enclosed in a delicious setting of varied green, there heaped on a low mound, the front or gable end becomes conspicuous; the first, with a door in the middle and a window on each side, stare down the cleft as if they were the ocular and olfactory features of a pallid, lurking Cyclops; the latter, with a single black aperture in their pearly surface, like the entrance to a tunnel in a chalk cliff; presently other dwellings glint out in the sunshine from the jasper-and-gold coloured mass, like snowflakes.

Everything in this unexpected Arcadia was a sheet, a clump, or a tuft of emerald and olive green, near the low banks of the water, and in the full bloom of an advanced summer. To our left, between the town and the hills, from the middle of the highly-cultivated level in that direction springs an abrupt and rather stately hillock, on which the eye rested with curious delight, for it was decked and capped by groups of those pretty little temples that form such a distinctive feature in Chinese scenery. They were perched in the most arbitrary manner around a larger structure of the stereotyped religious style of architecture, and embellished by harsh, bristly, gloomy fir trees—favoured emblems of long life to the imaginations of our friends, but symbols of grief and loneliness to ours, and very much out of keeping, too, with such a glad scene.

On our right, to the south of the town, rich sweeps of green millet and maize roll and heave in long lines, without break or interruption, until they impinge against the blue horizon. Then comes a hill more than five hundred feet in height,—the Pagoda hill. The summit is crowned not only by the peculiar building of that name and shape, that stands so near the brink of the steepest face of the precipitous crag as to appear ready to topple over, were it not maintained *in situ* by some invisible power, but also by a neat little house of the dovecot fashion,—probably another temple,—peeping over into the cheerful picture below from between two or

three aged pines standing within a tiny palisade of millet stalks.

On the opposite side of the river, about half a mile from it, and running from the hills parallel to its left bank, descends an abrupt ridge, densely clothed with trees, until it gradually smooths down into the universal level, dotted along its sides and crest with many a flat-roofed cottage, half buried in luxuriant vegetation. Ornamental trees, orchards, and cereals, rested as securely in their undisturbed paradise, as if their owners knew nothing of the internecine feuds that were destroying the nation.

It was impossible to look on such a beautiful picture, now in its fairest and most felicitous colouring, without fervently wishing it might never be changed into a landscape of ruin and sorrow, made up of burning roof-trees, forsaken fields sprinkled with the blood of their tillers, and broken-hearted beggars haunting the devastated spots on hill and in valley!

But a few minutes' ride was required to bring us alongside of the Lan-hô, the muddy waters of which it was necessary to ferry, the width at present being not much less than two hundred yards, but, by the broad sandy beach on the other side, at certain seasons it must be at least two hundred more. There was some little life and motion going on on the right bank, caused by the boat traffic passing up and down, as well as by the presence of the ferry-boats poling and pushing their promiscuous loads about from side to side. A miniature fleet of tiny, long, narrow, canoe-like lighters, without keels, and alike square at stem and stern to admit of their being lashed to each other in strings, are moored to the low alluvial bank, on which their crews are hurriedly preparing the evening meal, or are hard at work transferring to the shore the cargoes of rice, salt, and other native produce brought up by these craft of light draught from the junks which had penetrated from the Gulf up the river, until the shallowness of the water stopped their farther advance.

Various detachments, consisting each of half a dozen or more boats, joined bow to stern, filled with merchandise of some kind or other, were pulled up against the stream — which must have been running down at the rate of a mile and a half an hour — by nude gaunt figures, tanned to the deepest brown by the hot rays of the sun; their brain-pans being alone shielded from its frizzling effects by a blue sort of turban. Their bodies were nearly bent double by the heavy strain put upon them, and their chests were deeply indented by the bamboo which passes diagonally across the breast, and to which is tied the long end of the tracking-cord attached to the slender mast of the leading boat — the only mast in the fleet.

Wearily they plod on, two or three to a line, keeping step, and each pulling his just share of the burden, never talking, and but rarely hiccuping a low monotonous melody; while the dark-faced fellow who crouches down in the stern of the last skiff with a clumsy oar keeps the flotilla clear of the sides and from shoals, as it floats away towards the mountains on its passage perhaps to Zehol, far beyond their impracticable heights.

Some of these dusky slaves came to look at us in the most irreverent and shameless manner, evidently thinking no more of exhibiting themselves before strangers without a garment than we would of appearing before them without gloves.

A large square enclosure of the never-failing millet straw, with a range of bothies at one side of the same material daubed with mud, is nearly filled by teams of quadrupeds eating out of mangers, with their carts, owners, and drivers, all awaiting their turn to cross by the busy ferry.

We were obligingly permitted to avail ourselves of the first boat coming alongside, by those who were ready for embarkation,—so, after the indispensable amount of difficulty and delay consequent on unyoking the skittish mules, wheel-

ing the cart up a narrow wooden inclined plane to the flush deck, jumping the animals on board from the shore, when everything else had been stowed away, the cranky vessel was pushed off, and we were vigorously engaged in soothing or coercing the more alarmed quadrupeds on their departure from the shore.

The depth of the river here was in no part more than eight feet, with in some places a rocky bottom, in others sand or alluvium. Below, and not far from the ferry track, a small dry shoal, covered with rushes and tenanted by various members of the gull family, lay in the middle of the stream, offering an insurmountable obstacle to the passage of anything through the remaining navigable portions, save the light skiffs employed by the natives.

On the opposite side a large convoy of heavy country carts, covered with the mud of many days' travel, was halted for the arrival of boats to convey them across.

They were transporting a number of soldiers towards the west, and were encumbered by a very promiscuous stock of baggage, packed and slung below and above the semicircular neat roof, leaving only room sufficient for one or two passengers to lie on the boards. Muzzles of matchlocks, tufted heads of spears, leathern quivers filled with arrows, and heavy swords, were artfully displayed under cover, to show the warlike mission of their wearers.

While the mules were being disembarked and harnessed again on the shingly beach, several of these eastern warriors collected around us and were intensely curious about all they saw, especially admiring our saddles and bridles, and our boots; even going so far as to apply the sense of touch to the cloth of our coats and trousers—extolling loudly the quality and fashion of our apparel and equipment.

One, who appeared to be the leader, and who certainly exhibited more intelligence and address than any of his fellows, made himself very busy, and had apparently more

purpose in his inquiries; and with him, until the tardy cart was ready, we sought to fraternise.

With much of the dare-devil revealed in his youthful but hard features, and as much swagger and style in his carriage and bearing as a newly-promoted French sous-officier, he was as timid and scared as any schoolboy when we began to talk to him. He was tall and well proportioned, and as erect as if he had been all his days in the hands of a Western drill sergeant; his glossy well-plaited queue was wound jauntily round his head — and with it worn in this way every Chinaman looks well — the end of the heavy black silk cord with which it was incorporated dangling saucily over the right shoulder; his figure was well set off by the loose white jacket partially covering his arms and chest; and a thick blue cotton sash was around his waist, in which were stuck two long wooden-handled dirks, bound together for some mysterious purpose by leathern thongs.

He wore a pair of wide-legged blue cotton trousers, tied round the ankle by a broad white bandage, and ornamented from thence to the knee with a profusion of wreaths and swirls in black velvet, until in front of the knee the character 'Shau'—meaning longevity—terminated the gay embroidery. By this he was distinguished from his brother soldiers, who were but coarsely clad. The nails on his delicate fingers were long enough to serve as marrow-spoons, and his shoes, though dust-stained, were superior to the cobbled-up old sandals of his comrades.

In short, our youthful friend was nothing less, in our eyes, than a *beau sabreur* of a peaceful nation; a dandy swinge-buckler or sworder among unarmed villagers, and a veritable Mars when gallantly endeavouring to storm the hearts of the dark glancing beauties by whose homes he passed.

In return for the close inspection he had made of us, we imagined we were fairly entitled to ask him some little questions, and to request a look at his side-arms, but he quickly

retired beyond our reach, and eyed us for a few minutes rather doubtingly, until, struck with the ridiculous idea of such a valiant-looking person going to fight the battles of his country with 'longevity' on his legs, we laughingly enquired the meaning of such a whimsical device. He skulked away out of sight among the waggons, evidently taken aback at such unwonted liberties.

When we were ready to resume our journey, the groom was told to pay the ferrymen some small sum for their trouble, but the two rascals—great, ill-favoured individuals—would take nothing less than their demand of one thousand cash, and looked in every way ready to make a row of it. Ma-foo fruitlessly exerted his persuasive eloquence; in vain M. threatened to re-cross to Lanchow, there to protest before a mandarin his determination not to pay between four and five shillings for what, at most, cost no more than a few cash to an ordinary traveller.

Things were in a fix, words were running high, a boisterous altercation was imminent — for both sides seemed resolved not to surrender the slightest tithe of their claims — and the evening was approaching—at this crisis the bashful soldier came up, listened for a few moments to the dispute, and then took the elder of the boatmen aside. He plied the fellow with such irresistible reasoning, that presently we were immensely astonished by an announcement that all had been settled! There was nothing to pay, and we had permission to depart.

The would-be extortioners at once betook themselves to their boat, and were soon aiding the tired waggon conductors to get their loads on board. Our amiable friend having accomplished this essential service, modestly maintained a distant position, where he kept posturing gracefully at the bow of the boat, out of reach of our thanks. We made no attempt to alter this arrangement, as we were confident that this was one of those ferries maintained in lieu of a bridge

by the Chinese government for the public service, and for the gratuitous passage of wayfarers across the river. The fellows had tried to extort this large sum, presuming on our ignorance and inability to resist, as we were travelling without the slightest semblance of protection or authority from their officials.

Upon leaving the dry sand and shingle of the now attenuated river's bed, the road ascended the abrupt heights in a rather disagreeable uphill fashion, that tried the strength and endurance of our team, and the tough texture of the gear and traces of twisted thongs. But the summit was gained without any mishap, after a short though active spurt for four or five hundred yards, during which the mules had exhibited such decided symptoms of fatigue, that it was as much a matter of necessity as of humanity to give them a sufficient rest.

It was but doing simple justice to ourselves and the landscape we had quitted, to bestow on it another survey before bidding adieu to one of the prettiest prospects it had been our good fortune to meet in this land, for down in that valley, spread out under that intensely blue sky that was undiscoloured by cloud, lay as serene a picture of beauty and rural tranquillity as the heart of man could desire to find in any quarter of the world.

We halted in a little village surrounded by orchards and great wide-spreading walnut trees, that threw dark masses of foliage over cottage and garden; and near us stood a rude Artesian well, from which the good folks drew deliciously cool and sweet water.

The afternoon was so clear, that the eye could scan for many miles over the country through which we had traversed. Almost at our feet, the Lan-hô meandered gently along the edge of the plain, like a wide streak of black paint, until lost in the corn-land a long way south, and in the gully between those towering peaks in the opposite direction. On its

surface men and boats appeared like so many water-scorpions leisurely swimming about or asleep under the tiny trees overhanging the water.

Thence the plain rolled away in verdant sheets until stopped by the microscopic roofs of houses among the willows and fruit trees; then the fantastic turrets of the Lanchow wall threw up their sharp dark edges over all; beyond to the left, the Pagoda hill uplifted its bluish-grey

View of Lanchow.

structure as boldly as does Ailsa Craig from the Frith of Clyde.

On the other side, a confused array of jags and pinnacles, regular in height as the teeth of a saw, looking as if they would disappear altogether in the golden-and-violet sky, so sharp seemed their points, while in the gathering haziness of the evening, the temple hill—a *Mons Paradisea* fit for the gods—softly reclined at the base of the mountains, as if it

had never been touched by the profane hand of Buddha's followers.

