MA-YUEN, A CHINESE WARRIOR — DISCIPLINE, FIDELITY, CRUELTY TOWARDS PRISONERS — DEATH BEFORE DISHONOUR — THE AVERSION OF THE PEOPLE TO BEAR ARMS — IMPERIAL ARMIES — MILITARY INSTITUTIONS — OUR CO-TRAVELLERS — GREAT THIRST — HEADS OF THE PEOPLE — BEGGARDOM — HEARTLESS PILFERERS.

‘TA-MÍ, ta-mí! Shumah ta-mí?’ M.’s firm decided tone of voice roused me from as profound a sleep as mortal man could possibly desire in such an inhospitable hostelry, and to the consciousness of a stormy debate that was going on between him and the *soi-disant* master of the house, regarding the various items in a bill about three feet in length, at the same time that I became thoroughly aware of the filthiness of my *al fresco* bed-chamber. Though the daylight, in a leaden-grey complexion, was struggling hard to obtain an ascendancy over the stubborn gloom of the dawn, and surrounding objects were all but imperceptible, everybody was astir and busy. M. had been up for a long time, had seen the ponies fed, and was now beginning to practise the Mandarin tongue with a force and intentness of purpose that would have startled a dormouse. The particular matter in dispute at that moment seemed to be a novelty to him, as he kept repeating and inquiring about it, until I rejoiced to learn that it was only barley—the barley that had been given to our four-footed bed-fellows.

Rubbing my eyes, hot and painful as they felt from the yellow glare and smoky flame of the lamp, and scrambling

down from the hard board, booted and spurred, with legs cramped and head aching, I did not find the prospect of such an early getting-up at all cheering; but there was no help for it, and I longed to get a mouthful of good air. Another violent conflict of tongues ensued, when the total amount of our charge for the seven hours' entertainment was announced. It was the almost fabulous sum of 4,000 cash, equivalent to four dollars, or sixteen shillings and eightpence sterling! This was enough to make a small independence for any frugal Chinese to lend out at interest! So unconscionable a squeeze was not to be submitted to for such paltry accommodation.

M. was firm; the host was loquacious, urgent, and stiff-necked; but the former conquered, and something less than 2,000 of the base coinage sufficed to satisfy all claims. The man at length retired with a smiling countenance, no doubt delighted at having discovered that the outside barbarians knew the value of *tchen* as well as himself, and had as much intelligence given them to guard against rapacious attacks.

There was no breakfast for us, and being as ready for moving as we were when entering the village the evening before, we had only to set the cart on its way and depart. But the shaft mule was as contumacious and spiteful as I have found the majority of her mongrel race. She had to be coaxed, scolded, and castigated, and eventually punished by a gag of thin sharp cord tied across from one cheek of the bit to the other, and passing below the upper lip to rest upon the gum, before she could be rendered at all tractable. Even then bullying and shouting were required in addition to drive her under and between the shafts, and to retain her there until the rude gear was fixed; after which a similar procedure had to be enforced against the little jennet in the traces. All this occupied so much time that it was quite daylight before we could start, and the sun had become fully visible ere we had crossed the stone bridge

that led from the poverty-stricken village down a steep bank to the low ground beyond.

Once fully awake, we began to feel the dreadfully irritating effects of the mosquitos' operations. Every inch of skin exposed to their venomous bites was raised into numerous little eminences like ant-hills, or old-fashioned hair trunks studded with round-headed brass nails. In the middle of each mark was a semi-pellucid vesicle denoting the spot where the merciless proboscis had pierced and burrowed. The tingling, itching, and throbbing sensation that afflicted face, neck, and hands, was excruciatingly annoying and painful. The agony I endured for some hours is indescribable, and can be but faintly imagined by those who have never thoroughly undergone the process of tattooing as practised by the irresistible and active mosquito of North China.

With the cart in front jogging away at a lively pace, and Ma-foo on his scraggy grey Bucephalus bumping behind, we moved along in anything but cheerful spirits, feeling as unrefreshed by our short slumber as if we had never slept at all. There was nothing in the country through which we rode to divert our minds from the 'out of sorts' condition we were in, and the sun already gave tokens of a blistering day, as it glanced upwards in a hazy flood of light.

Onwards we proceeded over a narrow track, in a great, flat, and totally unpicturesque plain, with no living or moving object, save some tiny white sails threading the convolutions of a hidden canal that in all likelihood opens into the Peiho, not far from Tien-tsin. Nothing was to be seen as far as the eye could scan towards the horizon, but a low marshy waste; a sea of purplish-green heath, wild and desolate for the greater part, with here and there some stunted patches of unhealthy-looking millet and hemp suffering from neglect; a moor or heath of the most depressing aspect, worse even than the Aldershot long valley on a November day. In this scene there was an absence of trees, hedges, fences, or

walls, that gave it a monotony quite appalling. Away on the extremity of the moor we presently distinguish high mounds of earth, rising like islands at long intervals from the dead level, and as we approach we perceive that they are topped by haggard-looking villages of mud and millet-stalks, with a few sickly willow trees striving to throw their branches over the lowly dwellings, as if to screen their poverty from observation.

From the mouth of the Peiho to within forty miles of Peking, and on both sides of the river for very many miles inland, the country seems to be generally lower than the banks. High plots are raised to a height of at least twelve feet by the earth dug out from a series of wide ditches which always encircle them, and lead, when possible, to lower levels. On these the villages are perched; such elevation not only in smaller clusters of dwellings, but in the towns, is rendered necessary, the natives inform us, in consequence of the Peiho, at lengthened but uncertain periods, overflowing its banks and inundating the whole country far and near. It then submerges crops and everything on its bosom sometimes for weeks together, during which time great distress and inconvenience are occasioned by the unavoidable suspension of labour and loss of property.

Ominous-looking *san pans*, or flat-bottomed boats, kept in good repair and preserved from the weather under little sheds of millet-stalk, are gathered together around those hamlets that lie far from the river, as well as near those on its borders. We were at first perplexed as to the use that could possibly be made of these punts, seeing they were so numerous and so much cared for, and yet there were no canals nor sheets of water near on which they could be serviceable. We afterwards learnt that they formed the sole means of maintaining a communication between one place and another during the time the country was laid under water.

As we rode on, the whole surface of the plain we travelled over gave more conclusive evidence of the former existence of a temporary lagoon, in fragments of shells mixed up with the soil or thinly spread over the fields. Among them were entire specimens of the *lynneus stagnalis*, whose pleasure it is to bask in sunny nooks on the edges of pools, and a small bivalve shell somewhat resembling the *mactra*. Numerous saline incrustations and efflorescences met with, proved that the earth had not been disturbed for some months.

Not a loose stone was to be found anywhere for miles around us. Everything went to prove that many inches thick of mud are deposited over a wide tract of land on each side of the river when a strong east wind long prevails in the gulf, and drives the waters up the tributary channels until they rise beyond the banks. Then the flat nature of the country offering no impediment to their outward spread, an inundation takes place, the untoward consequences of which can only be remedied by the slow process of evaporation, and at its termination a fresh stratum of prolific soil is found imposed on that left a few years before.

From information picked up among the villagers, one is led to believe that these floods are becoming less frequent in occurrence and extent. There is, too, a corresponding diminution of the damage inflicted. This change is ascribable to some alteration in the bed of the Peiho, and also to the influence of the extensive bar at its mouth, as well as to a general elevation of the land towards the border of the gulf; for in the direction of Pau-ting-fu — the capital of the province of Chili—there is a vast permanent lagoon, thirty or forty miles in length, intersected by several streams or small rivers; and many of the people who reside in the Egyptian-looking huts fixed in the artificially-raised terraces of mud in this region, gave it as their opinion that the water in their neighbourhood is not so deep as it used to be, because they

could now cultivate the water-lily in places where the flood was over their heads a few years ago.

In the middle of the loneliest and wildest stretch, the meagre track led us close to a solitary cottage. We had noticed its dilapidated condition for some time. It had been built on the low ground, and showed such visible neglect, that we supposed it could only be some house of



Chinese Guard-house.

refuge for destitute wanderers over the dismal waste in wintry weather, or a shieling for strayed cattle on tempestuous nights; but we were agreeably surprised to find, on coming up to it, that it was a guard-room or small military station occupied by about a dozen soldiers, some of whom we could see sleeping on a couch inside, while others were walking about or playing cards on the limited square of cleared ground in front. A nearer inspection satisfied us

that the building was not really so bad as it appeared at a distance. The walls were of the usual materials—mud and grain stems, the windows were rather small, but the front was smoothly plastered and white-washed, for the better display of the arms. These were neatly fastened against it, and comprised about a dozen handy matchlocks hanging by their slings at one side of the doorway, and four swords, two red-plumed spears, and two fourteen or sixteen feet jingalls reared against the eave at the other side, with their complement of black bottle-like powder flasks in close proximity to each fire-arm.

As soon as they noticed us, these *pings* got up and made every demonstration of good will, smiling, laughing, and sawing the air with their clasped hands until we had passed on; and as often as we looked back we observed them still watching us in the most friendly manner. As they stood there, endeavouring to exhibit to us the sentiments of welcome and pleasure excited by our presence among them, we could not help asking ourselves whether these lusty fellows, whose bare necks and chests testified to their having attained the very highest physical development, had fled, fugitives from Enfield rifles, Armstrong guns, cavalry sabres, and Punjaub lances, but nine short months ago! Tall, powerful, and symmetrically built, they were fair specimens of the northern army sent to uphold the policy of the war party at Peking in 1860, and to resist the approach of Anglo-French *influences* and the *moral pressure* applied in the direction of the Northern Court. In spite of numbers, choice of defensible positions, a highly advantageous country, and brute strength—the quick movements of the invading force, their wonderful arms of precision, and the lightning darts of Sikhs and dragoons, proved too much for the bows and arrows of the once-dreaded Scythians, the light squibby matchlocks and fantastic ‘whingers’ of the so-called cavalry, and the jingalls,

rude spears, and badly-trained field-guns of the footmen. What appeared to be a formidable enemy too soon for their reputation became an ubiquitous one, nearly always in the right place at the wrong time, until it was acknowledged that catching Tartars was no easy matter. When caught, the difficulty seemed to be what to do with them.

It was impossible to avoid confessing that they were by no means destitute of that courage which would have enabled them to make a stout and a bold stand against an invading force armed and disciplined in the same manner as themselves. Their ignorance of our art of war, and the potent weapons we use, made them poor opponents.

Some of them, perhaps, were in front of the little group that watched us from the bleak-looking guard-house. They had been a warlike race in the middle ages, and had gone through many a stirring campaign in Central Asia under the leadership of the famous Madyes, *alias* Ogus Khan; they had burst into Media and slain Cyaxares; they had overrun Poland and Russia; they had penetrated Silesia, vanquished Duke Mieczslaw, and desolated the whole of Hungary — in short, had considerably alarmed Europe. But in the nineteenth century the tables were completely turned. Even Genghis Khan with his innumerable hosts would not have had the shadow of a chance against the armament the allies brought into their middle kingdom. The Celestials had not a chance.

Cavalry they would wait for and meet, though they could not but find themselves woefully at a disadvantage and unable to inflict any injury: infantry they would slowly retire before—regardless, apparently, of the not very deadly volleys poured into their disorderly masses; but those dreadful cannon — those malignant genii hatched and perfected in the ‘outer and tributary kingdoms,’ they could not stand against, and afforded, by the pell-mell retreats they made, a most unequivocal test of the magical powers those machines were capable of exercising on the minds, if not the bodies, of

the valiant 'braves.' Possessed of all the qualifications necessary in the manufacture of first-rate soldiers — limbs, and bodies the very models of health and strength — they seemed to be endowed with no small degree of patience under adverse circumstances, while capable of enduring much hardship without exhibiting its effects. How widely they contrasted in *physique* with the long, thin-legged, weak-armed, and narrow-chested Hindostanees brought against them in the field — men, the very feeding of whom requires a commissariat, a transport, a retinue of servants, and other complicated arrangements sufficient, one would imagine, to smother any one department of an army in any country but their own.

How very differently would these Indians have behaved had affairs been reversed, and the Chinese been led against *them*, officered, drilled, and armed by Europeans! Since October last I have been strongly impressed with this idea, and am quite of opinion that the Northern Chinese — Mongols or Mantchus — are a match for any other Eastern people in war; and from what I have been able to see of them in the course of a good deal of rambling, I cannot help thinking that no better men for soldiers could be found — out of Western countries of course — were they enlisted young, trained, rationed, and taught the use of arms in a proper manner. Fed on coarse rice, the produce of the country, green vegetables, and an infinitesimal allowance of salt or fresh pork, the troops opposed to the allied armies to me looked fit for anything, could they have the advantages of discipline, good leading, and instruction in the handling of modern fire-arms.

No men could stand pain better than they did. Many I saw who had been wounded, and were found lying out in the fields, days afterwards, in the places where they had fallen, exposed during the day to the dreadful heat of the sun, parched and burnt up by thirst and sick from pain, with no creature near them to afford aid or consolation, held

on to life, and were free from any of those fits of despondency or grumbling which tend so much to retard recovery from serious injuries. When at last carried in to the temporary regimental hospital, not a complaint was made by them; on the contrary, the calmness and cheerful resignation they always displayed was most wonderful, and gave us the first favourable indications of their robust and hale constitutions and equable tempers.

Two men in particular I remember well, one of whom—a fine muscular fellow in the meridian of life and vigour—had three bullets in his body, and his thigh-bone smashed and splintered by another. He was discovered in a field at some distance from our camping-ground after the final contest near Peking, and though he had been lying out in this maimed condition for a whole day and night, without a morsel of food or a draught of water, he expressed no great emotion on being addressed, but merely signified his desire to indulge in a pipe of tobacco. While the bullets were being searched for and extracted from their lodgment—a most tedious, difficult, and painful operation when they have but recently entered, but far more so after the wounds have been exposed to the sun and dust, and the parts have begun to swell—though the probing must have caused the poor wretch the most excruciating agony it is possible to conceive, it was all borne with the greatest manliness, with scarcely a disturbed countenance, and without a murmur; and immediately after the necessary, but torturing work was over, the man looked lively and happy, and continued so until recovery.

He was a favourite with me, so I was often by the side of his stretcher: he was such a masculine good-humoured fellow, it did one good to see him, and grin and nod with him. He could not speak half-a-dozen words of our language. He puffed away at his little brass-bowled pipe, contentment depicted in every lineament of his bronzed face, and testified his admiration of the skill and attention of our young doctor.

by continually jerking up his thumb, as much as to say he was a first-rate, or 'number one' man, and then pointed with joyful satisfaction to his rapidly healing limb—kept immovable, easy, and comfortable in that wonderful fracture apparatus. An interpreter was sometimes available, and then interesting dialogues would take place, in which expressions of gratitude were frequent for the kindness and care shown him, of fear that he gave too much annoyance, and of a strong determination not to join the soldiers again, should he ever be able to return to his wife and children in their little home near the Great Wall, where one of his first acts, he vowed, would be to burn incense-sticks in grateful remembrance and acknowledgment of the benefits he had received from his thumb-friend, the doctor.

The other case was that of a man who had six lance-wounds in various places, but the worst, and, as we thought, the mortal one, was in the back, close to the shoulder-blade, where the lung had been perforated by the lance-point. Faint and weak from loss of blood while he spent a day and night in the sharp and irritating millet stubble, he was as firm and good-natured as the other sufferer, and whiffed away at the gently soothing weed as he sat doubled up for many days with pledgets and bandages to his wounds, constrained to assume and remain in that position in consequence of the hæmorrhage that took place from the lung on the slightest movement. He was quite as grateful and pleased as his companion, and like him he also recovered. Both returned to their homes from the Tien-tsin hospital, where a subscription had been thoughtfully got up, and a good round sum in dollars accumulated to pay their travelling expenses. What wonderful stories they will retail to the inhabitants of the little out-of-the-world villages they pass through, and how many long evenings will be spent among their old friends in recounting their adventures, and the hospitality they met with from the 'Men beyond the Seas!' The rations and the medical

comforts in hospital they can speak of, for they were liberally supplied with everything, and took as kindly at once to beer, porter, and rum, as if they had been initiated in childhood into the mysteries of indiscriminate tippling as practised in English cities. How they will astonish the rural population in those lonely spots away towards the border of the Supreme province, when telling of the manners, customs, and fighting qualities of the race which was to be decimated by their old-world tactics, defences, and weapons!

The history of the Empire affords many examples of the fidelity, wisdom, and courage that animated individuals and armies in ages gone by, when martial honours and achievements were held in greater respect and much more highly valued than in recent years. Some of the finest traits which ennoble the profession of arms in any age or country are still dwelt on in the eloquent narratives of historical and traditional writers, and serve to illustrate a period of chivalrous zeal and integrity not much behind that of the brilliant era of our own knights and crusaders.

Ma-yuen, for instance, who is recorded as having lived contemporaneously with our Saviour, must have been a valorous and high-spirited man, and the very model of a soldier. He displayed the greatest bravery and judgment in fighting and reducing to subjection the fiery Tartar tribes who sought to invade and plunder China, then under the rule of the Eastern Han dynasty, and in quelling the turbulent and rapacious Cochin-Chinese.

What can be finer or grander in the development of a true knight's aspirations than his frequently expressed sentiment, when entreated to retire from the dangers and fatigues of the camp and field, that 'the warrior should die on the desert battle-field, his noblest pall his saddlecloth; not in a chamber amidst weeping women!'

There is an identity of feeling between this Bayard-like speech and the cavalier turn of mind of one of the greatest

of modern novelists, when he says, deeply imbued with the spirit in which he wrote: 'It is the memory which the soldier leaves behind him, like the long train of light that follows the sunk'en sun. . . . When I think of death, as a thing worth thinking of, it is in the hope of pressing one day some well-fought and hard-won field of battle, and dying with the shout of victory in my ear—that would be worth dying for; and more, it would have been worth having lived for!'

The long accounts of Ma-yuen's expeditions against hordes of ruffians, and the brilliant acts of valour displayed by him in suppressing mutinies and rebellions, raised to oppose the authority of the Emperor Kwang-wu, are recited in thrilling tales written in fanciful language. One Chinese historian thus describes him as he appeared before the enemy at Kwanyang:

'Ma-yuen rode out dressed in an azure robe, his armour shining like quicksilver, his head surmounted by pheasant plumes in a white and costly helmet. His spear was eighteen feet long. He sat upon a horse with an azure mane, and thus placed himself in front of the battle.' How forcibly does this poetical description remind one of the fine old national song of 'Chevy Chase,' as it pictures the brave Douglas, whose career was closed in that desperate engagement, on the eve of attack:—

Earl Douglas on a milk-white steed,
Most like a baron bold,
Rode foremost of his company,
Whose armour shone like gold.

After many long years' service this warrior at last met a soldier's death, and realised his wish; for marching against the people of Wu-ling, in Hu-Kwang, he got hemmed in amongst the mountains during the severest months of winter by a greatly superior force, and, with his troops, suffered extreme privations. Another general was, with all haste, despatched to

his aid, but on inquiring he found the brave Ma-yuen no more, and his force prostrated with fever. The next Emperor, Ming-ti, did his memory justice, and rendered his own reign the more brilliant and happy by marrying the deceased general's daughter, who is celebrated as having been as talented and virtuous as her parent had been faithful and valiant.

In the ninth century, a Chinese general, Wang-sen, during the reign of He-tsung of the Suy dynasty, finding provisions failing him on a march, gave orders that all the old and feeble should remain behind in order to preserve the efficiency of the troops, and made a declaration that if any presumed to follow by disobeying this order, they should be put to death instantly. His aged mother accompanied the army, and was attended to by the general's brothers, who still ventured to carry her with them after the promulgation of the pitiable but necessary decree. In spite of their efforts at concealment, and their reliance on their brother's regard for his mother's life to exculpate them from punishment, Wang-sen found out the attempt to evade his order, and harshly reprimanded them, saying, 'Every army possesses laws; no army can exist without them; not to destroy you for your disobedience to my order is to render my army without laws.' The brothers, to screen themselves, urged the peculiar case of their mother; but the general was inexorable, became enraged, and issued an order to have her head cut off. The brothers begged to be put to death first, and the army, being powerfully moved in their behalf, interposed, petitioned, and finally procured a pardon for the three. This episode is given by the historian as an instance on the one hand of great fidelity, and on the other of a total want of it.

Did we wish to give an illustration of staunch adherence and an inflexible determination to die rather than become a traitor, we might refer to the fate of Sun-Kwei, a distinguished officer of the Emperor Chaou-tsung, who was taken prisoner by Kih-yung, a rebel and solicited to accept a com-

mission or command under him. He promptly refused, on the ground of its being dishonourable to him, and that as his troops were defeated, he had no alternative but to finish his duty—which was to die : for to receive an office under one opposed to the Emperor was impossible. Bribery and taunts being of no avail, Kih-yung in a violent passion gave orders that he should be sawn asunder. The executioners of this barbarous mandate could not make the saw enter the flesh. Sun-Kwei, railing, said : ‘ You dead dogs and slaves, if you would saw a man asunder, you should compress him between two planks ; but how could you know it ? ’ They took the hint ; and, tying their victim between pieces of timber, carried out the horrid sentence ; but he never relented, and died scornfully scoffing and jeering them.