Long did we gaze across the pleasant expanse until the golden light of the sun followed him down behind the dusky-blue chain of rocks, and the rosy hues were quickly flying beneath the irregular horizon, thinning away in intensity as they sank; then we somewhat unwillingly turned our faces towards the lonely stretch of unknown road yet to be got over.

Every variety of British landscape had been stored away in the treasure-house of memory, but none made so pleasant an impression, nor came to our recollections afterwards, clothed in so many charms, as the view just described.

The narrow road wound and twisted over all sorts of outrageous heights and hollows; at one time doubling round the advanced end of a bank, at another over crumbling stony fragments thrust through its face; more frequently burrowing through deep cuttings, where the labour that had been bestowed on them evinced the value put by the people of these parts on opening a means of communication with the river.

Millet, and orchards, and willows were everywhere, prying faces of all ages stared down on us from the edges of the banks above, until, in the grey twilight, the straggling residences of stone or mud began to assume something like order, and formed themselves up in two long lines, between which we rattled over sundry stones, serving as an irregular pavement, and were pleased to be told that our destination for the night had been reached.

We were in the town at the distance we had proposed at starting in the morning, and there was the inn—the 'Shih Mun,' or Rocky Portal, in which we might put up. Neither the disconsolate-looking tenements, standing as if hopelessly vacant, with their dull doors and windows unoccupied, nor the outside of the *auberge*, at the gate of which the muleteer halted, gave tokens of any uncommon degree of comfort or

amity. To say the least of it, the locality bore a very suspicious aspect, notwithstanding the combined protestations of Ma-foo and the carter to the contrary, and their bold and loud testimonies as to the excellences of the 'Tien.' I was at all times a little inclined to suspect the conduct and feelings of the natives, among whom chance ordained that I should trust myself during the watches of the night—not that I was afraid of them, or of any damage they might have inflicted, but I habitually kept a sharp look-out, so as not to be thrown off my guard. My misgivings were increased when, on making the customary survey before turning in, I discerned, a few dozen paces from the house, nailed high up against the grey corticose trunk of an old willow, one of those horrid wooden golgothas, through the spars of which might be seen the revolting, corroded, black 'caput mortuum' of some unfortunate wretch, who, by committing murder or robbery, had incurred the popular penalty of beheading.

Small time, however, was there for consideration. The cart and its attendants had passed the portal, and it was incumbent on us to follow suit. Our ponies needed no incentive, but rushed eagerly into the quadrangle, where our unpleasant feelings ceased. We found ourselves in one of the snuggest little places we had yet seen in China, which indicated a nearer approach to civilisation than any of the hovels designated 'inns' occupied by us since our departure from Tien-tsin. The servants, far from manifesting those signs of fear or curiosity that had rendered their office a sinecure, came forward with alacrity. With as much obsequiousness as distinguishes the Johns and Thomases of Western lands, they took our ponies by the bridles while we dismounted, as if they had been all their lives accustomed to foreigners, and assisted the carter in unharnessing his fatigued pair of mules as if he had been an old acquaintance.

The landlord, a fine, stately, strapping, middle-aged man,

with as well-formed and good-humoured a set of features as host could wish to be furnished with—and a jolly countenance should be a speciality in a Boniface—came towards us streaking his thin moustache and giving one or two jerks of his head to adjust the luxurious plaited appendage between his shoulders, bestowing on us our guest rite in a very graceful genuflexion; his open face betraying not the slightest vestige of surprise, but rather pleasure at the rencontre, as if it said—

> 'Sirs, you are very welcome to our house:
> It must appear in other ways than words,
> Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy.'

In a word, the greeting was of so warm a nature, that on the spot we found, as it were, a home; and we were domiciled for the next eight or nine hours of the twenty-four as securely and satisfactorily under the roof and auspices of this sober-complexioned worthy as if some twenty thousand miles, more or less, did not intervene between us and the most commendable family hotel within the precincts of the world's metropolis. There we remained, inhaling the pure invigorating mountain air, and delighting in as pleasant a hostelry, consistent with Chinese taste and ideas of accommodation, as anyone, under the circumstances, could desire.

At what must have been a very respectable elevation above the sea level, the temperature felt agreeably cool and even bracing. There needed no better proof of the sanitary condition of the place than the evidence of our own senses, when we had the opportunity of examining the healthy bloom on the cheeks of a crowd of robust individuals, who began to straggle into the enclosure as soon as they heard of our arrival.

It was just the sort of place medical men would select as a sanatorium for people worn out by the sultry, relaxing heat of the plain; and it would have done credit to their choice.

On two sides of the spacious yard, built up against the high stone walls, were numerous sheds and troughs for the ponies; in front, facing the street, and communicating with the yard and that thoroughfare by two wide doors, were the servants' hall, the kitchen, the public *salle-à-manger*, the dormitory for the reception of the humbler and less ostentatious class of wayfarers, and the general rendezvous for everybody,—saving and except the more aristocratic visitors,—all in one.

From this sallied forth, when required, the host, the cook, the accountant, the scullion, the man-of-all-work,—we never in the whole course of the journey saw a female in one of these higgledy-piggledy abodes,—and the eager crowd, after they had discussed the best mode of paying us a visit; and into it our two followers were only too ready to dive whenever our backs were turned, coming out again highly impregnated with the heavy alcoholic effluvium of Samshu, which acquisition led us to believe that the inn added dram-shop to its other functions.

It was a low, murky, single-storied den, redolent of the powerful fumes of all sorts of volatile ingredients; therefore, keeping it at a respectful distance, we faced about. Beyond it, there was a temporary roof of fir-branches, raised on poles in the middle of the yard, with tables and chairs underneath for the use of those who preferred a shady retreat in the open air at midday to the sudorific indoors, and where the *bona-fide* travellers took up their quarters.

A regular series of one-storied stone-and-brick buildings stood at the bottom of a grassy knoll, on which the never-absent willow and pine-tree waved thickly and darkly against the sides of the precipitous mountains that rose immediately in their rear: their spinous ridges, now ominously wrapped in dense white clouds, indicated anything but fine weather.

Under the leadership of our long white-robed cicerone, we were conducted to these neat little refuges, and indulged in

a peep at our apartment. The inspection was in every way calculated to please; no difficulty was experienced in reconciling ourselves to such good luck, or in laying ourselves out for a night of supine enjoyment, as a sort of sequel to so many days' saddle work.

But, while preparations are being made for dinner, after we have imbibed the habitual quantity of pure cold water and a small basin of hot tea, according to Ma-foo's prescription, let us take a look at the outside, and then at the inside, of this model habitation.

Walking in the courtyard, we discover that our civil landlord is a family man, and that his private quarters stand behind the other buildings, quite out of the way of ordinary traffic. We cast our eyes that way; but not a creature is moving. The windows are completely hid by a low wall thrown up before them, which is whitewashed and covered with black characters, expressing, or asking for, all sorts of good things. Finding nothing in this direction, we betake ourselves again to an examination of the skill and taste expended on the ground in front of our apartments, and find occupation enough.

From one end of the range to the other, which is raised three or four steps above the level of the court, a wide space is partitioned off by an ingeniously plaited fence of millet stalk, and cut out in miniature terraces for the reception of plants in pots,—chiefly three varieties of hollyhock, the China aster, and some kinds of roses in full flower, that threw out a sweet perfume to the dewy night,—with an abundance of creepers clinging to the fence and festooning the front of the house,—crimson amaranths lending their gay colours to blend with the hues of the evergreen shrubs interspersed among them.

At each side of the doorway, resting on rugged pillars of rockwork, are immense glazed vases filled with water, on the surface of which float fine specimens of the almost idolised

water lily—just on the point of blooming, with black and red gold fish swimming around the stems, and sporting under the great palmate leaves—curious-looking animals, with an extraordinary developement of the caudal fin, and eyes protruding far beyond their heads. In one corner are some dwarf fruit trees, the most notable of which is the species of citron called the 'fingers of Buddha'—from the digitated manner in which the fruit grows—the plum-tree, and the peach, the double blossoms of which, in the early spring months, form such a beautiful spectacle in northern gardens.

These signs of attention to embellishment and neatness gave quite a charm to the whole of the place, and tended more to please one with the establishment, than if it had been a great deal more pretending. The rooms, too, were fair models of the North China dwellings, and showed the same regard for the just disposition of the minor details. The entire building had been erected in the undeviating style of architecture of the country, embracing nothing either of grandeur or splendour, and scarcely boasting anything more than a series of roofs supported by plain walls, such as would mark the earliest attempts of a people relinquishing the tents of a nomadic life. From the palace to the temple, and from the temple through all the different classes of tenement down to the lowest hovel of mud, the same primitive elements prevail, and are retained in what must be nearly all their early simplicity; the only attempts at ornamentation being chiefly lavished on the roofs. In the south of China, and more especially in the larger cities—not excepting the more northern city of Shanghai—very many of the houses are two-storied, and furnished with a small wooden staircase inside; in the north not a dwelling could we see of more than one story, save the larger temples at Peking and Tien-tsin, where a row of musty rooms were sometimes piled on the lower tier.

The ground floor seems to be all that is necessary or

desirable, in a land where cultivation demands so much space for the maintenance of the inhabitants, though for what reason it would be hard to discover, unless it be true that no structures are permitted to be raised higher than the temples, or that the female portion of the community, in consequence of their distorted feet, are considered unable to ascend or descend stairs; so that a wasteful extent of ground is covered by low buildings, and occupied by extravagantly proportioned courtyards, without any commensurate advantage.

There is a sense of littleness in the general conception, of triviality and toyishness in all the details, that is immediately impressed upon the stranger, somehow or other, at first unfavourably. In time, however, he perceives a happy mixture of simplicity, and even elegance, in the light and airy mansions, sufficient to demand some amount of admiration.

The general absence of stone blocks in buildings of any height, the substitution for these of brick in thin weak walls, and a predominance of timber in the composition of all dwellings and public edifices, tend to early decay—a result very much accelerated by the heavy overdone roofs; so that, like many things one sees, reads, and hears about in China, the national architecture presents a tottering, dilapidated appearance everywhere, even within the sacred precincts of the Imperial residence at Peking.

It seems strange, that though the Chinese have an abundance of excellent granite and other stone, perhaps more easily wrought, in the lofty but accessible ranges of hills bordering the greater portion of the rich alluvial plain in which their principal cities and towns are situated, with rivers, streams, and canals on which to transport them, yet, except for some unimportant purpose, such as paving streets with slabs here and there, forming foundations for city walls, building bridges, or steps for doorways, they do not avail themselves of the advantage. They prefer the employment of brick and wood chiefly, if not altogether, in the erection of

public and private edifices, contrasting in this respect with the ancient Egyptians, who quarried and conveyed to great distances the indestructible granite rock wherewith to build and adorn those wondrous structures, those enduring remains of departed magnificence, which remain marvels to the traveller who rides among them for hundreds of miles in the valley of the Nile.

Despising or fearing all without her wide boundaries—a comparatively refined nation when other countries were almost totally uncivilised, rendered independent by her immense wealth and wide range of climates, as well as by the industry of her peaceful subjects, of the kingdoms around—China has exercised but little influence in modifying or directing the progress of either the antique or modern world.

Nevertheless, by maintaining an isolated self-reliant position, and inhibiting all intercourse with other peoples—building, inventing, labouring, and regulating after her own fashion, more for the present than the future—she has, according to Chinese notions, done all that was required to constitute her a great empire; while the Egyptians and Assyrians have been swept away, leaving nothing but their indelible traditions and fancies figured on the desolate fragments of grand temples and cities; and Greek and Roman have faded away, endowing, however, the art of our day with unrivalled models. With convenient materials well adapted for carving in plenty, with the use of which for other purposes Chinamen seem to be well acquainted, it is astonishing that they did not avail themselves of their aid to perpetuate the memories of their divinities, emperors, heroes, or scholars—the more especially as all their oldest mythological allegories represent Pwanku, the first man, chiselling the heavens out of chaos, and images were introduced at no very remote date for purposes of worship, nearly all of which are formed from wood or mud.

They have a cupola-shaped monument in the Lama temple, at the northern suburb of Peking,—a curious erection, of white marble, covered with elaborately-cut historical or allegorical subjects in *basso* and *alto-relievo*. It was built to commemorate the death of Pan-Shen Lama, who, in the forty-fourth year of Kieng-lung, came to Peking, and 'went to rest' in the temple, from whence His Majesty sent him back to Thibet in a golden pagoda or mausoleum. Some graveyards also contain a few laboriously-wrought, but unique specimens of carving, all of modern production, and in all probability the result of Jesuit instruction; but there is scarcely any proof that sculpture, as an art, has been recognised in the empire.

I discovered some old figures in the fields near Tien-tsin, half buried in the soil, disfigured, and otherwise neglected, of men — priests and warriors they appeared to be — and women, wearing strange costumes, with horses ready saddled, and cattle, sheep, and dogs, all of life size, and hewn out of the common, greyish-blue, compact limestone, found in the neighbouring hills.

Without the Shanghai city walls, in a little garden, I met with fac-similes of these, but generally defaced and without dates, though they are sometimes asserted to belong to the early days of the Ming dynasty, — no farther back than six centuries, — and are supposed to be fragments of the tombs of high personages, each group doing duty as attendants to serve in Hades.

Too much engaged in their easy work-a-day world, unmindful of the future, and ever looking back towards their ancient customs and institutions, instead of forward to a higher state of civilisation, all their actions biassed by their rigidly economical and calculating minds, the men of the Middle Kingdom are not likely to sacrifice time and labour in what does not possess the recommendation of present utility.

One might have concluded that a difference of climate,

from a pretty equable southern temperature to one of wide and severe extremes, would have caused the Northern Chinese to modify their tastes in regard to the construction of their dwellings, and meet the requirements of the seasons by suitable arrangements within doors; but no—each house is made as open, airy, and summer-like, and yet as confined, as if the tropical heat never disappeared, and its inmates were condemned to an unvarying round of hot days and years.

No provision is made for the bitter winter,—when an intensely chilly gale from the Gulf drives the blood into the innermost recesses of the body, leaving every exposed surface liable to frost-bite,—except the oven couch that adorns every apartment, and which I thought such a singular contrivance the first time I saw it in a rude hovel at Talien-whan Bay.

The walls are—underneath those climbing plants—built of the blue bricks in universal use, north and south, and which are here, like the men who employ them, larger and of more substance than those seen at Shanghai or more southerly; and in very workmanlike style are laid in even courses, with no stone foundation, as such a substantial substructure is rare. But in every house in and around Tientsin, and along the whole route, when formed of bricks, there is a peculiarity I have never observed elsewhere. About two or three feet from the ground, separating one tier of bricks from that above, is a layer of coarse straw, laid transversely and closely, and trimly cut off to a level with the wall, in the face of which it looks rather odd.

To our enquiries as to the beneficial effects expected from this infirm introduction, the only reasonable reply has been that it prevents the *soo-chee*, or 'Spring-damp,' from rising and diffusing itself within the building, where it would remain until the winter, when, becoming frozen, it would expand and throw asunder the bricks, and be very likely to cause the downfall of the whole fabric. Whether this be true or not,

without more experience it would be rash for me to say; but certain it is, that, either owing to this precaution, or to the dry state of the atmosphere throughout the year, damp and its results are never discernible in the exteriors or interiors of the houses so prepared.

The Chinese have so long dwelt in raised dwellings of this description, and their powers of observation are so keen in such matters, that a knowledge of their habits predisposes one to believe their explanation, and give them credit for their acuteness.

All the first and middle-class houses I have seen were enclosed within high walls of brick or mud, and the veriest plebeian, the poorest rag or paper-gatherer, or the almost outcast proprietor of a den under a city wall, contrives to appropriate a scrap of ground,—a sort of neutral territory, hemmed in from public intrusion,—after the manner of their superiors. These better houses are often situated in the strangest out-of-the-way nooks and narrow lanes; and, when they chance to be in a trading thoroughfare, the appearance of the gloomy wall gives no token of what may be within, though it imparts a miserable character to what might otherwise be a cheerful street; so that when the European traveller ascends the few low steps that lie before the narrow doorway of a tolerably well-to-do Chinaman's private abode, and, bent on paying a 'chin-chinning,' or domiciliary visit to the good man, passes between two conical stone guardians, something like rabid dogs, with fierce, open mouths, protruded tongues, and *dumb-bells* round their necks, he is surprised to find a spacious courtyard, paved with bricks or tiles, leading perhaps to several others, and summer-house-like, self-contained buildings for every purpose of domestic life, methodically, though sometimes intricately, arranged.

A wall is now and then found in the yard facing the outer door, on one side of which is a little niche with the joss shrine—a smoky little idol with a pot before it, in which the

propitiary incense-sticks are to be burnt*—and on the other, flowery inscriptions in puzzling characters of great size, which, translated into our plain language, signify the most ardent invocations to their gods, or desires for the usual good fortune of a Chinese; profuse sentiments, such as 'May the beautiful stars of heaven shine continually on this door,' or 'May the moon with its heavenly light shed eternal beams of felicity on this house,' &c.

The chief point of attraction for displaying their peculiar tastes, as I before remarked, seems to be on the roof, which is heavily overdone with all kinds of ridges and furrows, curved and straight lines, and layers of ponderous blue tiles arranged in a grotesque fashion—the large semi-cylindrical ones at the corners being deeply indented with the character that indicates or expresses 'longevity'—perhaps the most popular in the language, figuring as it does not only on the ends of the tiles, but in some conspicuous place on almost every article—on their coffins, their chairs, caps, and shoes, on articles of ornament as well as those of utility, in the ceremonies at birth, marriage, and burial. It was not thought out of place on the nimble legs of our soldier-friend at the Lan-hô ferry, and, indeed, in some form or another—for it is written in about fifty different ways, and nearly every one at all educated can read the whole of them—it meets the eye everywhere.

The main courtyard of large houses, has a very lofty structure of poles and laths covered by matting—this our intelligent landlord has copied in his own rustic way in that cool shed before us—during the hot summer months; and these tall fabrics form very striking and prominent features in towns, where all the buildings are about the same height.

* Just as the Greeks had an altar to Apollo, their tutelary divinity, the sacred laurel tree, or a head of Hermes or Mercury, in the same situation.

But the quarters for domestics, and especially for the porter, near the street-entrance are left to broil in the sun, while it is only the more dignified and select portions of the habitation remotest from the front—those kept secluded from the ken of the world—that participate in the deep shelter thus afforded.

CHAPTER XII.

SUPERSTITIOUS FANCIES — THE HORSE-SHOE — WORDS OF GOOD OMEN — CHINESE LARES AND PENATES — HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE — USE OF THE KANG — HOT AIR — THE DOMESTIC HEARTH — PREFERENCE FOR AN ENGLISH FIRESIDE — A CHINESE ARMOURY — USE OF THE BOW — MUSCULAR DEVELOPEMENT — THROWING THE STONE — A PLEASANT REFECTION — CHINESE RESPECT FOR AGE — A NIGHT STORM — OUR ARMS.

ABSURD superstitious practices, and the effects of idle fancies, nurtured and strengthened by a false religion—a religion nothing better than a tissue of incongruous fables and puerile delusions—run riot everywhere in the public gaze; and sorcerers, necromancers, and soothsayers are ever in request to help those ignorant people who, haunted by bad fortune, malignant spirits, or unpropitious influences, are ready to come down handsomely to induce the sorcerer to ward off real or prospective disasters, by incantations, philters, or timely notice of the impending calamity.

This state of mind is more noticeable in large cities, such as Tien-tsin, than in the country, and though it jars very much on one's feelings, and excites a sincere pity, it cannot be forgotten that the most refined nations of antiquity shared similar delusions, and that even in our own land—not many generations ago—they flourished as luxuriantly.*

Looking at the two half-doors near which I am standing, I see what corresponds to a superstitious safeguard yet to

* It is impossible to forget that by order of a papal bull, the Inquisition hunted out and destroyed 100,000 victims for witchcraft in Germany; that 30,000 people suffered execution for the same in England; and about the year 1515, 500 witches were burnt in three months at Geneva.

be found on barn-doors and stables in England—the lucky horse-shoe. This is sometimes transferred to floating habitations, such as fishing-boats, and even, if I remember right, to more formidable craft—and had not the immortal Nelson a rusty symbol of this description nailed to the main or mizen-mast of his invulnerable flag-ship? In Gay's humorous fable of the old woman and her cats, he makes her complain that

> 'Straws laid across, my path retard,
> The horse-shoe nail'd, each threshold's guard.'

And so might the witches, warlocks, and foul spirits in North China grumble at similar agencies for their discomfiture; for in addition to the remarkable way in which the builders have endeavoured to avoid placing doorways so as to face each other, believing that it prevents the ready exit or entrance of the *mauvais gens* from place to place—two deities, one pasted against each half of the door, keep watch and ward over the portal intrusted to their supervision.

Chinese history declares that a spell or charm, consisting of the words 'Mun-tee' or 'Tau-foo,' specially devised for the subjugation or banishment of such baneful incorporeal beings, was introduced for the protection of the liege subjects who might be troubled by such visitants, and that it consisted of the four words Shin-tu and Yuh-li, which are the names of these gods. There they are, more ferocious and terror-inspiring than any of the bugbears of the nursery, in menacing postures, flourishing clubs and swinging great swords. One is a white King of Hearts' face, the other a thorough grim-griffin-hoof—a sort of salamander, with a Gorgon expression of countenance, and a complexion of a strong brick-red, from out of which large black and white crab-eyes are jumping in quite a demoniacal fashion, sufficiently horrible to send any number of children into convulsions of fright.

Sometimes, and more particularly in Tien-tsin, the silly notions of the people show themselves in a slightly different form. These are less easily noticed by the careless observer in the thronged and narrow streets, but are novel, if not interesting, when discovered. If a house abuts upon or stands before the end of a lane or passage, the side looking towards that passage almost invariably has a small tile or slab of stone let into it, with an inscription which varies with the fancy of the owner, the opinion of the fortune-telling sage, or the locality from whence the tablet may have been procured.

An inscription of this kind on a large slab of blue slate, neatly cut and painted, as if it demanded care and attention, I saw in the wing of a brick building at the foot of a by-lane, not far from the banks of the Peiho; and, curious to know its meaning, I obtained a translation of it. It was simply to the effect that 'This stone was brought from the province of Shantung, and placed here to prevent the evil influences of the lane coming near this house.'