But throughout the whole Chinese and Tartar history, even up to the present time, great cruelty appears to have been exercised towards prisoners ; and it seems to have been a constant practice to put to death the principal officers after being captured. If they were able men, and would serve their captors, they might be spared ; if not, they were destroyed in the most dastardly manner. Those who chose to die rather than forsake their party, are mentioned in history with honour under the appellation of Sze-tse, which serves to denote dying with an undeviating adherence to the line of duty.

Brute courage the troops opposed to the Peking expedition most assuredly possessed, and that in no small degree ; for we have never been able to learn that any of the combatants made prisoners by the British between Pehtang and the capital ever made the slightest sign indicative of suing for mercy ; and instances were frequent in which they died without betraying any signs of submission—even when resistance was perfectly hopeless. Had they done so, in all probability they would have been spared. At best they must have been nearly, if not all, conscripts drawn from the towns

and villages within and without the Great Wall—Chinese, Mongols, and Mantchus—the majority of whom were, doubtless, driven away from their homes and occupations to perform duties and undergo hardships with which they could scarcely be acquainted.

Chinese records inform us how unwillingly the people submitted to this treatment during a more warlike era than the present, for it is stated that in the reign of Shin-tsung of the Sung Dynasty, Gan-shih, his minister, formed a kind of militia, to which the inhabitants had so great an aversion that many of them cut off their fingers or hands to avoid being enrolled in the ranks. As in everything else that we see around us, the *trade* of arms in the country appears in a hopeless stage of antiquity; nothing remains but a worthless mass of unstable trumpery quite in keeping with the institutions to which it is appended. This unmistakable decay is not of the last hundred years, but appears to have commenced long before the Mantchu rule, and has been gradually paralysing the by no means bold attempts of the nation at rejuvenescence. Even in the days of a vigorous monarch of the present dynasty, famed for his love of those sports and pastimes which minister to warlike tastes and requirements, military expeditions were so promptly and successfully conducted that in his forty-ninth year he could boast to his friends and visitors: ‘Since I ascended the throne I have directed military operations to a great extent. I have crushed rebels; I have taken possession of Formosa; I have humbled the Russians.’ But a very mediocre testimony to the worth of the troops in his pay could be given. Kanghi, a Jesuit missionary, says—and, according to Le Comte, he said nothing but what was proper, as he did nothing but what was great—‘They are good soldiers when opposed to bad ones, but bad when opposed to good ones.’

The *morale* of the army, if we can assure ourselves that

they may lay claim to anything of the sort, is bad; the leaders, unlike the gallant and chivalrous Ma-yuen, are reported to look out for and secure to themselves a good line of retreat well to the rear, ordering the men of small confidence and less judgment to the front; and when reverses come upon them, they are ready to lead their command from danger by a precipitate flight, though they are the first to receive personal degradation and ignoble punishment; while both officers and men are rationed and paid on such a scale as entirely to preclude the possibility of maintaining that condition and spirit necessary to enable them to cope with the soldiers of civilised countries.

Discipline they may be said to have none; and, taking them altogether, they are for service little better than an unwilling mob of pressed men—good or bad as may be—fighting ever with disgrace or decapitation before them, should they fail in obtaining victory; and with but little hopes of reward should they chance to be successful. Under a more genial and a more enlightened rule, the Chinese forces would, it may confidently be predicted, be very different, and with the immense means of men and material at the disposal of the empire, they might be made to offer a very serious obstacle to the operations of an invading enemy.

We have long since lost sight, however, of our semi-nude friends—the last peep we managed to catch was of one brawny rascal who had mounted the thatched roof of the house to watch the way we went—and the sun is really consuming us. The past night's discomforts and unrefreshing sleep have made us feverish and fagged, with an almost unbearable thirst parching our throats. Not a drop of water is to be had in the ditches or hollows, and, unsuccessfully, we solicit the inmates of the mean habitations scattered sparsely to the right and left of our route, for a mouthful of anything to allay the more urgent cravings of our mouths.

The long level seems without water of any kind, and how the dwellers on it manage to exist without that essential of vitality, was more than we could guess in our dried-up state. They must have had water somewhere, but probably in such small quantity that they could not spare as much as we required. Nor was there anything growing for many miles but two species of heath—one resembling a good deal in hue and size our own heather, overtopped by a taller and more plentiful, but not so brilliant tinted, a variety. The travellers we met were few, and all bore some description of weapon, either sword, spear, or match-lock—whether intended for offence or defence we could not ascertain.

The pedestrians were of a very humble class, and carried little, if anything, worth protecting; while the one or two who passed us on nimble little donkeys could scarcely require the aid of the defiant-looking, wooden-handled sword that lay so snugly between the saddle flap and rider's thigh on the off-side—as their property consisted only of the shrivelled, over-weighted asses they bestrode, and a small bag containing a change of clothing (?), or some very trifling commodity that could be of no value to any but the most mercenary footpad in creation. They must be volunteers, we thought, wending their way to some rendezvous or dépôt not far off, whence they would be conveyed, in bodies, to those provinces where robbery, murder, and devastation were rampant, there to swell the hosts of lukewarm scatterlings idling their lives away in frivolous skirmishes under the Imperial banners. They much resembled the misnamed troops at Shanghai and other places southward, in dress and arms; but it might turn out that they were only going as Government representatives to levy money from ill-fated villager or townsman, under instructions from some Mandarin or official, who had arrogated to himself unlimited powers.

We continue faintly clinging, or rather hanging, to our

saddles, gaspingly longing for a deep quaff of some icy beverage, with the unclouded sky and unmitigated sickly glare of the sun making more forbidding the landscape through which we try to push our way. We are guided only by the scathed stripe of baked earth deeply rutted on its edges by the narrow rims of native wheels, and turn at every opportunity into the shrivelled enclosures of the shreddy earthen tenements to beg or seize upon the first vessel of water we can discover; but the pauper-looking occupants seem as if they themselves were dying of thirst, and had been dried up to imitate mummies. Our eyes are painful and watery, from constant straining against the stupefying glare and a wind hot and biting as the Mistral, and our noses, fierily red, are not to be touched with impunity.

In all sincerity of spirit, and in far more urgent case, we exclaim with Cowper:

‘ O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade ! ’

What sacrifices would we not have made to have bargained with some Dryad for a tiny nook in the deepest recess of sylvan retreat, away from this shadeless tiresome scene!

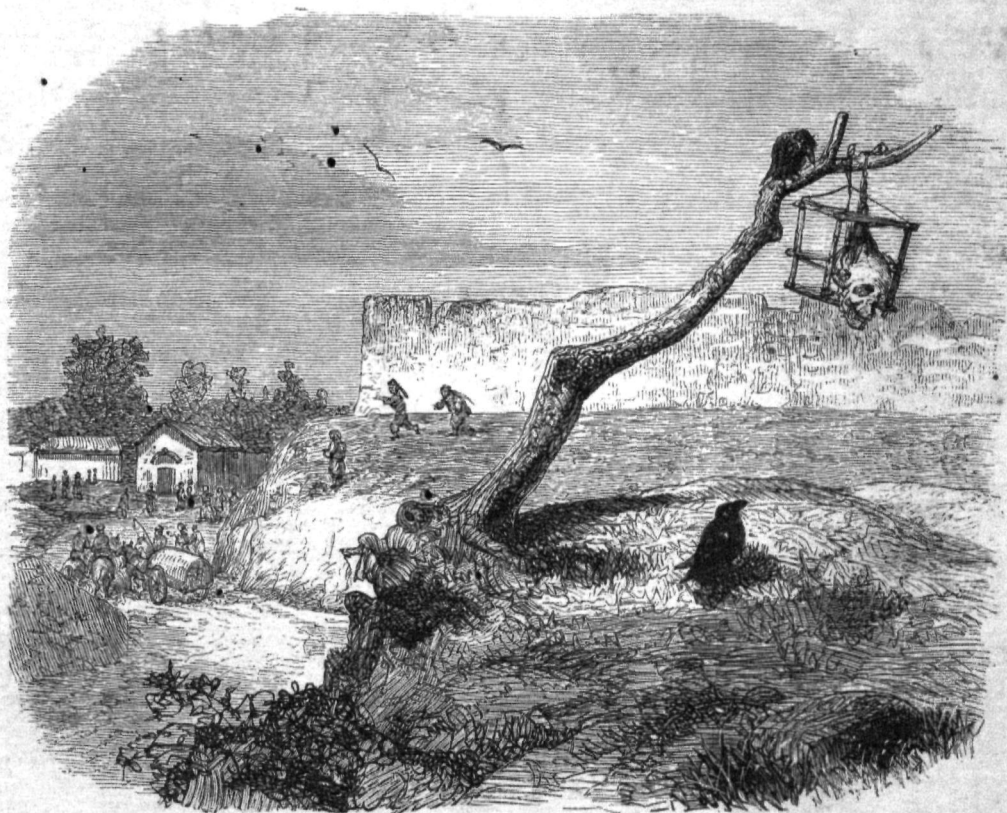
A high branchless trunk of a tree rises before us like a lantern-pole, with a little roughly-constructed box, resembling a hen-cage, fixed at the top. We were about to pass it, in the conviction that it was intended for a beacon to guide travellers across the waste by night, and were dutifully placing such thoughtfulness of the local rulers to their credit, when, drawing near to its foot, we were disgusted to find the cage contained a human head—or the remains of one—black, decomposed, and crow-pecked. The horribly ghastly face looked directly down upon us through the bottom spars; for the skull, partially dragged out of the box by the carrion-birds, still kept hold of the plaited queue which was tied

round the pole to prevent the loathsome kites and crows tearing it away altogether before it had fallen to pieces. Awfully hideous was this memento of cruelty and barbarism — weather-worn, grilled, discoloured, and decayed, and threw a sullen darkness across the bright light of day as the vacant orbits seemed to rebuke the heedless travellers in language like this: 'For the sake of human nature, for the credit of those who frame laws, and those who enforce them, be merciful, and bury me under the earth, or compassionately hide me amidst the heath from the shuddering gaze of humanity. The maxims of our country are ever inculcating commiseration and charity towards our fellow-men: I am one of the Emperor's — our father's — children, and his regard for us is constantly in the mouths of his ministers, so that we may faithfully serve and duly revere him; our philosophers wisely and tenderly say, "in enacting laws, rigour is necessary; but in executing them, mercy." Behold!'