This inscription is likely to excite a lively degree of interest in the scholar, from its similarity to those of a like nature preserved among the remains of Roman signs and pavements brought to light in England and elsewhere, where invocations to the *genius loci* for good fortune, frequently concluded with a desire to be spared from misfortune and malign influences. For example, on the shattered surface of a tesselated pavement found in the ruins of what had been a Roman private house at Salzburg, in Germany, an almost effaced writing has become apparent, but in a fragmentary condition, signifying —

'. . . . (Name of the person is lost) Hic habitat :
Nihil intret mali !' *

* '(——) dwells here—may nothing evil enter!' *The Celt, the Roman, and the Saxon*, by T. Wright, Esq., London.

At other times, instead of the written character, I have observed the *Yang yin pah kwa* — a species of religious 'mystic cabala,' made up of combinations of the monad and duad

principles of Chinese philosophy, with eight tables arranged in circles around the tadpole-like symbol, which is illustrative of the reciprocal state of everything in the Celestial's material world.

But I have remained long enough outside; it is almost dark, and the atmosphere feels rather damp, in consequence of the descent of the heavy clouds within a very short distance of the house: so I will go in for the night.

The door opens on an apartment which we may suppose is the hall or ante-room, and from which an inner room branches off to the right and left. The floors, both of inner and outer rooms, are of square tiles, and look cool enough for summer, but very shivery for winter. The walls are covered with a white satin or silvery paper, and are adorned with scrolls and labels. On a table in the centre stands, wonderful to behold, a very common glass globe — the most important curiosity in the house — set off as it is on a very

presuming stand of walnut wood, and placed in the situation where it can be most advantageously seen by the patronisers of the inn, when they seek the hospitality of the 'Shih Mun.'

I can scarcely do less than salute the *Lares* and *Penates*, who are worshipped in a little red-painted box, with a row of gilt attributes on each side, on the wall, facing the door.

There are two household gods sitting, in the dull light of two vermilion-coated candles, with legs crossed, and one hand admonishingly uplifted, as if giving a lecture on the nature and properties of the varied assortment of vegetable and animal messes laid before them in little cups, or rebuking their Pagan supporters for some neglect of religious rite or ordinance. The strong camphorous smell of the burning incense-sticks pervades every corner.

The landlord is anxious that we should take the right-hand room, but we prefer the left, because it affords us a chance of ventilating the place by throwing the window open — an operation that could not have been performed for many years before. The people wonder at our exhibiting such a liking for fresh air, but are not displeased, as it gives the outside folks an opportunity of observing our doings within, for the windows all look into the courtyard, and that is pretty well crowded by a very orderly congregation of villagers, who look and smoke, but are sparing of noise or talk. The frames, though stoutly made, stand great risk of being smashed in the efforts made to throw them outwards; and the paper panes do not escape unscathed; but this does not much matter; they are easily repaired. It is only in some of the better class houses, near Tien-tsin, that one or two panes of glass to a window are to be seen — that luxury never extending itself to the common dwellings, where the use of thin white paper — sometimes oiled to increase its translucency — calico, or occasionally ground oyster-shells, makes everything without undistinguishable, while throwing

an opaqueness over the interior of the houses not at all pleasant. Skylights, which would tend so much to lighten up these single-storied rooms, was glass procurable, are unknown; but the calico and paper would be useless in excluding rain or snow in bad weather.

The furniture of the Chinese household is heavy, clumsy, and inelegant, according to our ideas of cabinet-work, though not devoid of skill and workmanship in its construction. It comprises but few articles besides tables, chairs, and low stools, with ponderous cupboards and screens. Many introduce large arm-chairs, which are as uncomfortable as they are unwieldy.

As I before remarked, the houses are not adapted for winter use. A trial quickly showed that they were very deficient in comfort and cheerfulness, particularly by the absence of fire-places or grates, for which, in the eyes of a Briton, there can be no compensation. The inmates have done their best, and done very well too, in devising means whereby they might be able to palliate the cold by the antagonistic properties of heat, and without all that dust, smoke, cinders, and suffocation that in nearly every case attended the process of combustion as extemporised in the Tien-tsin quarters at the insetting of the cold weather, according to scientific rule, by amateurs in the arts of warming and ventilation.

Besides the little braziers and stoves, more inconvenient and productive of headaches than the fire-place, that are in general use during the cold months, every dwelling-house as far as I have travelled has one or two rooms, which, in the majority of instances, are engaged for sleeping as well as sitting apartments, when warmth becomes necessary; these contain a hollow couch, *kang*, or bed-place, built of brick, extending along the whole of one side of the apartment. It is five or six feet wide, and raised about two feet from the ground. This is a very near approach to the Roman hypo-

caust, though it does not bear the same tokens of skill and refinement that can be traced in recently disinterred villas.

Outside the apartment, and below the level of the floor, is a small cavity where the fire is kindled and attended to by the domestics, who do not require to enter the house for this purpose. From this little pit flues spring upwards, and proceed in a divergent manner under the stove-bed until they gain the farther extremity, when they converge to meet in the chimney, which rises through the gable-end of the house and carries off the smoke. In summer or winter it is never slept on, unless prudently covered by thick felt and rush matting: the people say it is productive of bad effects if used without these adjuncts, and they cite a maxim of theirs—sure to be derived from that invaluable monitor, experience—to the effect, 'that it is safer and always more preferable to lie on a cold bed,' that is on an ordinary wooden bed, 'than on a cold furnace,' meaning the unheated bare bench. These coverings modify and retain for a long time the transmitted heat when the apparatus is in play; and if a Chinese servant manages the fire below, and does not allow it to burn too fiercely until the mass has reached the proper temperature, the bed made on it is not at all to be cavilled at, but is really very cosy and soporific, when the mercury of the thermometer in the open air has fallen below zero.

As far as fuel is concerned, the thing is economical in the extreme—a great object where this very essential ingredient of winter comfort is so scarce and dear—because the strong current of air set in motion by the flame accelerates the burning of the wood or millet-stems in the fire-pit—the native coal is too hard and stony for such a purpose—and the blaze is carried for a considerable distance through the brick-partitioned flues; consequently it often happens that the end of the fabric most remote from the fuel is sooner warm than the other portions. A moderate fire burning for two hours before going to bed will impart heat enough to

make the structure agreeable until the morning. When kept going in the day-time, if the doors are closed and the seams protected by the thick quilted mats, for whose suspension we see those metal hooks stuck in the lintel of our present bedchamber door, life is supportable.

On such elevations the northern Chinese appear to spend the greater part of their indoor time during winter, and all the members of the family huddle on them instead of the floor when occupied in play, sewing, or reading; indeed, it is the only endurable part of the establishment during rigorous weather, as the cold-blooded folks seldom think of putting carpets or matting on the chilly flags composing the floor, and every other nook and cranny is as open as a cow-shed.

The arrangement, however, has serious drawbacks. Mud and earth enters so largely into the composition of the stove inside and out, that when really hot, the room becomes filled with a sickly effluvium as if from the mould of a newly dug grave; and the air feels so warm and dry, that nobody but a Chinaman can keep his health in it. There are also the risks of a conflagration and a scorching to the sleeper, for at Tien-tsin European servants did not prove very trustworthy observers sometimes of the regulated amount of fire required to produce an equable and moderate temperature in the oven. Woe betide the luckless wight who yielded to its premature but fascinating seductions, and consigned his senses to oblivion with the fierce flame whisking and roaring underneath!

Early trials, for alas! we speak feelingly—sufficed to convince some hapless experimentalists that such outlandish contrivances were not for them, nor for their comfort. The eyelids could not be allowed to drop a few minutes, from apprehensions of an accidental and complete cremation without the slightest warning; or they would be startled out of their nap by the sensation of intense local heat acting on their bodies, when they would find their rugs and blankets reduced to soot.

It was plain enough that terrible disasters might occur, unless very particular care was taken by the domestics. The latter were never happy unless their masters were exceedingly cosy, and could not believe that they could be made too warm on a howling cold night; consequently it did sometimes happen that the poor 'governor' got roasted as expeditiously as a joint in a London kitchen.

It was like tempting fate by sleeping in a charged mine, or on the edge of the crater of an active volcano; there was the furnace outside, and nothing in the world to hinder any mischievously-disposed person from seizing the opportunity to perpetrate a practical joke. These grave defects prejudiced me so strongly against the *kang*, that it was either pulled down or disused before many days of the winter had been got over, and notwithstanding all cavils, I resolved upon having the cheerful twinkling of a visible fire. The change proved as pleasant as it was reasonable, and much comforted me during my isolated situation for many months without letter or newspaper, by suggesting recollections of the happy scenes witnessed in my distant home at this time of the year.

Economists may preach and lecture about the thrift of other countries, and laud their ingenious stoves and furnaces made to evolve the maximum of caloric with the minimum of fuel, as if heat was the only desideratum in a room where people were obliged to spend the greater portion of the day and night; and they may complain loudly of the recklessness with which coal is consumed at home; but, after two or three winters of a comfortable British fireside, let them try these pet inventions in strange lands, and if they do not return with vastly augmented fondness to the open grate, they are not to be classed among those who would see happy homes and smiling faces throughout the three kingdoms. Has not the author of 'Pelham' made the accomplished Vincent ask, 'How can the private virtues be cultivated without a coal fire? Is not domestic affection a synonymous

term with *domestic hearth*? and where do you find either except in honest old England?'

Let the Northern nations—the semi-dormant Russian, the lethargic Swede, and the slow Dane or Finlander — creep around their stoves, and wonder how we can, with such a waste of fuel, keep ourselves so miserably uncomfortable; and let the frozen-in Chinese loll and smoke in their baking reclination without a thought as to the world beyond their own doors; but give me the 'blithe sunny blink o' *our* ain fireside,' with its pictures of felicity such as never can be found anywhere else.

Never mind if our faces are roasted and our backs frozen — we can stand all that, and are sure, at the same time, that fresh air is about us. We would rather endure these trifling discomforts than be enveloped, day after day, and night after night, in stagnant, relaxing, and stewing hot air.

Our coal — dealt out to us by Providence with such an unsparing hand — and our open coal fires, are as much ours as the great political privileges and the strong sense of happiness we possess.

> '*Blest be the spot where cheerful guests retire*
> To pause from toil, and trim their evening fire.'

And steaming stove or fervid *kang* could never reconcile such groups to the loss of the blessings they know so well how to appreciate.

The Chinese labourer no doubt works well and patiently in the fields, or in the crowded marts; and betrays no symptom of discontent, or of longing for anything better; yet his endeavours are not sustained by the prospect that cheers the heart of the English cottager—

> 'His wee bit ingle blinkin bonnilie,
> His clean hearthstane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
> The lisping infant prattling on his knee.'

Wherever we are, and in whatever humour we may be, we like to indulge in whatever reminds us of home:

> 'Around our evening fire an evening group to draw.'

This seems the very essence of enjoyment, and then, the genial flame tends to heighten the merriment of the joke, and deepen the interest of the tale. And for the contemplative man's recreation under difficulties, could we desire any place better adapted than the silent room, the shaded lamp, and the glowing fire?

Coleridge paints beautifully the effects of the midnight flicker on the solitary thinker, when he tells us that, alone, in pensive disposition

> 'The thin blue flame
> Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not,
> Only that film which fluttered in the grate,
> Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
> Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
> Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
> Making it a companionable form,
> Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling spirit
> By its own moods interprets, everywhere
> Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
> And makes a toy of thought.'

No; we cannot afford to dispense with our grand expositor of social science — our universal panacea against nostalgia. The reflection of the firelight sparkling from eye to eye, and the sense of comfort it distributes, is heightened by the chant of the kettle on the hob, or the almost as musical breathings of the domestic pet that occupies the rug. Perhaps such blessings are in store for our Celestial friends, when they become satisfied as to the superiority and the good intentions of the honourable nations they have hitherto classed as outside barbarians; and then they may be willing to receive suggestions from our engineers and travellers, and bring into use those great coal-fields that underlie the enormous empire. Their miners, instead of burrowing for a few crumbs of coal down in their badly-constructed pits, shall be taught to pierce through the incombustible shale for the valuable mineral.

The stuff they now procure as coal is economised to the best advantage, and made to yield every atom of its slender

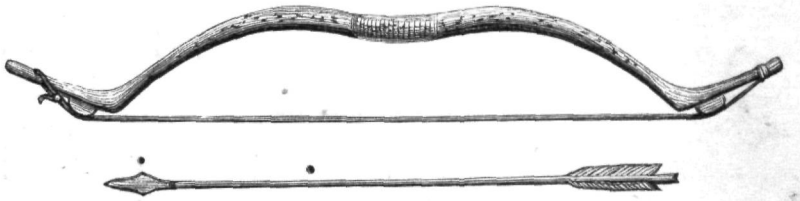
heat-giving proportions in a way that seems to show the high degree of attention paid to its utilisation; and yet it is deemed difficult to ignite, and still more so to keep burning in their stoves or open braziers. When prepared as a fuel, it is minutely pulverised by hammers and mallets, saturated with water, then mixed up thoroughly with clay or mud in a definite quantity, and kneaded into brick or ball-shaped pieces. These, when kindled by a thin layer of charcoal, become of a dull-red colour, burn slowly, give a mild degree of heat—with heavy sulphurous fumes, too—and entirely consume the carbonaceous elements of the coal; thus obviating the unpleasantness and loss that would be incurred by the escape of smoke.

Very many of the more opulent class of houses which we visited at Tien-tsin and Peking had their outhouses stored with these fire-bricks and balls, just as a Westerner would have his coal-cellars ready for the winter's consumption. But in the country, wood and millet-stalks and roots are cut, and gleaned, and hoarded up with the utmost frugality, even within a few miles of almost endless strata of undisturbed coal. At the end of our present quarters is a stack quite sufficient to indicate, by the assemblage of all sorts of incendiary odds and ends from the field, the plantation, and the house, and the manner in which they are preserved — the necessity our host sees for a well-heated fireplace for his own people and the half-frozen guests who visit him in cold weather.

The room we have chosen possesses other attractions besides those of the ordinary commonplace scrolls and pictures, in the form of a well-assorted collection of bows standing in a frame in the corner behind the door; and peculiar holster-pipe shaped leathern quivers filled with long beautifully feathered arrows, nearly all of which are tipped with a square iron spike three or four inches in length. We examined the bows, and found them of various sizes and of as various degrees of strength, but all unstrung.

The landlord, who may at first have doubted the judiciousness of letting us sleep in his armoury, now appeared delighted with our attention, pulled off his long dress, and drawing out one of the bows, the resiliency or strength of which, he told us, was equal to forty catties of one and a half pounds each — with his great wide chest and long muscular arms — began to string it. After our awkward attempts, with him this was but the work of a second, for throwing it behind the right thigh and in front of the left, and catching the right end, he slightly stooped, and with a sudden jerk the bend was reversed, and the loop of the thick string slipped into its notch.

The next bow — equal to sixty or seventy catties — he as quickly bent in the same way, though it was a pretty hard task not only to ourselves, but to the iron-armed Chinese

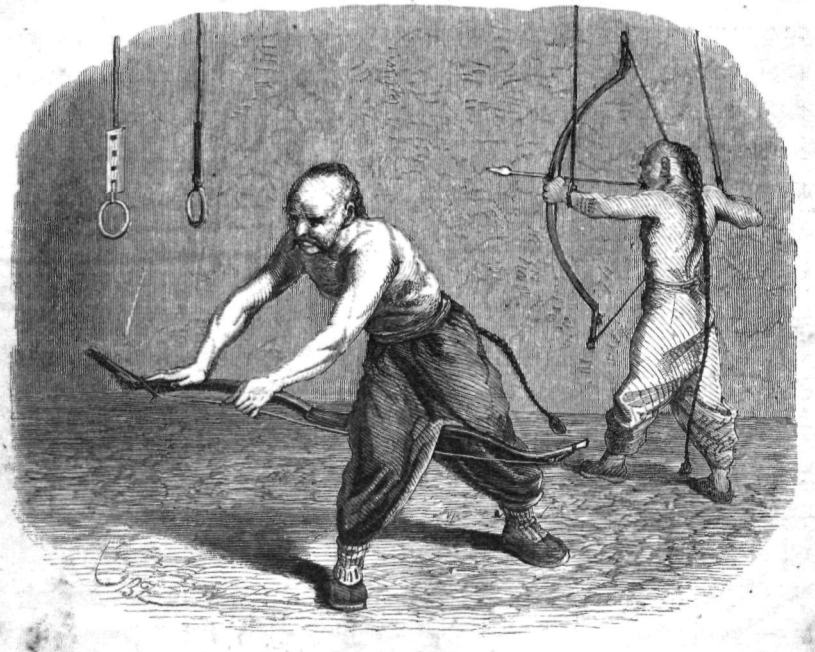


Tartar Bow and Arrow.

Alcon, who was not backward in applauding or expressing surprise when we came near him in strength, and succeeded in making the obdurate weapon crack and bend until it described a full semicircle. Our friend's manner of handling it displayed as much ease as could be attained by constant practice; and no doubt he was an enthusiastic amateur in the science of arms.

We had noticed on entering the room, that from one of the varnished cross-beams of the roof, two articles, like the handles of those elastic chest-expanders used at home, were suspended by cords with small pieces of perforated wood at each end, into the holes of which the two handles were fastened by means of two straps. We could not divine the use of such an unusual piece of mechanism dangling about the height of a man's elbows in the middle of the apartment,

unless it were for the developement of the chest or some other gymnastic exercise; so after the arrows had been handled and the bows had been strung, bent, and again unbent, we asked our instructor to satisfy us as to the *modus operandi* of the strange implements. We ascertained that



Stringing the Bow.

they were rests for practising the use of the bow — but not as we use rests for the rifle, by laying the weapons on them.

Our host adjusted their length by moving them to a lower or higher hole, put his hands through them as far as the wrists, then threw his figure into a statuesque posture, planting his legs widely and firmly on the ground, bracing up the well-knit body, while the arms were disposed in the suspenders as if about to shoot an arrow, and remaining in this state of immobility for some seconds. This was to give steadiness and precision in taking aim, and to acquire the habit of drawing the bow without jerking or shaking, until it had attained its greatest curvature.

He was no Tartar, and yet seemed as devoted and eager as if he were obeying the commands of a Mantchu soldier when he said:—

'To know how to shoot an arrow is the first and most important knowledge for a Tartar to acquire, for though success therein seems an easy matter, yet it is of rare occurrence. How many are there who sleep with the bow in their arms?—and, after all, how few are there who have made themselves famous? How few are there whose names are proclaimed at the matches? Keep your frame straight and firm; avoid vicious postures; let your shoulders be immovable, and shoot every arrow into its mark; then you may be satisfied with your skill.'

What a different impression would this manly fellow have made on us had a rifle been substituted for each bow, and had cartridge pouches been hanging where those nonsensical arrow-cases are placed. It is almost to be regretted that such an amount of time, skill, and patience should be thrown away upon an obsolete arm, on which he had to defend his life against an enemy possessed of the most destructive weapons. Of these he evidently knew nothing, though they had been employed effectually against his countrymen only a few months before, and was thoroughly satisfied with the national favourite; I did not think it necessary to undeceive him, and left him as strongly embued with convictions of the importance of practising archery, as were our forefathers in the times of Edward III. and Henry V. after their victories at Cressy, Poictiers, and Agincourt.

Of the beneficial tendencies of the art, in a physiological point of view, and the physical developement produced by the severe training of those who would excel in it, there can be no doubt. The only active exercise we ever saw in China, was in a court in the Tartar portion of Peking, where four men were going through a course of arm-strengthening play, for the purpose of passing their examinations as soldiers.

They were naked to the waist, and though young, possessed chests and arms the very models of sound health and muscular strength, while their legs were anything but feeble, to judge by the liberties they took with them.

Their training consisted in throwing the 'Suay tau,' or 'Ta shih,' a nearly square stone—weighing about fifty-six pounds, with a handle cut in its substance like one of our heavy metal weights at home—from one to another, as they stood at the corners of a square marked in lines on the ground, without allowing it to fall or touch the earth. And cleverly the game was gone through.

Each man as he caught the block by the handle, which always came down with the cavity uppermost, and was made to receive the hand easily, swinging round once or twice as if he were tossing the caber. He then launched it, like a catapult or balista, high into the air, and it descended into the hand of the next athlete with a hurl sufficient to shake the nerves and astonish the eyes of a good number of muscular Christians, allowing them very little chance of catching it.

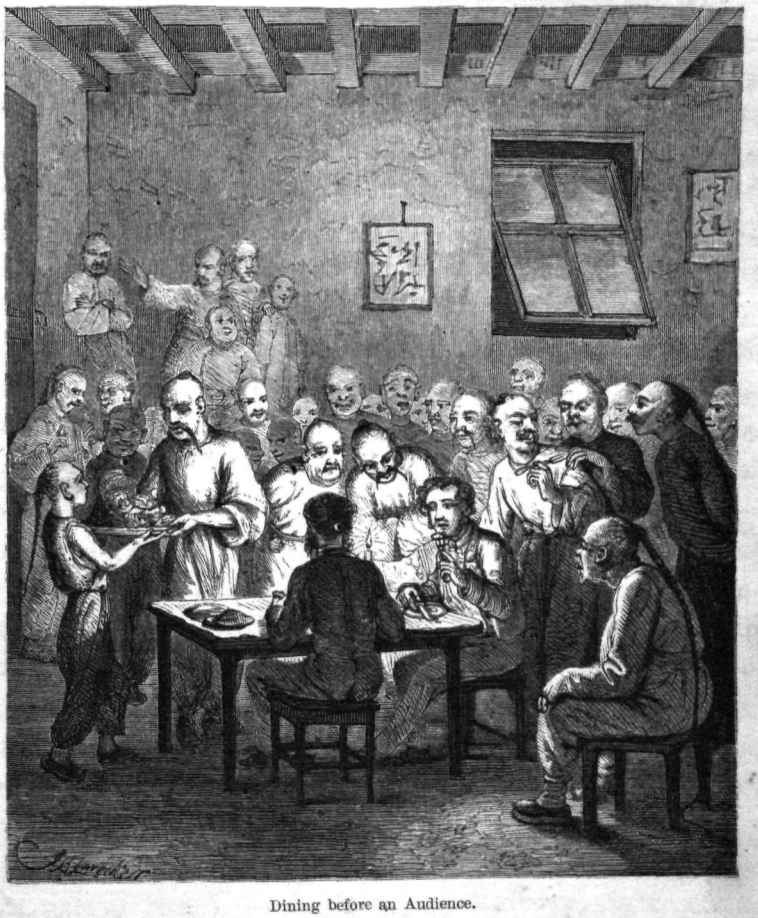
But the ground was never indented; the stone passed quietly from corner to corner with the smooth regularity of a machine so long as we remained—a period of about ten minutes; and the performers thought no more of the feat than we should have done had the object been a cricket-ball.