We are reminded that we have before us another phase — a most revolting one — of the strange inconsistencies which are to be noted by the observant dweller amongst the people of China, even in the most common-place matters. The laws — the penal code — are most sagaciously and mercifully framed for the administration of justice, and provision is made for all possible contingencies that may arise to retard its course — mildness and equity being ever paramount. Here justice, and life, and death were concerned, and death triumphed. Why? Because destruction, cruelty, and torture were, perhaps, more convenient and better suited to the practice of the magistrates than the humane but antagonistic theories of the code.

We could not understand why this display of Asiatic law should have been made in such an obscure place, so we at once referred to Ma-foo for an explanation. The unfeeling man must have thought we were joking, for it was some time

before his old withered countenance could be brought into a condition of steadiness sufficient to allow him to chuckle out that the wretch whose head hung over us had been a *Pi-lang*—by which Canton word, that he had picked up somewhere during his missionary rambles, we understood the man to have been a thief or pirate, as *lally loon*, another Canton word for thief, may be derived from the 'Ladrone' of



A Warning to Robbers.

Portuguese notoriety, and that he had suffered the extreme penalty of the law for, in all probability, some insignificant misdemeanour perpetrated near the spot.

We had not gone many hundred yards before we came on another, and another, each more disgusting than the other. We appeared to have got on to an old-fashioned Bagshot or Blackheath, so fearfully did these relics remind one of highwaymen and gibbets—for Ma-foo declared all to be the heads of robbers. This attendant of ours, though a

Roman Catholic, and therefore coming under the designation of Christian, had the same want of sympathy and indifference to human life as his countrymen generally display. One need go no further than to the beggar class for proof of this; crowds of beings in all the harrowing stages of starvation throng the streets, dying, and often dead, at the doors in the busiest thoroughfares, and their fellow-men pass them by as if they saw them not. Certainly the quality of mercy is not much strained to economise life—nor, from what we have witnessed, can we vouch for the existence of this great attribute in the slightest degree in the leaven of the Chinese nature; nor is the desire to foster or awaken it in the hearts of the many who might minister to perishing creatures at all to be imputed to those who represent the patriarchal system of government; on the contrary, any movement to alleviate distress, during the rigours of a severe winter, we were sorry to observe, obtained little favour from the authorities.

A superabundant population, teeming in every nook and cranny, selfishly striving to eke out as comfortable a lifetime as possible, and to accumulate wealth in the least time compatible with security, is always extruding the unlucky and unthrifty from its mass, and throwing them out to drift about as they best may. To steal and to beg are the only alternatives left—the former leads to a nearer termination perhaps than the other. ‘Heads or tails’ is the sentence; the first most frequently turns up, and the culprit is compelled to part with his headpiece, tail and all—and is hurried off to execution a few hours after the decision against him, without a tithe of the protection or inquiry bestowed on a pickpocket in England.

When amputation of the tail chances to be the sentence, the offender is irrevocably fixed in beggarmdom, far beyond the possibility of extrication or the reach of sympathy; a lost man, in fact, shunned by everyone, a wretch to whom

death would be a gladdening relief. A Chinese beggar's vocation is not the hale and hearty gaberlunzie independency of the English vagrant. From the moment he is cut off from labour, decapitation and starvation haunt him, without a prospect of escape, though this he attempts with desperate cunning and extraordinary boldness, which did not quite receive our approbation when we happened to suffer by them. How I beseeched Astræa, the Goddess of



Chinese Beggars.

Justice, to deliver up to me the only coat I possessed, with watch, papers, and pocket contents accompanying it—no portion of which did I ever see again; or the hard-hearted rascal who purloined them from my tent, when to replace them were almost impossible; and how I ranted and raved on that cold winter's night, when, having constructed a cosy little fireplace in a dingy Tien-tsin room, and with no

small amount of labour raised a tall chimney to carry off the products of combustion into a narrow lane at the gable-end of the house; I had the chimney knocked down for the second time, and the bricks carefully removed to some unknown locality! My astonished servitor reported the daring conduct of the unknown parties, who afterwards, not satisfied with what they had already taken, twice emptied the grate of its burning contents by the aperture leading to the outside of the room. How many nights did I not lie awake watching the vacant hole, with all sorts of curious things rigged up to tumble down at the slightest touch of the scoundrel, the mean-souled Prometheus, and kept a revolver near my bed in a state of readiness; but for weeks neither friend nor pilferer ventured near between the going down and rising of the sun! A few days afterwards, when riding through the suburb of the city, I saw three newly-decollated heads embellishing the roadside, and my heart relented, for I imagined that they were the remains of our late visitors, and from that hour the weapon of retribution appeared no more at my bedside.

CHAPTER V.

THE HUNDRED-SPIRITED BIRD — ANCIENT RUSTIC — INEXPENSIVE COSTUMES — THE INN AT CHE-TUR — MID-DAY HALT — TARTAR PONIES — SUPERIORITY OF MULES — MANDARIN'S TRAVELLING EQUIPAGE AND ESCORT — NON-OBSERVANCE OF SUNDAY IN CHINA — THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS.

ABOUT eighteen miles from our last night's quarters the country became dotted here and there with meagre squares of meadow land, on which the diminutive black goat of the country, or a scraggy, sore-backed donkey, grazed in peaceful comfort; while sundry hares, smaller and lazier than our own, scampered with easy pace from the path of the intruders to seek a nest in the nearest ling-bush. 'Far in the downy cloud,' regardless of the sun's intensity in the fierceness of the July midday, the little North China skylark, the *Pehling*, or 'Hundred-spirited bird,' 'blithesome and cumbersome' as its congener in our own land, though imperceptible to the eye, inspiringly threw out its gushing song with the most lively *abandon*—the thrilling melodious gusts descending from the heavenly promenade like those of

'A high-born maiden in a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden soul, in secret hour,
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower.'

Soon the glad song drives away one-half of our fatigue as we plod on, eager for the first inn, where breakfast may be got ready in some way or other.

An old man is at work in a grass-plot cutting the short thin herbage, and as our road is not altogether well marked out, we cross over to inquire. Poor old fellow! he is in a

great state of unfeigned alarm at our sudden appearance, and makes an attempt to run away, but a second thought convinces him that his weak limbs could not carry him beyond the field, so he stands still, ready to supplicate for pity. He is quite unable to answer the questions put to him, till reassured by Ma-foo that we intend no harm, and then he gathers confidence to speak, though still uncertain as to our motives. Purblind and all but naked, the skin



Grass-cutting.

covering the visible skeleton head, gathered in wrinkled creases around his neck and face, which is of the colour, and not unlike the texture, of a hard-worn, deeply-stained saddle; but the dearly-cherished tail, though still pendent from the crown of his venerable occiput, had dwindled away to the thickness of a whip-cord of silvery strands coiled round his brow. His morning's work lay near, in little heaps of fodder placed every ten or twelve yards over half an acre of ground,

and the implement employed bore such traces of novelty in its construction and design that we could not forbear taking a rough outline of it, and noting its name, which sounded, as nearly as we could write it, like *tsu-sa*. To a little basket of willow twigs, open at one side, was fixed a shovel handle with a thin sharp blade of iron along the front or open side. This handle was held in the left hand, while the right one swung the basket and blade against the grass, cutting and carrying it away at the same stroke by means of two cords tied to the back rim of the tray and looped round each end of another wooden handle in the right hand. The expert way in which he wielded this contrivance, and the quantity of grass cut with it in a few minutes, after we had overcome his scruples and got him again to work, showed that the inventor had economy both of time and labour in view when he introduced it.

Soon after, we saw scattered groups of people toiling and scraping the crust of the land in an entire state of nudity—the most humble class of peasantry we had seen in China, and as we passed close to them, and could not avoid gazing at such miserable slaves, they betrayed no signs of bashfulness, but continued their unprofitable work as if no strangers had been near. The villages were becoming more plentiful, but still were raised on tall hillocks, and as decrepid as any we had seen. The starving inmates came out to look at us, some of the males and nearly all the children—if appearances were to be trusted—happily exempt from tailors' bills and the fluctuations of fashion, their bodies unconstrained and without a covering save that afforded by the thickly-incrusted dirt that had been collecting on and sheathing their skins since the ceremonious washing inflicted on them, according to custom, a few days after birth. Not unfrequently, however, some few could be observed clad in a quadrangular sort of tucker suspended around the neck by a cord at one corner, and bound close

to the middle by the opposite corners, but barely covering the front of the half-civilised beings who jumped and squatted about their doors. In these apologies for a costume one or two pockets were stuck, in which were carried any trifling necessities a Chinaman of the lower orders may require.

About one o'clock exhausted nature felt revived, and hopes began to be stirred up as we ascended the steep side of the embankment on which the streaky road stumbled into the exalted but rough hamlet of Che-tur, where we found an inn in every respect better than that of last night. The rooms, though in miserable repair, felt cool and sheltered, the thermometer only indicating 96° in the shade. The domestic arrangements of the establishment were knocked into endless confusion by our presence, and by the embarrassment imposed on its servitors through the impetuous crowd of villagers who thronged the place to immobility, and made ingress or egress for any but ourselves all but impossible. Already we began to be objects of curiosity and speculation to these simple-minded people, who had never before seen the face of European, and were lost in wonder at everything about us. Two willing little boys—more active and acute than any of their age and class we ever saw at home, waited upon us, and by dint of great exertion and anticipated *cumshaw*, found us water enough for a bath, and a half gourd-shell to souse it about with.

This, with copious draughts of hot tea, and a brief nap on a mat couch, thoroughly refreshed us, and it was an agreeable addition to our satisfaction to see the animals on which so much depended digesting large mangers-full of chopped straw and bran with undiminished spirits or appetites. But our own meal—our breakfast—was still unapproachable, as the *cuisine* boasted of nothing likely to please our outlandish palates, except eggs. Not having become sufficiently accustomed to their pleasing aroma, hunger's urgent appeals

failed to entice us to depend on them, inasmuch as we were cognisant of the existence of a staple commodity, lurking in a basket which had been carefully packed up for service in the depths of the travelling cart, and which offered far stronger attractions to our delicate tastes; so on Frankfort sausage we fell back, and what with its excellent flavour, its delectable taste, and its unimpeachably substantial qualities, aided by capacious bowls of pearly rice—each pellicle as distinct and clear in outline and individuality as the light flakes of snow which the wintry sky thinly scatters over this intemperate region—washed down by repetitions of steaming cups of the national beverage, such a repast was made as rather amazed our youthful waiters, who were considerably bewildered at our foresight and unexampled fastidiousness in carrying about our own supplies and the articles necessary for their serving up, refusing the dainty fare of the house, and objecting even to the assistance that might be found in the chopsticks which they laid before us. Many visitors ascended the two little steps at the door to watch the movements of two such curious mortals, and when the feast had really commenced, a rush was made by about a dozen of the most obtrusive, who could contain their unruly inquisitiveness no longer, but fairly stuck themselves over the table, staring into our faces with unwinking eyes, or following the motions of spoon or fork like starving dogs. The organ of smell required that they should be expelled without delay, and it must be told, to their advantage, that after the first intimation of their being unwelcome, they did not again enter the room, but pertinaciously posted themselves outside in every corner from whence they could obtain the faintest glance of ourselves or shadows.

Nature demanded another hour's rest to overcome the effects of this unusual repletion; so we stretched out again on the couch with all the ease and contentment so comfortable and simple an entertainment could bestow, under

the gentle *surveillance* of sundry princely dignified Tartar beauties, whose painted faces, surmounted by clusters of bright-coloured flowers, looked down smilingly on us from detached scrolls on the wall, as with slender tapering fingers, armed with the boatswain's-whistle nail protectors, they becomingly wave the graceful fan, or with silken cord restrain the playful gambols of toyish poodles who are bent on amusing themselves with the gay tassels suspended to the toes of their thick, narrow-soled canoe-like shoes, quite unmindful of the interspersed specimens of exquisite calligraphy surrounding them, inculcating some trite moral Confucian aphorism, favourite saying, or good wish.

Well restored by four in the afternoon, we again got under way, and with a long twenty miles before us, and the fag-end of a hot wind blowing in our faces, left a staring crowd in the middle of the village street as we descended to the plain beyond.

Four miles an hour rapidly brought us into a more fertile country, with large tracts of meadow-land, on which grazed troops of what are generally called Tartar ponies, but which are, in all likelihood, bred on this side of the Wall,—tended by men with long whips, whose business seemed to be principally confined to smoking, and now and then adjusting the rope-hobble that bound two or three of each animal's legs together to prevent their straying too far. Among the droves were some of the best ponies we had yet seen in the North; great, strong, 'tousey tykes,' as uncouth and rugged members of the *genus equinum* as could well be found anywhere else in the world; but as hardy, strong, and handy as they seemed coarse-bred. The so-named Tartar pony is as unlike that in use in South China, Manila, or Japan, ■ can be imagined by those who have not seen it, and differs as widely from the Amoy and Canton breed as the rough, old-fashioned farmer's Galloway does from the Shetland or Dartmoor pony; the former of which it certainly

favours in more respects than one. Great, out-of-proportioned head, indicating nothing but the most surly stubbornness or vice, with the eyes almost concealed beneath an excess of long matted forelock; a thin neck, roofed by a tangled mane undisturbed by comb or brush since the animal first assumed a quadrupedal existence; a low, thick, straight shoulder, from which extends a lengthy, concave, sharp-ridged back to the massive bony haunches which stand out like two buttresses, leaving the loins narrow and yawning, and a croup salient and rude, reaching to a tail for all the world like a protracted muddy swab; while the limbs, strong but rigidly perpendicular to the very ground, are all but hid in masses of unkempt or untrimmed hair. Beneath this ungainly and unprepossessing exterior, however, lies the staunchest spirit and most unflinching endurance that can belong to the species, and which enables this much-neglected servant to perform work and achieve long journeys that perhaps no other animal could accomplish on the same meagre innutritious food. Many stories are told of them and the long-continued jog-trot pace they can sustain with a heavy lumbering Chiuaman on their backs, weighing, perhaps, sixteen stones, and the pony measuring but from twelve to fourteen hands high at the utmost. The Russian courier from Peking to Kiakhia, a frontier town of the Russian dominions—a distance of about 500 miles—not long ago used to ride one pony there in twelve days, and, after two days' rest, return in fifteen. In getting away through heavy ground they are decidedly first-rate, and nothing could exceed the ready way in which they shuffled off with their riders when chased by our dragoons in the early part of the campaign. Bearing no visible signs of any attempts having been made to improve the breed—and it may be doubted if what we consider improvement would much tend to enhance its value for the purposes to which it is made subservient by the Chinese, and at the same time preserve

those qualities which endow it with such a remarkable aptitude for withstanding fatigue and exposure to the weather on the most unfavourable sort of forage—we see the little brute now as it was in all probability in the dreaded days of the Tartar cavalry, when, becoming too redundant for their own comfort on the barren steppes or neglected plains, and dreading famine, or prompted by the prospect of pillage and the glory of conquest, the equally hardy and obstinate Mongol or Mantchu, mounted on these ursine solipedes, broke through all obstacles, and covered countries richer and more civilised than their own, with havoc and ruin. But though gifted with so well-adapted and serviceable an animal, the Chinese very much prefer the hybrid, obtained by crossing the pony with the never-worn-out ass, and in this they show their usual discrimination in matters pertaining to domestic economy. Not so tall as the Spanish mule, stronger built than either the Persian or Turkish, the North China mule is incomparably better-constituted, more robust, and livelier-paced than either, and in the hands of a Chinese muleteer is as docile and obedient as a Liverpool dray-horse, without requiring a tenth part of the care and attention bestowed on the more favoured breeds; and their immunity from disease and the effects of over-work being greater than with the ponies, their value is considerably increased, sometimes even threefold. So much, indeed, is this animal preferred for riding purposes, that Mandarins select mules for ease and convenience rather than ponies, and scarcely a team of draught cattle can be met that has not either one or two of these mongrels in the most important corner of the gear, as a powerful aid and incentive to the other beasts.

The road or path we were tracking out was still a lonely one, and did not seem to be much frequented, notwithstanding the little footways that at decreasing intervals led off in various directions; so that we had but trifling variation. Sometimes a man would pass us trundling along the peculiar

tchou-dza, or wheelbarrow, with a load on it large enough for a one-horse cart, the perspiration rolling off his face and weather-browned body in mimic streams without affecting his strength in the most trifling degree, while his tail was put to a very laudable use in binding a piece of rag around his forehead and affording support to a browband with a lot of bristling rushes inserted in its structure immediately over the eyebrows, to protect his eyes from the sun's glare. Sometimes the same kind of vehicle would be wheeled labouringly along by an old faded individual whose worldly all, consisting of his small-footed wife, and perhaps a child, with an agglomeration of duds, and fragments of furniture, were packed on in a manner sufficient to indicate a distant 'flitting,' and two or three young people walking alongside, one of whom was certain to be carrying arms, gave one an idea of the strength of his establishment. As the afternoon progressed the country improved; the villages near us, frequently shrouded in a whirlwind of dust, exhibited more taste and care, and away in the far distance, afloat in the drifting sea-like mirage, they towered up pleasantly among trees at close intervals, looking green and fresh as islands in a tropical ocean; but the ready san-pans still hung about them in case of need. Before the sun had touched the horizon we encountered a large convoy of some dozen carts, carrying each in front a small triangular flag with its wavy border bound by red, and in the centre an inscription denoting the name and rank of some mandarin, their interiors crowded with all sorts of miscellaneous articles; and in some of these rude conveyances lolled great obese phlegmatic Chinamen, who slept, ate, and lived in their jarring apartments for very many days, for they had travelled from a place in Kwantung (the old name for Liautung), which they informed us was about 300 miles distant. Goodness only knows how they contrived to come so far without injury, in such torturing clumsy carts. Large square blocks of wood coarsely mortised

and bound together to the unwieldy shafts, formed a body of some 10 or 12 feet in length, from the sides of which sprang a semicircular roof of cane matting, to shelter the occupant from sun, rain, and dust; the whole imposed on a massive wooden axletree which had low, nail-studded, primitive wheels fixed at each end, and revolved on the springless body, instead of the wheels on it. Above, below, on the sides and behind, inside as well as outside, the most outlandish



Mandarin's Travelling Carriage.

things were fastened, and special regard was had to lances, scimitars, and matchlocks, that exhibited their threatening figures in the most conspicuous and ready places.

A large concourse of brawny equestrians loitered about while the weary animals in the carts were being refreshed by a scanty supply of muddy water, a few lazily hanging over the necks of their ponies, or sartoriously squatted on the ground watching their steeds as they were trying to rid their mouths

of the sharp-edged bit before cropping the enticing herbage that encircled the watering place. To every saddle was hung its matchlock or sword: the first, with its muzzle stopped up by a plug of red horsehair, was suspended by the sling to the high peak of the crupper, while the sabre in a leathern scabbard depended by two loops from the side, in which position it might hang without inconvenience to its proprietor.

These wanderers were the finest men we had seen for a long time — tall and loosely formed, their muscular bodies enveloped in the ordinary thin blue or white cotton jacket and trousers that barely served to cover them; their feet and ankles buried in wide gaiter-like socks which served also to contain the lower portion of the legs of their trousers; their necks were quite exposed, and their heads surmounted by straw hats wider in the brim than any Spaniard's sombrero, from under which their massive faces, covered with dust in patches, in others as brown as sepia, looked out upon our small party with an expression of stupid curiosity and wonder quite characteristic of these country folks, plainly indicating that though their eyes were sluggishly at work, their minds had little to do in speculating about us. Their masters in the waggons, during the whole of our halt and attempted conversation with sundry members of the rough-and-ready escort, never relaxed the rigid twist of stern incognisance into which they had thrown their physiognomies as soon as we came in sight, though their smothered inquisitiveness must have punished them severely. Sometimes we made certain that a movement was required to ease their tiresome position, which entailed a sudden projection forward in our direction, when, perhaps, they may have caught a glimpse of our boots or a squint at the visible portions of our saddles, though their stoical full-moon faces betrayed them not. Sometimes their official, buttoned, extinguisher-looking summer hats required adjustment either on their heads or the sides of

the roof, when something very much akin to a furtive stare at our faces was undoubtedly attempted, though their stolidly fixed eyes were gazing vacantly before them in less than a second afterwards. Their arrogant pride would not sanction their manifesting the faintest approach to civility for the gratification of their all but irrepressible prying wonder, and seeing their desire to be left to themselves in the pseudo-dignity they had borrowed for the nonce, we had no inclination to thrust ourselves upon their consideration, even at the expense of losing information that might have been of some value to us on the unknown road that lay between us and our destination. The beasts drank their water, the lusty cavaliers tightened the white leathern thongs that served as girths, pulled up their socks, and pushed down their pantaloons deeper into them, and the cart teams jerked the wrenching squeaking wheels, or rather the grating timber axle, into its wonted circuit; two or three shouts of encouragement were bellowed at the leaders, and then the whole caravan was in motion, and the horsemen mounted; so, without a word of greeting at meeting or parting, we took our opposite courses — we still to the north-east, they to the south-west. Their first contact with Europeans was over, and their interest in the rencontre was woefully damped by their ignorant vanity, closing their mouths and blinding their eyes to what they were at perfect liberty, for aught we cared, to speak of or look at.