At Tien-tsin we have seen the same practice; heavy bags of sand being substituted for the stone—very much to the injury of finger ends and nails, we should think—but with no diminution of the exertion, nor lack of the accompanying increase of muscle, and expansion of chests. Every bundle of fleshy fibre on the trunk stood out during the exercise as if carved in bronze against a wall of bone.

But our supper is ready, and amply repays us for the delay we have suffered, and was wonderfully refreshing after eight hours passed in the saddle.

Hot soup was served up in the first clean basins we

have seen for some days; and there was rice in an enormous heap, as white as an avalanche. Then came eggs, boiled rather hard, it is true, but they were perfectly fresh. Our olfactory organs could not discern the slightest approach to that union between sulphur and hydrogen which, even in certain mineral water, is scarcely endurable. A tin of haricot



Dining before an Audience.

mutton, so the label said, had been unmercifully hacked and ripped, and was now produced as a sort of third course—a glorious finish to the feast. We were doomed to a cruel disappointment, however, for the mutton turned out to be beef, hard and indigestible. After a copious drenching

with tea, *minus* sugar, the good people of the inn were warned that we required rest, and must be left alone.

Nothing could exceed the decorousness of the behaviour of the crowds who came into the apartment and stood watching us; the quaint unsophisticated way in which they went about the examination of our kit, and the astonishment of the very old men when they saw us eating with knives, forks, and spoons, was very amusing. In their excitement they could scarcely refrain from taking them out of our hands while we used them, and pert questions to Ma-foo came belching out with endless volubility. The sight of two wine-glasses almost electrified them; nothing would satisfy them but a minute scrutiny and handling. They passed them from one to another, setting them on their bottoms, and went through the form of drinking out of them with the greatest ecstacy. The groom was interrogated in volleys and file-firing from mouth to mouth; but, though ever polite and civil towards his countrymen, and willing to concede to them every favour—a great deal too much so in many instances—he now changed his demeanour a good deal, answering their questions only when they suited him, and gratifying their curiosity in a very homœopathic fashion, as if unwilling to surfeit their inquisitiveness, or to destroy the favourable *prestige* we had created.

> 'Hungry people must be slowly nurst,
> And fed by spoonfuls, else they 're sure to burst.'

Ma-foo seemed aware of this when he gave his compatriots curt and half-evasive answers, and sometimes a mild snarl when they pressed him too hard.

One thing was particularly noticeable here—and, indeed, everywhere else on our road, when we happened to stop for the night, or but a short time at a town or village—and that was the respect paid to age.

Nothing could be more marked than the deference with which some infirm father of the hamlet was received when he

entered the room, tottering towards us to gaze with open mouth on the strangers. Every available article that could afford support was converted into a seat by those whose limbs were tired of standing, and all were so well conducted that no reason could be given for turning them out.

Yet whenever one of these patriarchs introduced himself, there was a movement among the spectators; everyone who was seated got up and welcomed him by a nod, a kind word, or a more formal waving of the joined hands and a slight inclination of the body forwards; while those who were standing, in addition to the salute, made room for him, or advanced to help him to the best place among them, where he was made a sort of centre for their regards and admiration. Every word that fell from his mouth was listened to with a grave or joyful interest until a more reverend visitor arrived, and then the first would be as ready to get up and testify his respect for his senior as his juniors had been to respect him.

Juvenal tells us, that in his day —

> 'T was impious then—so much was age rever'd,
> For youth to keep their seats when an old man appear'd.'

The Chinese, along the five hundred miles of our ride, could yield in nothing to the Romans of the vivacious poet's time, in their regard for this sentiment. In every mob or throng, in courtyard, or within doors, the wrinkled face, the snowy beard, and equally white moustache, that scarcely concealed the lips, was always there and cared for, no matter how uproarious the majority of the people might be.

In return, the old men seemed to esteem childhood, and seek its companionship at all times, as if it was not only their delight, but their duty, to regard the young with the tenderest care. The extremes of existence were often met with together in these groups —a hoary grandsire with a prattling youngster — dressed in every way alike.

We were glad to be able to find, in such out-of-the-way places, characteristics of a higher state of civilisation, and

one of the essential attributes of Christianity, especially after what we had so often read concerning infanticide and child desertion in the South. It was pleasant to witness such happy testimony to the truth of the proverb of the Wise King, 'Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers.'

Another gratifying feature was the decent attire in which everybody who came to see us appeared. Though all their clothes were made of the homespun blue, white, or drab-coloured cotton, not a tatter or unseemly patch could be remarked. Everything, from the crown of the head to the shoes, was neat and tidy — much to the credit of an agricultural town in a secluded district, but two days' journey from the Great Wall.

After dinner, we allowed our visitors to look at and finger our dinner service, under the surveillance of Ma-foo. We had at first some doubts as to their honesty; but we wronged them. At the end of our journey not an article was missing of the equipment with which we started from Tien-tsin, though they were all exceedingly valuable in their eyes, and likely enough to excite their cupidity.

The landlord had waited on us himself, and hurried the servants out and in when we required anything, anticipating our wants as well as he could, and showing the greatest anxiety to make us comfortable; so we treated him to a look at a thermometer, barometer, and a pair of binocular glasses, explaining their uses as best we could.

The glasses pleased him and the others most; and, with the right or the wrong end, they imagined that they could see any distance by going to the door and merely looking through the lenses. They saw so many things about us so interesting, so mysterious, and so wonder-exciting, that it was with reluctance they left when we expressed our desire to be alone. Long after the doors were closed, every chink had its persistent peering eyes and audible whisperings, to

tell us that we were as closely watched, and our actions as eagerly criticised, as when we had but commenced the evening among them.

Our beds were made down on the *kang* — a cane mat and a railway-wrapper did not seem much of a bed—and we went to sleep under the watchful stare of many faces, doomed, it was apparent, to idle away the night by their inquisitive wonder and excitement; for, though it is a fact that the knowledge of strange people being about me, and within grappling distance, during the most helpless hours, did not dispose to feelings of security or to deep slumbers, yet I had been so pleased with the evening's halt, and found the couch so grateful — ye sleepers on feather beds lose the greatest luxury the traveller in this region of the globe enjoys, a brick-bottomed dormitory, after a fair day's exercise — that nothing but real danger could have kept me awake for many minutes.

But a storm was brewing without: murky clouds, that gathered around the mountain tops, commenced to roll in heavy folds down the hill-sides, and some time about midnight resolved themselves into rain over the 'Shih-Mun.' Everything seemed blown about by the gusty wind; thick drops pattered with a loud rattle against the paper-panes, and flew in a shower-bath through the open window above our heads; the thunder cracked and crashed with a din loud enough to awaken a man from the deepest trance; and the lurid lightning fizzed and darted about the room, making its minutest article of furniture as visible as if it had been bright daylight.

We started up, still half asleep, and closed the window; but the lightning continued to zigzag and frisk about in a very unusual and menacing way. Suddenly it was remembered that we were armed — that we each had a revolver — and that M—— had fortified himself besides with a Japanese short-sword, handy for close fibbing, and with an edge as

thin as a razor. These things had been taken with us merely as a means of defence against robbers or thieves; and, if the worst came to the worst, as a protection, should we be attacked in the places we might have to visit.

Taking arms into the country was not countenanced, it was understood, after the winter had disappeared; but a revolver under one's head, or in a saddle-bag, need trouble nobody but the owner, if he is unmolested, and gives him a wonderful amount of confidence while trusting to the humane intentions and friendly feelings of a strange people, not considered altogether trustworthy in other parts of the Empire. Those who never sleep away from their homes or dwellings, and think that a five or six-shooter is unnecessary, when wandering among all sorts of unknown folks, and meeting with signs of their morality by the head-posts on the road-sides, we refer to Corporal Nym who avers that —

> 'Things must be as they may:
> Men may sleep, and they may have their throats about them at that time; and some say knives have edges.'

When the lightning gave us the benefit of a more intense flash than we had yet been favoured with, and went darting in angles round the walls with a spluttering sort of noise, as we thought, we recollected a similar storm at Tien-tsin, where the electric fluid struck down the gable of a temple in which there were some soldiers, entered the room, singed a fur cap as if it had been on a blazing fire, and fused the steel hilt of a sword-bayonet, leaving its track on the scabbard, as though it had been streaked with aqua regia, besides alarming everyone in the building. The Japanese sword, it was thought, might attract the fluid in the same manner; so M—— was prevailed upon to put it as far out of the way as possible, while the revolvers were thickly done up in rags.

We again composed ourselves to sleep, but not without half-apprehensions as to the difficulty of moving through the fields in the morning.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MISERABLE MORNING — A RAINY DAY IN CHINA — GLIMPSES OF SUNSHINE — A THUNDERSTORM AND A THOROUGH SOAKING — CHINESE THOROUGHFARES AFTER HEAVY SHOWERS — BEING HALF DROWNED — BAD ROADS — MANAGEMENT OF ANIMALS BY THE CHINESE — CHANG-LE-TOW — ITS DEFENCES — HOSTILE PREPARATIONS — ROADSIDE SCENERY — THE LOST CART — CHINESE SIGN-BOARD FOR AN INN.

BY the dead, leaden light of the morning we were aroused from as cosy a nap as tired travellers could desire, by a mournful sound — a *reveillé* of rain-drops, beating with monotonous clearness on window and wall, with a soprano and ground-bass accompaniment made by the streams from the roof furrows and the distant roll of the thunder, and a particularly dismal obligato pitter-pitter, patter-pattering in the pools all over the courtyard, that did not in the least add to the *concordia discors* of the unpropitious weather.

Staring out of the window, the picture was still more dismal. Nothing looked as we saw it last evening, save the water-lilies — but they are aquatic. The only animals stirring were the ducks, provokingly enjoying the calamity in their own silly way, and bubbling and billing at the water and mud as if their lives depended on its presence and thorough mixture — they also were aquatic.

The ponies and mules stood downcast and woe-begone, their ears and tails drooping, and their pendent heads showing a very rueful expression, in the damp-bottomed shed that was without a particle of bedding. They seemed as if a day's rest would have been more fitting in their depressed state than a resumption of labour.

Not an inmate of the house moved out; but, ensconced

below the most trivial cover, were the dotard old men with children, and the madcaps of other ages waiting for our levée with the soberest and most imperturbable equanimity possible, never moving to the right or left, seldom stirring a limb, and always keeping their faces towards the window, from which they were stayed only by the drenching rain. How people could ever be so extravagantly curious about two fellow-creatures remaining near them for but a night, was more than we then cared about discussing; but the sight was amusing enough, and, had we not been too much engrossed by the more important consideration of a start, and its likelihood of proving successful, we should have soon got the room filled again with these infatuated beings, many of whom looked as if they had lodged outside all the night.

Ma-foo and the mule-driver were ousted from their lairs, and reported themselves in our presence, in no inspiriting or affable humour, the one muttering, in reference to the weather, the guttural '*pu-how*, *pu-how*,' bad, bad; and the other grunting and hiccuping his displeasure in no measured terms. The host appeared, and is asked if the weather would relent and give us a fine day; but a doubtful shake of the head and the negative *mè-yo* settles it. We must trudge and drag our way in the rain and sludge as best we may; and, if we can get no farther, put up at some other village for the time, as there is no telling when the rain may cease, and the longer it continues the worse will the roads have become.

There was no help for it but to get off at once; so the drowsy mules are stirred up, after the wonted coercion of other mornings, and the ponies, with their hair bristling up on end, and their skins shivery and unclean, are fastened within the saddle girths, apparently much to their disgust, and dragged forth to be mounted, showing every symptom of aversion.