Anon we came upon village carts laden with some vegetable productions, and drawn by asses, oxen, ponies, or mules, or a member of each class clubbed together in front of the slow-moving noisy carriage; and — could it be possible! — old men in open fields ploughing on Sunday, and ploughing, too, more frequently with an ox, a pony, and an ass, than any other species of beast; the three working away as cheerfully and earnestly as if the Almighty had never insisted that the race of man should keep holy the Sabbath day, in the fourth

commandment, and as if Moses, in Deuteronomy, twenty-second chapter and tenth verse, had not declared : 'Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together ;' the latter, perhaps, furnishing an additional proof that those from whom this people descended withdrew themselves from the main stock before the institution of a day of rest by the Prophet in the wilderness, by which many writers attempt to account for the non-observance of this day in China.



Farmer's Team.

Fo-hi, the founder of the empire,—whom some people suppose to be Noah,—they imagine, retired to China in his old age, and there, divinely begotten as he was, he taught his subjects to build towns and live in them, giving them prime ministers and magistrates to manage their affairs and preserve tranquillity, inventing music and the art of dressing, to make them happy and comfortable ; bestowing on his nameless people names ; introducing the custom of sacrificing six different kinds of animals at the solstices, in order to ease their

consciences and foster feelings of veneration ; giving them also a symbolical mode of writing for their special edification, and a code of laws which his clever eyes and pen enabled him to copy from a tablet on the back of a post-diluvian monster that he had the good luck to become intimate with for a few seconds, as it rose to breathe from the bottom of a lake, by the side of which he chanced to be strolling. We have often wondered why, when he gave them all this, and made them such an industrious lot of creatures, he did not allow them an interval of rest or recreation oftener than once or twice a year ; for he showed, by his omission of this boon, a total disregard or unwarrantable ignorance of the truths contained in the prediction that 'All work and no play would make John Chinaman a dull boy.'

No, he gave them everything else necessary but a proper day for unbending their bows, though he made a very close approach to it when he presented them the symbolical diagram of the '*Yang* and *Yin*'—'darkness and light, rest and activity'—to portray the reciprocal order of things as they exist in Nature,—one of these dual principles, the *Yang* or male, governing the affairs of Nature for six days, then ceasing when the *Yin* or female principle came into operation for the next six. What a pity he did not allow only one day to elapse between each change ! What a difference it might have made in the conservative routine habits of the people !

As the sun began to droop in the west, and to spread around him the resplendent hues of a summer sunset, the bold dark outlines of the fine range of mountains we had caught a transitory glance of yesterday came out in full prospect, as if produced by the startling agency of a magic-lantern. We experienced a renewed sense of joy it would be hard to describe. As the raging orb of day gently slid down behind them, a heavenly breeze from their majestic tops stole soothingly and benignantly below into the dark

glens and the plain beyond, cheering everything animated, and adding new beauties to the already quiet grandeur of the gloaming in the ever-varying atmospherical changes attending the decline of a fine evening.

Black, bare, and rifted into all sorts of jags, pinnacles, towers, and minarets, hustled in heaps, or regularly posted in long chains, treeless and heatherless, they held out their sombre welcome to us, we were certain, after our red-hot and wearisome life on the most palling of all unrumpled levels, with more fervour and congenial spirit than we ever expected from the purple Bens of the Western Highlands. Liberty, life, light, and strength seemed to revel on the loftiest ridges of that serrated margin, and looked boldly and defiantly towards the insipid, sickly earth, spreading out its languid surface far to the right and behind and before. Surely the uncontaminated air that sustains and invigorates the soul of freedom, and exalts the nature of man, is concentrated in those regions that draw nearest to the clouds, where the enervating breath of the Mistral and the venomous swelter of the plain never come; where every movement tends to independence and masculine thought, and every inspiration sends an additional stream to the river of life!

The distant sight of these revered natural monuments, and the alternating character of the country between them and us, seemed to curtail the journey. We were unconsciously passing through a neat little avenue of willow trees that skirted along the bank of a newly-made aqueduct, and opened on a pretty, toyish stone bridge (*vide* willow-pattern plate), that rose in a sharp convexity over a pool, in which a number of farmers' ponies were being watered, — greatly to the discomfort of a flock of ducks, whose white plumage was undergoing a thorough soiling from the muddy splashes, — before we became aware of the presence of a curious crowd that had gathered on the parapet of the bridge to gossip, after the toils of the day. They now rapidly fell back as we advanced, and

allowed us to get a peep of some snug little cottages, with gardens overhanging the sides of the pond, in which grew a profusion of pink and red hollyhocks, and the fan-spreading, lake-coloured amaranth, so much admired by the country people.

CHAPTER VII.

VILLAGE OF TCHUNG-WAH-KOW — RIVER PEHTANG — UNPLEASANT REMINISCENCES — A DISAGREEABLE IMMERSION — ADVENTURES OF A NIGHT — A DREADFUL DORMITORY — HARD TIMES — TOWN OF QUI-TOOSA — INN AT FUNG-TAI — BAD ACCOMMODATION — FELLOW-LODGERS' EXCESSIVE CURIOSITY — REFRESHING SLEEP.

WE were in the small but well-built village of Tchung-wah-kow, on the banks of the Pehtang hô, as it is named by us, but to which the people here give the lengthy title of Che-tau Yoon-leang hô. Ascending the narrow, steep street, which was lined by tastefully-finished houses on each side, we descend again to the little jetty, where the ferry-boat is waiting to convey us across the sluggish yellow river, flowing noiselessly and smoothly on, undisturbed by many junks, and between low clayey embankments here and there, but more often spreading over a large patch of land, on which grows in thick luxuriance the tall lazily-swaying reed (*Phragmites communis*), so useful in this part of the world for the manufacture of matting and in forming an under-thatch on the roofs of the better classes of houses. As usual, the alarm had been sounded, and a mob of old and young, males and females, hurried out to see us,—the most obstreperous of the masculine gender crushing and crowding around ere we had time to transfer our cart, ponies, and mules, from the ground to the barge. A goodly number of the unconscionables even found their way on board and accompanied us across, in spite of the exertions and protestations of the ferrymen, who were well aware that remuneration from such a slippery lot they stood no chance of receiving; but the latter were so numerous and so nimble that they escaped through their fingers like

quicksilver; and, as darkness was rolling in upon us, the vagabonds were allowed to have their own way and stare at us until their eyes ached again, while the boatmen poled the craft to the other side. The river here runs from north to south, and is about twenty or twenty-five yards in width, and only about eight or ten in depth, giving off a branch to the eastward,—the Hwang-sling hô,—on which, above the lofty reeds, the slender masts of a few light san-pans could be observed in the dusk; the course of both being only visible for a short way in the dense mass of green vegetation fringing their sides. As we stood on the shaky boards, trying to pacify our affrighted ponies and prevent their breaking off the deck into the current, and as we surveyed the quiet scene in which we were moving,—the lonely village,—the deep shade of the old willow trees made deeper by the approaching night,—the delicate rustling of the reeds as they nodded their heads from the tangled coverts to the evening wind,—and the stridulous unceasing chirp of the large green grasshoppers, with the guttural croaking of toads and frogs from the marshy ground,—we were reminded of this river where it opens out its mouth to the waters of the Gulf and the town of Pehtang,—slimy, wretched, and rotten, the place of abominable smells and Stygian pools,—as they made our acquaintance not much more than a year ago.

Horrible and unsolicited retroversion of memory! Why do we find ourselves again endeavouring against our will to recall to our mind's eye, and with full olfactory vividness, the dismal vicissitudes of a night of misery when landing some time about

‘The wee short hour ayont the twal,’

in the pitchy darkness of a moonless autumnal morning, at that loathsome accumulation of everything vile, on a sort of jetty that led from the gun-boats to the miry streets? Amid the glare of torches, with horses kicking, mules scampering away without

their keepers, Japanese ponies engaged in fiendish-like combats with each other in the boats, on shore, or even in the very bed of the river, and a thundering Babel of sounds, in which the stentorian voices of tars could be always distinguished as they shouted in anger or surprise: 'Now, Bill, make this 'ere pony fast by an 'itch round 'is tail, to stop 'is darned 'eadway.'—'Oh! blow me if this haint a grampus or a hold shark that I've gettin' 'old on, for he's been and tuk hold wi's teeth on my dickey; and blow'd if he'll let go on ony 'count!'. At that hour, one of our party, poor B., was too much perplexed by the crush and the stunning confusion of sights and sounds to hear behind him the warning bellow of a son of Neptune, who was getting the worst of it in a wrestling encounter with an hysterical bull. Finding his grip gradually giving way as he was dragged along, he managed to scream out, 'Mind yere starn, sir! Hard a star-board and make all sail, sir, or—he'll run you down, sir!' My friend found that

'All too late the advantage came,
To turn the odds of deadly game,'

for he was without ceremony hurled by the said animal into the water and semi-glutinous matter that lay near the shore. This stubbornly refused to give him up until aided by two brawny mariners, one of whom declared, as they pulled him out, in a sort of half sympathising, half joking way, that he looked 'more like a dirty night off Cape 'orn than a nice sodger officer;' and the other exclaimed, as the besmeared and saturated individual gave him a delicate whiff of the Sinensian bouquet, with which he had been invested in this inglorious bath: 'Oh! may I never be piped down to dinner, Jim, if he don't smell worse nor the bilge-water of an old Indeyman!'

To remedy such a mishap was beyond the present resources of the bewildered and benighted group, and to touch even the hem of his garment was to become tainted in

such a degree that every idea of comfort was banished for ever after. A random suit, better adapted for the halcyon promenades of Regent Street or the Park, than the turbulent fagging of service, stuck by the merest chance or oversight in the corner of a very elfin-like portmanteau, quite up to the regulated restriction as regarded weight, was donned during the middle watches of the night; after which installation in 'Mufti' we agreed to go in search of our, until then, kind friend and benefactor, Somnus, on the top of what must have been, at no very remote period in the world's history, a Chinese dung-heap, not many yards from the odoriferous river.