The hotel bill—a very mild one—was discharged with a

round of cash; breakfast was deferred until a more convenient occasion, and after vainly looking out for a few minutes to discover if there were any indications of a break in the clouds, we issued into the plashy puddles with the intention of outbraving the spiteful elements—albeit the feat must be accomplished in thin cotton 'karkee,' made only for the hot weather, and a pair of long riding-boots; for we had taken but two suits of clothes with us, and they were both of this material—waterproofs being out of the question when we started in such a good season from Tien-tsin.

Bidding our respectable landlord good-bye, or rather a hearty farewell, we presented him with one of a small parcel of Bibles in Chinese—the gift of a Tien-tsin missionary, that we had contrived to stow away in a corner of the portmanteau.

He received it with the most jubilant surprise imaginable. The cart was once more transferred to the street, and we were hobbling after it—a forlorn procession of tempest-defying mortals, through the sadly changed street, which was now a mass of mire. There was not a creature to follow us for a few yards, and only a face here and there at a door or a half-open window watched our departure.

Rainy weather in the fairest western city is a sad curtailer or rather vanquisher of out-door pleasure and convenience, notwithstanding all the aids and appliances brought to counteract its effects; but in a northern Chinese town it is a perfect calamity, and a plague for many days after, completely putting an end to what little comfort people may have enjoyed from pedestrian or equestrian exercise. The wide streets that may have struck the observer as a grand improvement on the narrow alleys of the south, are found to be, unlike them, unpaved, and converted into sloughs of despond, through which it is sheer madness to attempt to pass, unless prompted by the most urgent duty; you must then remain utterly indifferent to a covering of highly-scented black diluvium, picked up in viscid splashes, as well as to sundry immersions

in treacherous pits, caused by the gentle somersaults, 'croppers' and 'headers,' innumerable from the sides of slippery ridges and banks, set up generations ago as an apology for a *trottoir*. These, from the decaying nature of their principal constituents, quickly become a series of villanously-smelling man-traps, offering less security to the foot than the surface of a glacier, and challenging the virtues of the most potent detergents to remove their traces from the apparel.

Locomotion of all kinds for the timid is in abeyance. Horses are as much at their wits'-end, and as unsteady to ride, as they would be were they ascending step-ladders or trying to amble along a tight-rope. Chairs are not much better, and are hazardous enough from the shuffling and painful tumbling about of the coolies, who are ready to drop under you in the first ditch they meet, if they are much embarrassed. Under such circumstances a dull spell within the house is one's only resource until the sun has steamed off the abundant fluid, and walking may be resumed with thigh boots.

But if you compel yourself to scramble and jump, wade and plunge when the streets are flooded, running against and grappling with the natives in a wild effort to maintain the dignified position assigned to your species, and the purity of your garments, there is but little to reward you for your pains. Of troubles, however, you may have abundance. For example, a young jackanapes standing knee-deep in filth—they are here as fond of dabbling in dirt as Europeans of their years and class—lazily plastering a dike before a shopkeeper's door, to avert an internal inundation, will, unintentionally of course, deposit a full shovel of the compound in the leg of your boot, and grinningly shout 'Ey-yah' to express contrition.

There is no use seeking for redress on the spot; you must carry your wrongs about with you until you get home, and you go on picking your steps as tenderly as if treading on a

fathomless quagmire, and making but a few yards when you come to a place deeper than usual.

You reach the middle of it attentive to soundings, hope telling the flattering tale that you may pass it safely. Suddenly an elephantine Chinaman approaches with his petticoats closely tucked up about him, and grasped with both hands, as those of an old woman would be in similar circumstances; he wears nice white stockings and soft shoes, a kind of *chaussure* for such roads that makes one feel dreadfully catarrhish to look at; and unable longer to contain himself he comes hurling down from one of the afore-mentioned banks, on which he has been needlessly puffing and blowing in endeavouring to creep along without soiling himself. He descends like a great landslip towards you, and though self-preservation may be your dominant impulse, the fickle ground you cling to will not render you any assistance in getting out of his way.

Slush-h-h he glides to your feet, and there suddenly brought-up, he flops on his heavy back, sending a mud shower over your head, face, and body, that envelopes you as accurately as if it were a mould of plaster of Paris. In his distress he clutches at your legs, and away you go also; and lucky will you be if one or more of the slippery passengers don't lend their bodily influence to keep you down.

Sometimes the streets are so flooded that coolies make a very good trade in carrying passengers through the impassable parts on their shoulders—a nice state of affairs for the Commissioners of Public Works.

The few Chinese who have much street walking in bad weather, are generally provided with long boots, the legs of which are waterproof cotton, and the soles furnished with great spike-headed nails to penetrate the mud; bad indeed must be the condition of the European who gets one of these soles planted at a street corner on a tender instep or inflamed toe-nail. His yell of agony would startle the entire city.

Such are the streets of North China, and such are those of the great capital itself, when a heavy shower has passed over them. They then become a mixture of water and mud, slippery mounds and dirty pits, stagnant ponds and open ditches in which men and animals, carts and wagons, flounder and float distractedly, and in which all that is interesting and pleasurable appears to be submerged in filth. So it was with this town and with some others during the day's journey. The houses looked cheerless and neglected, and the few people seemed wandering about without occupation of any kind.

The road still lay for some way among the hills, which expand without apparent limitation to the northward, forming a dense gloomy wall, the lower peaks and ridges only visible now and again in the grey drizzling clouds. Whip and spur did their work, and the animals bravely did their share in pushing on; but the more the pace was increased, the more bitterly the rain pelted us. The roads became more adhesive as the narrow wheels cut deeper into the loosened sandy soil. Still we proceeded uphill and downhill, through villages surrounded by water, and through fields of millet and maize, and along by-paths behind hamlets to avoid the chances of drowning altogether.

The rain ceased for a short space in the forenoon as we left the higher ground, and struck out into the plain, still beautifully green and luxuriant; then the lower masses of cloud cleared away as if by magic—great rifts revealed themselves in those heavenward fleeces, and the glorious sun came out again among the proudest needle points of the sierra, throwing his richest golden lustre over those immediately exposed beneath him, lighting up with sprightly rays the greenish-grey of their sides, the far-off clefts, the wild gullies, and the drenched valleys, dispersing the mist wreaths that yet obscured some sweet spot on the upland, and bringing it out to the partially unfolded landscape, that now smiled

though yet in tears, as if bidding it to smile also after the discouraging weather of the morning.

As the rifts became wider, or the vapoury shreds sped across his face, their margins were lit up with a fiery suffusion of surpassing splendour that would have gladdened the hearts of a Turner, a Stanfield, and a Pyne. It gladdened ours, for it gave us promise of a fine afternoon.

The dwellings, grouped as they were in their random fashion, and so shone upon, looked exceedingly attractive, especially those which stood on the banks of streams now foaming, sparkling, and noisy as they rushed over the obstacles in their pebbly beds, and glimmered and glinted under rustic bridges, beyond which they were eclipsed by an expanse of drooping crops.

This effect, however, though very fine, was but of short duration. The road made a wide detour upwards towards the foot of the hills again, though for what reason we could not see — and as we drew nigh, the mist began to gather itself into a dark canopy of increasing density and sombre aspect. The sun retired suddenly behind it, and the wind commenced to agitate the trees and whistle about us dismally. We indulged the faint hope that it might be only a passing shower. Unconsciously, almost, we repeated Thomson's lines:—

> 'Along the woods, along the moorish fens,
> Sighs the sad genius of the coming storm;
> And up among the loose disjointed cliffs
> And fractured mountains wild, the brawling brook
> And cave, presageful, send a hollow moan
> Resounding long in listening fancy's ear.'

We were not kept long in suspense as to the nature of the tempest. The performance commenced with a most disenchanting overture; from out of the centre of a great gathering of crape-coloured clouds, hanging a short distance over our heads, streamed a sheet of lightning so vivid that

our eyes were blinded for some seconds, and this was quickly followed by a stunning crash of thunder that seemed to shake the ground beneath us. It was like the explosion of a large powder magazine, and at its conclusion we involuntarily looked to see if either of the hills had been cleft in two by the concussion.

Suddenly the rain came streaming down, not in discernible heavy drops, nor yet in 'torrents,' but in tangible sheets that almost beat us out of the saddles. Peal succeeded peal, and flash followed flash, without intermission; while the reverberations were carried backwards and forwards, and repeated times out of number among the glens and rocks, until they subsided, miles and miles away, to the weakest, that rumbled like a wagon over a hollow causeway.

We need not assert that our soaking was a complete one. Shelter of any description could not be got at, so away we ploughed and toiled, drenched to the skin, the superfluous water welling out at our boot-tops every time our legs were moved to take a fresh hold of the slippery saddle, while the thumping and clashing of the tempestuous shower against the steaming roads forbade all attempts at conversation had it been necessary, and almost blinded us.

Not a word was spoken for some miles — all the talk seemed completely washed out from us, as well as the dust and mud,—and more like shipwrecked voyagers, just landed from the surf of a heavy sea, than overland travellers, we hurried on with heads down and backs well arched, the chilly streams playfully cascading around our shoulders, and dripping in a heavy fringe from the most dependent corners of coat-skirts or sleeves.

Poor Ma-foo stood it out like a strong-minded martyr; though, as we glanced at him, if we knew that drowning awaited us the next moment, we could not have repressed our laughter. There he sat rolled up as tightly as a mummy on that eccentric crooked-legged old grey of his, — now

changed to a pale-blue,—nothing was to be seen of him but his conical straw hat, that, like the nose of a watering-can, carried the collected water in transparent jets around its brim. It gave him the appearance of a popular fountain, such as our holiday folk are familar with at the Sydenham Crystal Palace.

Long tags of disordered blue drapery drooped loosely from the little bundle sticking so closely to its perch, and that contained the sediment of his mortality. The tempest had deprived him of the greater part of his apparel, and what was left of his personality bore no resemblance to anything save a ship's swab that had been accidentally dropped on the back of a superannuated steed fresh from Neptune's stable.

Bravely he bore his condition; indeed, the ablution had a most wholesome effect, not only on his clothes but on his person, by scouring out the furrows on his wrinkled countenance, and carrying away the incrustation that had almost obliterated the original outlines and colour of his face and skin.

The roads became more and more heavy for the mules, and many times threatened the cart with a complete deadlock in the mud and sand, not likely to be overcome in a hurry. The willing brutes, however, strained their harness in a way we have never seen equalled out of China without an expenditure of whipcord.

The driver was a very inferior specimen of his class, still he was an excellent manager of what are supposed generally to be a most headstrong and stupid breed of animals.

The Chinese muleteer has obtained an influence over these hybrids by patient perseverance, and by a sort of intuitive knowledge of their nature and disposition. This is quite astonishing to those who have seen Spaniards, Turks, and Indians handle mules of a much more docile turn than

those bred here; by means of such gentle persuasions as a few words express, they can bring them hearty and fresh from a long day's work in a manner that would gratify the disciples even of Mr. Rarey.