Ugh! shall I ever succeed in forgetting it, or can the constant use of the most potent disinfecting chemical or mechanical agents manage to renovate, fumigate, or purify my sense of smell? I fear not; and, as for sleep, it completely deserted and betrayed me! The most morbid and uproarious night-mare that ever punished the indulgence of a dyspeptic valetudinarian in underdone pork chops, with heavy plum-pudding and porter as a finishing course at midnight, can hardly be compared to the agonies I endured in my dewy, but far from flowery, bed in the concavities of two inverted pack-saddles, jammed firmly into the fermenting stuff we had congregated on, flanked by a trunk to keep off the dogs, and with a valise for a pillow to the head, that rested as uneasily as if it had been wearing half-a-dozen or a dozen crowns. Spasmodic dreams of descending by precarious ropes at a terrific rate some one of the deep street openings into the sewers of London, with the very pressing and laudable object in view of saving some partially-known being who had fled there for safety from a mad ox, and of having a handkerchief tied smotheringly tight round one's mouth to prevent suffocation by the poisonous gases usually generated in these places, were interrupted, as I was awakened to a full appreciation of my plight, by two

unruly steeds, animated by the most unfriendly sympathies, engaged in the peculiar attack and defence made use of by these equine gladiators, and striving to produce the greatest number of bites and murderous contusions over my prostrate body.

At another time, it was an unfortunate—or rather fortunate—pony that had escaped out of the river's bed to expel us from ours; and no sooner was it driven away by huge fragments of hard-baked, strong-scented mud, thrown with the undeviating precision of desperate men, and we had again settled down to another incubus, than a string of mixed animals, led by a liberty-loving mule and pursued by a host of those nondescript, chupattie-eating ghorrawallahs, would dash over us in wild disorder, planting their feet under them so freely and firmly, that to attempt to give anything like an idea of the impression they made on our minds, as well as on our limbs and trunks, would be rather a painful waste of time and feeling.

Suffice it to say that a charge of cavalry in daylight could never inflict the same amount of mental—not to mention corporeal—damage that these repeated raids of misguided quadrupeds did to me while I was in the transition stage between sleeping and waking,—between the London-sewer night-mare going on in my disordered brain, and the horror of being run over, as I still half-dreamily thought on starting up, by a thundering train of competing City omnibuses. All this, commingled with a powerful nauseating atmosphere, I noted down carefully, as I hailed with joy the dawning day, and added what I thought appropriate to the occasion,—and something to the effect that the rulers of China were a wise people in using their artifices and mild persuasions, with, when required, a more forcible method of argument, to induce us to visit their capital by the same route as that followed by the minister of a late great and peace-loving nation, not many months before; for, truly, if men bent on

journeying to this land of Goshen,—this land flowing with silk and money,—can endure such a villanous place and live, they are not again likely to return, or recommend even their very worst enemies to make their *kow-tow* to His Celestial Majesty at Peking. So that their distant metropolis is tolerably safe from the invasion of intruders, if they have to pass *viâ* Pehatang. In less than a week after, I annexed an underlined postscript, conspicuous for the number of its notes of admiration, which I lavished on the Chinese war-party, who, I said, are an eminently sagacious clique, and better versed in strategy than many thought, when this same town was occupied by the Allied Forces without the expenditure of a single round of ball-cartridge. Surely never was an army so situated before as this was, on the 10th of August, when the rain fell in continuous sheets, rendering the whole country beyond nothing but a great lake, bristling here and there with sad-looking sugar-loaf mounds, under which departed mortality lay soaking. Away below the horizon, it was whispered, the Tartars were chuckling 'for joy, while' we looked wistfully around, and were floundering, like Milton's Sathanas, on what was 'neither sea nor good dry land,' and saw no way of getting at them except on punts, or by beseeching Neptune to convert us into armed Tritons for the time being. Worse than all, there was nothing to eat but adamantine rice-flour biscuit—that seemed to have been kneaded by a full stroke of Nasmyth's steam-hammer, and baked in some super-active volcano—in conjunction with salt pork, that might have been preserved by the original inventor, so desiccative and indurated was it. In addition, there was water, to allay its thirst-producing effects, of a very questionable quality, and with a well-marked brackishness of taste, that was conveyed to us at irregular intervals by boats sent in search of it not far from our present locality.

How many times did we turn our eyes in the direction of the droves of oxen which huddled up the roads and made

the scene more forlorn; when it was debated whether or not it were justifiable and commendable to dine off ox-tail soup—seeing that the flies had been driven away by the rain, and the quadrupeds had no very urgent need of their caudal appendages—indeed would have been better and happier without them, standing as they were half-drowned in pools and ditches. Would they not work as well when required, and in time never miss them, and could we not prolong life on fresh beef much longer than on pork that hadn't *existed* for at least half a century?

Shipwrecked mariners could scarcely have suffered more than we did from the want of fresh water to appease the raging drought engendered by the undue amount of salt one was forced to ingest if one ate at all; and I remember one night, in particular, our having sucked up all the rain-water to be found near my tent, which I had pitched in a graveyard. This, too, was saline; and everything was impregnated with the same seasoning—even the very animals—bipeds, quadrupeds, solipedes, and *split*-pedes—I don't see how even centipedes could miss it—were in a state of pickle. A few days more of such weather in such a slippery basis of operations, and we must have been much worse off. If we are to coincide in the assertion when

‘thus the poet sings—

A sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things'—

how much more joyful, in proportion, ought I to be in looking back on these hazardous days, now the dragons of Peking have been ‘*done*’ despite its Cyclopean environing wall, and I am journeying quietly through a *terra incognita*, on my way to inspect the second capital of the empire—the forsaken cradle of the ‘Pure Dynasty.’

These reminiscences came to a sudden conclusion when the ferry-boat ranged up at the end of a raised narrow road. The mob of accompanying eye-witnesses split up into two

parties, one remaining on deck, the other disembarking with us to watch the means we employed to get everything ready for the road again, and to pass their comments thereon. All arrangements having been completed, we soon were trotting along in the dark, leaving the reedy swamp on each side behind, and entering between rows of stately willows. We passed along several flat bridges of granite slabs thrown across wide deep ditches communicating with the tributary stream the Hwang-shing hô, for the irrigation of the large gardens that lay on our right. About a mile and a half from the Peltang hô, we went through the zig-zag but commodious streets of the town of Qui-toosa, with its tasteful one-storied houses of brick,—so remarkably clean outside, and its handsome temple adding to its appearance of substantial comfort. Little knots of good townsmen and their wives were placidly whiling away the evening in homely tattle and tobacco-smoking at the doors, or lolling on mats spread at the sides of the road, reciting tales or discussing the business of the day in loud voices—the youngest making himself as anxious to be heard as the oldest. Before they had time to rouse themselves for observation, we were out of their precincts, still keeping to the well cared-for road, which was, in many places, elevated fifteen and twenty feet above the low country on each side, and less cut up by wheel-ruts than any we had yet seen in North China; until at last, through another avenue of willows, of about a mile in length, we reached the larger town of Fung-tai, where, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, before we had got through one-half of the long main street, the whole of the population seemed to have got an intimation of our arrival, and turned out. By the time the inn was within hail, a little effervescing sea of dusky faces dashing about in white robes followed in our train, or tore away full speed in front, forming a large circle of ever-increasing or diminishing extent around the '*Tien*,' the gates of which

were now closed. More than knocking was required to open them to admit us; a purpose no sooner effected than—before one of our party could push his way through—the wave rolled in with unlooked-for impetuosity, and the unlighted courtyard, already crammed with carts and all sorts of draught animals, was completely blocked up by the half-frantic people. They swarmed not only every corner where a footing could be obtained on or in the buildings, but also the conveyances, greatly to the distress and anxiety of the owners, whose voices we could hear strangely mingled with the other din, pouring out the most voluble supplications or threatening warnings to the transgressors, and rising in intensity when a crash proclaimed that some one of the light passenger cabs, or heavy merchandise carts, had come to misfortune by an upset or break-down. Into this extensive scene of confusion nothing remained but to project ourselves with as much determination as a long fatiguing day's travel prompted us to employ, in order to find a bed in some nook of the low black buildings that surrounded every side of the capacious square. Shouting, and a continual flourishing of whips cleared a narrow space for our admission and that of the cart; but Ma-foo, who had gone to reconnoitre the disposition and resources of the place—after keeping us standing in the midst of this overwhelming, strong-flavoured crowd for what appeared a very long time, during which sundry charges had to be performed to prevent the press driving us over altogether—returned with a drooping head and a desponding whine to tell us that every apartment and bunk was engaged and occupied by guests, friends, or travellers, and that we must go somewhere else if we wished to be put up for the night. Pleasant tidings indeed, in a strange place reported to have only this house of accommodation, at such an hour of the evening, and with such a boisterous multitude of petticoated gentlemen contending in the murky obscurity with each other for a look at us!

Needlessly, and without response, did M. call for the landlord. His shout was only echoed back by the bothering garlic-smelling individuals around, who, delighted with his unpremeditated outburst of Chinese, giggled and laughed as they remarked to one another, '*Shau qwan wha,*' 'he speaks our language.' To have left the place would have been nothing short of serious blundering, situated, as we were, among a people of whose friendly or hostile disposition we had as yet no proofs, and of whose honesty we were anything but satisfied in the 'head' spectacles we had not failed to mark well on the way. So, as much to punish the indifference of the host to the laws of hospitality, and thus to teach him a lesson for the benefit of those remote wanderers who might follow us, as to make certain of a refuge until daylight, we resolved to remain in the courtyard—to sleep in or under the cart, as might be most convenient and safe for ourselves and the scanty supply of necessities we were carrying. Our companion, who had had ample experience in the management of such dilemmas, after making a brilliant chevy against the annoying mass of white and blue, and sending it flying in wild disorder through every possible aperture and over every clearable wall or barrier, betook himself to a snug little room lighted up by two tallow candles and tenanted by two Chinese—the elder and superior being a dumpy, diminutive creature, with a pulpy asthmatical face, and with a very prominent convexity over the region of his stomach, that indicated an advanced stage of prosperity by no means to be concealed, for he had undressed the upper half of his sleek, shining little body, and wore nothing but a pair of strangely-cut grotesque things gathered in great folds around his waist, ungainly and ample enough for the hinder extremities of a hippopotamus, and which, by reason of their encasing his short bandy legs, must here be called trousers. The other was a tall fellow in drab-coloured cottons. Both these individuals sprang up

from the attitudes they had been indolently reclining in as M. entered, as if astonished and little pleased at the interruption.