No Europeans, we think, could get the same amount of labour out of them as their Chinese masters, on the same miserable provender. This arises, I have been assured, from the absence of all disheartening punishment, and the liberal use of 'moral suasion.' Hence a mule that, in the hands of a foreigner, would be not only useless but dangerous to every one about it, becomes in the possession of a Chinaman as quiet as a lamb and as tractable as a dog. We never beheld a runaway, a jibbing, or a vicious mule or pony in a Chinaman's employment; but found the same rattling cheerful pace maintained over heavy or light ground by means of a *turr r* or *cluck-k*, the beast turning to the right or left and stopping with but a hint from the reins. This treatment is extended to all the animals they press into their service. Often have I admired the tact exhibited in getting a large drove of frightened sheep through narrow crowded streets and alleys, by merely having a little boy to lead one of the quietest of the flock in front; the others steadily followed without the aid either from a yelping cur or a cruel goad. Cattle, pigs, and birds are equally cared for.

The mutual confidence existing between the mule-driver and his team seems to exist in the relationship between man here and other domesticated creatures, equally to the benefit of bipeds and quadrupeds. No punishing spur disfigures the heel of the equestrian, who rides his forty or fifty miles in a few hours, armed with a very mild whip only to assist him in emergencies, and using a primitive bridle furnished with the softest of 'bits.'

How much does he differ in this respect from the Mexican, the Turk, the Hindostanee, and other peoples we could name! The Chinese courier will get over the ground

as quickly, and with much less injury to his steed than any other equestrian; and a larger proportion of horses and mules, double and sometimes treble the average age of those less mercifully dealt with in other lands, is to be found about Peking and Tien-tsin. An animal under five years and at work is quite an exceptional case; and horses are as sound and healthy at fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, or thirty years, as the great majority of our five and six year-olds,—at least, a pretty wide experience has shown this.

Away strained our team, steaming and smoking through mud and mire, as honestly bearing their drudgery as if they were to be rewarded with the best of oats in unlimited quantity, trusses of aromatic hay, and a snug stall knee-deep in soft straw, instead of being housed, as they really will, for a few hours in a cold wet shed, and put before a great wooden trough—realising the ancient standard Dunfermline pint:

A big dish, and little in 't.'

And that little *molto di* hard straw, *poco di* as hard barley.

The Jehu has worn out the only pair of shoes he started with,—and a Chinaman, though ever so poor, objects to

'Exposing God's leather to God's weather;'

he has therefore swung himself on the near-side shaft, where he is thoroughly saturated, and keeps up an incessant *tur-r-r* and *cluck-clucking*, varied only by a small shout now and then to re-animate the energies of the fagging pair, beating with sad rhythm the left hand on the corresponding thigh, and swinging the remainder of the shoeless limb with the rigid monotonous regularity of a pendulum. This was a confirmed habit of his, and mile after mile, during many days, he practised this movement as if it formed the principal part of his duty. Not often did anything go wrong with the

harness; but when it did the mules stopped of their own accord, and if it was only the leader getting over or entangled in the traces, no help was needed to put her right again.

A little after midday it cleared up a trifle, and close to the foot of the misty hills we came in sight of the walled town of Chang-le-tow, a rather welcome haven after the storm.

On reflection it was thought unadvisable to halt inside the walls, in consequence of the excitement and *furore* our presence was sure to create; and the condition in which the place appeared favoured this conclusion. In addition to the questionable nature of the reception to be met with within the high gloomy walls that rose at the termination of the gravelly road at the west side, there was an outer defence of mud, in the ordinary Chinese system of fortification, and with the carefully smoothed face and the elaborately notched edge for small arms, that characterised the works around Tien-tsin on our arrival at that place; the whole apparently of quite recent date. There was a narrow postern-gate and bridge of planks only, for an entrance across the ditch to the inside of the work.

The whole looked as if an enemy was momentarily expected, though we could not perceive a single soldier moving within.

Rather suspicious than otherwise, we thought it but wise to reconnoitre before going farther and thrusting our heads into a net; so cantering round towards the northern side of the town, leaving the cart and Ma-foo to follow, we had time to take a leisurely survey unmolested by anyone.

Chang-le-tow might have been prepared, or was preparing, for a seven years' war, so formidable were the works, and so inaccessible were they to the fury of the enemy who might set himself down before them, and go through all the interesting formalities of a Chinese siege.

The embattled walls looked tolerably sound,—that is, they were not in ruins, and to my surprise showed marks of the trowel in sundry white lines of plaster in various places,

which, however, may have been more intended to deceive the outsider than a sincere attempt at repair.

Our eyes ran along the whole line of parapet, and peeped enquiringly through those mediæval-looking embrasures; but with the exception of a sort of sentry-box, without a sentry, standing drearily at each corner, nothing denoted immediate action. Such was my impression, but I was wrong. A more careful scrutiny made me detect three lilliputian guns over a gateway, evidently laid to surprise assailants, should they venture so far from their own lines. So artfully were they concealed that, dismounted from their carriages, supposing they had ever been mounted, nothing but their muzzles showed above the sole of the embrasure. They looked like the mouths of so many decapitated soda-water bottles.

This northern gate faces the hills, which from their proximity to the town are here designated 'Chang-le-Shan,' and rise in sterile grandeur to a height of about 2,000 feet. It has also an outwork of plaster, ditched and bridged on the most narrow scale, and possesses a considerable number of temporary millet and mud huts inside for the reception of the 'braves' who are to hold this post of honour, but who have not yet arrived in their new quarters.

More formidable than all this is that flanking or detached demi-bastion, for it is hard to get a technical name in our language for things which we never saw or heard of before. It is perched on a low hill with remarkable sagacity. The front might take some active Britons in light marching order a little trouble to climb over, were a few stout Chinese with long poles able to stand on the rampart and push them down; but the clumsiest troops in the world would enter it in a few minutes by making a small round-about to the left.

We can see no cannon—probably they are still at the foundry, or the carpenter in the town may be making a few 'dummies' to soothe the alarms of the trading citizens until the blacksmith has forged as many as will make a

satisfactory noise and burn priming in dry weather. The fort is unoccupied except on the parapet, where two roguish-looking magpies are doing garrison duty until they have exhausted their chatter and preened their feathers for the next shower of rain.

What had been the cause of all this hostile preparation we were thoroughly at a loss to divine; and in our wet state, with vacant stomachs and tired nags, we did not particularly press ourselves to enquire. It was a source of congratulation to us that there was no strife, no attack or defence, or other game going on, likely to throw an obstacle in our flooded path or cause us to get into trouble, and we were content to forego the knowledge of what had created this additional proof of the military genius of the country. Possibly such bride's-cake structures were reared to train the bodies and improve the minds of Chinese military engineers, or teach militia how to defend themselves behind a lofty parapet a few inches in thickness, and explode flaky gunpowder with the loudest report without burning out their eyes. Perhaps they were raised to satisfy the inspector of fortifications that praiseworthy efforts were being made to add to the security of the empire—or mayhap to protect themselves from some offshoot of the rebellion raging not very far off, but of whose outbreak in this direction we have not heard.

Hungry men have no ears for anything but what relates to present internal wants; so we betook ourselves back again to meet the cart, which it was dreaded had come to grief on the road, it had been so long in trying to overtake us.

In returning we noticed what, in our attention to these non-picturesque matters, we had missed coming up—another of those little snatches of roadside scenery that are always acceptable, even in the most unfavourable weather. It looked pretty, even under such a pall-like sky as that we then had—deadening everything beneath it. A long way up, on the steep face of a granite hill, a flight of steps, diminished by

distance to the size of the cutting ridges on the edge of a fine file, ascends to a toy-gateway, and then, becoming more perpendicular, runs up—a black line—to a narrow terrace enclosed by a low stone wall, on each side of which are two temples with red pillars, in style something between the Swiss châlet and the Turkish kiosk. They were set off by flat-topped fir-trees, whose dark green shade contrasts well with the dusky blue hill and the red hue of the pillars; another flight of invisible steps, through a number of tiny gates up to another terrace with curious atoms of buildings, intended possibly for dwelling-houses for the priests, who, like their fellows in other parts of the empire, and like the monks of the West, past and present, have the happy knack of combining religion with comfort, beauty, and salubrity of location in the most inviting spots of nature, and adding other trifles that help to prolong and render felicitous such valuable lives.

The picture was an agreeable one, and set in that wide frame of everlasting rock was striking enough; but where was the tardy cart and its attendants all this time? We rode back to the spot where we left it, but not a trace could the rutted and flooded road give of its whereabouts. I galloped round three sides of the walls, but could not discover anything of the missing vehicle. Enquiries are made of several countrymen, but they hopelessly shake their heads and give a grunt, and stupidly avow they do not understand what we say.

We rush up roads among the hills where wheel tracks and fresh prints of shod hoofs make us believe they have gone. But, no; they are lost. The dilemma is a serious one. All we possess is in the cart; money—everything. In vain we dash towards a circle of children who are playing at some game in the middle of the way, sure that if our servants have interrupted their sport they must remember it, and be able to tell which way they have gone—they fly

before us, screaming as if we were savages or wild beasts, and in a trice are hid from our sight.

Anxiety, anger, and mortification, now gave way to despair. We must enter the town—chance our reception there—and search through the streets for the vagrants, though they must know that we did not intend to go through the place, and ought to have followed on our steps.

We cross the drawbridge — the three sides of the town, we have remarked, are defended by these extra precautions, but the ditch could be jumped by an active schoolboy — we pass through a wide space filled with empty huts, and come to the brick wall surrounded by a wide moat filled with water and filth of such an offensive quality, that for defence it must be unequalled—nothing living, I am confident, could exist near it for a few hours but Chinese and cesspool rats. Not a single soldier was to be seen either at the gateways or in the streets.

The town was mucid and quaggy in the extreme; once or twice we found the thoroughfares unfordable, and had to make a bend round to avoid total loss, not only of our ponies but ourselves. True, we saw the place under disadvantageous circumstances; but when are you to see a Chinese town to advantage? In fair weather and in foul; at sunrise, midday, and sunset, and at all seasons of the year, have we watched but never caught the happy moment for seeing such sights favourably. This period some people say never was and never will be. Perhaps it never can be while our friends wear their diminished locks twisted down their backs — they must ever be going farther and farther to the rear of those civilised nations who impersonify Time as an old gentleman wearing a forelock on his brow instead of a tail behind, by which they are keeping him from leaving them altogether, as had happened to these Celestials.

On we went, up one street and down another, followed by the idle mob who care not for the difficulties attending the navigation of their town but steer direct in our wake; in doing which they splash many a white-skirted shopkeeper who, having been warned of our approach, had rushed to his low door to mark the peculiarities of two half-drowned strangers.

Galling do we find it to ask anyone questions; for no sooner do the roystering young imps hear our voices, than with one accord they raise a shout of mirth, in which the elders — childish as they are — take part; we are, therefore, forced to remain speechless in the midst of our affliction.

The town has been crossed; the trying ordeal of another ditch has been overcome, and we are in a suburb dirtier, and consequently busier, than the town. Here the people received us in a calmer and a more obliging manner.

Seeing us look to the right and left—up every lane and round every corner — they at once divined the cause, and pointed a long way in front. There, encompassed by a rout of eager folks, we at last come upon the vexatious vehicle, with Ma-foo, miserable tissue-paper atomy that he was, standing at his ease, looking carelessly about him. As soon as he perceived us, he scrambled up into his saddle, and hailed us with a grin and a salute, indicative of his pleasure and his anxiety on our account.

To improve our condition another outbreak of the storm overtook us, and as no inn in the locality could entertain us, we had to sally out into the road again, thumped heartily by the heavy rain-drops.

After passing two or three miles along a sandy road, close to the foot of the hills, with the land in some places covered by great boulders of granite, and stray cottages of a very poor description, we reach a wretched hovel at the village of Chow-fo, where the hills have been named Chow-fo Shan—