The podgy gentleman—at this moment looking for all the world as if he had sat for all the portraits, ivory, wood, or jade carvings, of all the patriarchal old men that ever existed or do exist in the eccentric fancies of native art—had just left a tiny square couch in the middle of the cramped room, that seemed adapted to his length and width. It was covered inside with white cotton and comfortably curtained over with thin snowy gauze spread on four corner bamboos to prevent the ingress of any daring gangs of marauding mosquitos while his serene individuality reposed. He seemed more taken aback at the occupation in which we found him engaged than irritated at our unannounced intrusion, for he had been opium-smoking. There, on the miniature bed, stood the small stool, with the yet reeking opium pipe—the smoky deep yellow flame of the lamp dancing on it—and the thin cane pillow on which his globular head had rested during the indulgence of his soporific passion, which we had unwittingly interrupted before the due quantity of the ‘*manus dei*’ had been consumed; the larger portion yet remained in the concavity of the cockle-shell near the lamp, testifying to the liberal dose he had laid out for himself for the evening. To M.’s question as to whether he was the landlord, he could not return an answer for some seconds, but kept looking timidly at us, until his neighbour, who had been only inhaling the fumes of the tobacco-pipe, took up the conversation, and set the old man at his ease. He was in no way connected with the inn, but only a lodger, a merchant from some sea-port on the south, and had been a number of years resident in the town.

They could tell nothing about the capabilities of the house, but kindly requested us to sit down on two of the three chairs the room boasted, offered us pipes, and, better

and more welcome than all, filled two cups with scalding weak tea from the inseparable attendant—a large pewter teapot.

Meantime the crowd became more numerous; the window we were sitting near had every one of its oil-paper panes perforated by long-nailed fingers, and eyes darkly sparkling were behind the gaps. The door was twice or thrice nearly carried by storm, and nothing but the dashing sorties of the beleaguered inmates saved the door and window-frame from being carried out of the range of vision. Our quondam friends were civil, but uncomfortable, and evidently did not wish or could not summon courage to smooth the troubled spirits outside; and the proprietors^s of the numerous equipages and beasts of draught there, roared loudly when one of our irruptions caused a more than usual panic and smashing of shafts, with breaking away of the live stock. It was therefore deemed high time that a more isolated and independent corner should be found, and this M. set himself to seek. Before long he proclaimed that a somewhat unusual appendage to a Chinese building, a second floor, was unoccupied, and that to it we must adjourn. A paper lantern is snatched from the hand of one of our courtyard friends; we scramble into a dilapidated doorway, through a steamy cookshop surfeited with oleaginous odours, and from which the semi-rude greasy *artistes* have levanted on the noisy buzz. Without warning of our approach, we pass to a narrow passage full of break-shin furniture, from whence we can grapple our way to the foot of a creaking shaky staircase, and with about twenty strides reach the landing-place of our wished-for dormitory—an old lumber-room partially filled with very old, very much worn-out household chattels, the rafters cobwebby and scorpion-haunted. They bore a miscellaneous assortment of festival paraphernalia, whose faded colours and tattered tawdry detracted nothing from the general appearance of the place, and lent an air of melancholy despair to two gigantic butterfly

kites with flaccid wings drooping over the mouldy beams instead of fluttering in the freshening breeze. Without the slightest demur we are ready to accept the cover of such a dusky roof.

A man and two or three boys have appeared, as the representatives of the house; cold water is brought to assuage our thirst and bathe our feet; hot tea, for which we have brought sugar, so luxurious are we, reeks in very common bowls; rice, eggs, and the remains of our sausage all marshal themselves under the generalship of Ma-foo, who is now self-dubbed *chef de cuisine* of our peripatetic establishment; and we eat, drink, and are as merry as many more fortunately situated for good cheer. The stairs are groaning and squeaking under their unwonted burden, the floor of the outer room rocks and reels from the oscillating weight imposed on it by countless feet; the sanctity of the inner crib, in which we have cautiously lodged our all, and in which we are now preparing to sleep, is remorselessly invaded; youth and old age stand before us in palpable outline and substantiality, wondrously gazing; while over their heads and away in the darkness, eyes twinklingly give out their lustre like unnumbered stars in the firmament, and the shuffling din of footsteps and tongues affords us a gratuitous concert by no means entertainable after such an unpleasant day. We bore it all, nevertheless, with the greatest patience, until it could be borne no longer. Even Ma-foo, the most tolerant of all humanity, began to lose patience, and his thin shrivelled figure gave tokens of anger. The crush and hurry-skurry reached its exacerbating maximum when M. made one of his sallies armed with a riding-whip.

'*Est modus in rebus* will apply to obstreperous curiosity as well as anything else,' we could not help muttering as a dreadful row ensued—pushing, jumping, and gyrations of the most indescribable kind supervening upon the sudden apparition of the stranger in such a threatening attitude, until

the whole place was in a state of lively vibration, and nothing less than a sudden visit to the ground-floor seemed likely to be the termination of it.

Hard must have been the tumbles, shocking must have been the squeezes, and heart-rending the rents inflicted on the flowing robes of the nocturnal visitors by that return call. Its effects soon wore off, however; before many minutes a forlorn hope of juvenile desperadoes had once more scaled the ascent, carefully pushed their way through the long gallery of a room, and there were their obliquely-curtained eyes peering wistfully at us from the nearest and safest points of view. They had fairly outstripped us in zeal. Finding our efforts unavailing to drive them permanently away, we had nothing else for it, and so surrendered laughingly, lying down on a very dirty bench. We got the man and boy attendants to open widely the decrepid windows, and make sundry openings to windward, for the entrance of the fresh north breeze that immediately began to blow coolly and somnolescently around; and under the guardianship of a great tortoise-looking pasteboard reptile which hung aloft and gapingly glared below on us with its redundant whitey-piscine eyes, we, in a very few seconds, were quite forgetful of the locality we had reached, or of the spherical physiognomies that loomed upon us in this new paradise so far from home.

‘Blessings on sleep! it wraps one round like a mantle,’ gratefully says trite Sancho Panza. Redoubled blessings on it, we say, when, after a twelve hours’ ride through such a region, cheerless and waterless, broiling and dusty, it sheds its favours so assuagingly and without solicitation; obliterating all sense of loneliness or hardship, and alleviating the effects of fatigue.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TOWN OF FUNG-TAI—AN IMPROVING COUNTRY, AND THE THRIFT OF ITS INHABITANTS—ITS AGRICULTURE—RECOLLECTIONS OF HOME—GRAIN-FIELDS—GARDENS—AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY—THE GRAVE-YARDS—WAYSIDE WELLS—THE VILLAGE PATRIARCHS—THE HAMLET OF HANCHUNG—OUR RECEPTION—‘MEN OF THE GREAT ENGLISH NATION’—AUTOGRAPH-HUNTERS—FAN-INSCRIBING.

SO sound were our slumbers, as we lay exposed to the heavenly night wind on the rigid structure that served us for a bed-place in that airy attic, that—despite the watchman’s punctilious chronological registrations on the noisy gong, the melodious cantillations of the early vendors of materials for the preparation of the early morning meal, or the rapid accession to the number of those hapless beings who, we could not forbear thinking, must have kept watch over us during the night in order to notify to the outsiders if anything particularly strange presided over or influenced us during the dark hours devoted to rest and peace by themselves, as they crouched down on their hunkers lost in attention—we did not awake until a late hour, when the sun had fairly got above the tops of the houses, throwing his rays in gold and silver gleams, over furrowed tiles and horned gables,—through the verdant foliage of the wide-spreading willows that grew in an adjoining garden, and, in long dazzling white pencils, darted in fitful starts through our windows and played about our bodies like the impaling knives hurled from the steady hand of a Chinese juggler.

We had o’erslept ourselves, and were all the better for it—~~if~~ entire riddance from weariness and thirst, hunger

and scorching, and the substitution of good spirits, and contentment in lieu thereof, were to be accepted as guarantees. The baggage was quickly huddled into the cart, after a mild form of breakfasting had been rehearsed on the remains of last night's feast; the mules were once more in harness, the ungroomed steeds fixed in their rusty, dusty saddles and bridles, the saddle-girths barely clutching each side of the saddles over stomachs filled to bursting or cerebral apoplexy by unmeasured quantities of cut straw. Ma-foo is mounted; our last night's acquaintance, jacketless as usual, protrudes his little fat body with his little round face, garnished by a long-stemmed pipe, for a second beyond the cover of the door, and darts back again as we make as speedy an exit as possible. We are besieged by the citizens and the scamps of the place, who cling tenaciously to our skirts as we emerge from the 'Tien,' and they only left us when speed and distance had vanquished them. The town of Fung-tai was now visible, and though in the darkness of our entry we may have missed the best portion, yet we were pleased with this view of the small place. The houses were remarkably good, the shops large and cleanly for Chinese shops, and the main street through which we were passing tolerably wide, though, like all other streets or roads here, unpaved and rutted.

An iron-foundry stood on our right as we passed through, in the courtyard of which we could see pots and cauldrons and other articles of utility laid out in rows, and smutty faces and hands moving among them; while on the right—on the left bank of the Hwang-shing-hô, to which the town seems to be principally indebted for its trade—were timber-yards and workshops in abundance, the toiling inmates of which skip out to have a look at such an unwonted sight. The road leading for about a mile from the suburbs, is raised many feet above the level of the plain; and the solid character of its earthen banks, the width and firmness of the surface,

and the efficiency and neatness of the deep drains on each side, mark its importance in regard to the communication maintained between this and the adjacent towns and villages beyond. Drawing nearer the hills, with their endless variety of aspect, the country rises in gentle undulations and in perceptible slope towards their base; great care begins to be manifested in the cultivation of the land, which is improving in every possible way. The region of deluge and prostrating monotony, with its vapid sameness and congregated family arks, has disappeared; all that can please or delight the eye in rural beauty is before us, and we pass along with a sentiment and a keener relish for everything Chinese than had animated us since our arrival in the Flowery Land,—a condition of happiness, doubtless, owing much to sound healthful sleep, the salubrity of the locality, and the modified temperature, with the delightful variation in the landscape; but perhaps more to the investment we greedily made of a few cash in pocketfuls of apricots and peaches, which, though scarcely ripe, gave sufficient of the aroma and *goût* of these fruits to refresh our dusty mouths and throats for a long time. After travelling through many quiet villages and hamlets standing on the winding road, about ten o'clock we come upon the first spring well we have seen since leaving Peking last year. It was in as pretty and as homely a village as could well be found out of Britain, the name of which—*Ec-ma-tschwan*, 30 le from *Fung-tai*—for the benefit and regeneration of future summer travellers, we here record; and 10 le further we found another quite as charming and as rich in the possession of excellent water, with its little cottages built of brick and whitewashed, their roofs tiled or thatched, and roomy enclosures also of brick, finished in the most workmanlike manner, and the attached gardens stocked with fruit trees and vegetables. Every little aggregation of houses, spread evenly and not too thickly over the country, was snugly embosomed in genial sylvan shade, from the light