THE CHINESE THEATER.

THE Chinese theater was founded by Ming Wang (an emperor who reigned about the middle of the fourteenth century), and is, therefore, not much over five hundred years old.*

Ming Wang, so the story goes, had a dream; and in this dream he dreamt he rambled around the moon. There he saw strange sights and heard strange sounds, and beautiful beings danced before him in costumes unfamiliar to his eye. The memory of his dream remained with him when he awoke, and he determined to reproduce what he had seen for the benefit of his wife, whom, strange to say, he dearly loved. A temporary structure was erected in Ming Wang's pear garden; the actors were chosen from the younger sons of the nobility, and therefore to this day, in China, the amateur or mandarin actor is still called "Younger Brother of the Pear Garden."

This is the poetical and, on the whole, the not altogether improbable account the Chinese give of the birth of their drama, and there seems to be no good reason for rejecting it. There are many instances of dreams suggesting plays, notably that of Madame de Girardin's *La Joie fait Peur;* and it does not require a very great stretch of the imagination to conceive that the idea of dramatic representation might also have arisen in this way. Indeed, it can readily be believed that the importance of Ming Wang's invention was scarcely appreciated in his own time; for we are told that the taste for these performances died out soon after his reign, and that they were only revived by the talents and genius of the three great playwrights and dramatists of China, Tin, Tau, and Chung. The personality of these early sons of Thespis is not very distinct, for the names of the two former, Tin and Tau, are always written and pronounced together. Some hold that they were man and wife; others, that Tin was the founder of comedy and Tau of tragedy; but the most correct view seems to be that they were collaborators—in fact, a Chinese Beaumont and Fletcher. Chung was, it appears, neither a dramatist nor a playwright; but none the less is he held in equal honor with the rest, for it is to him that the Chinese owe the acrobatic and musical part of their performance. Whether Tin, Tau, and Chung flourished under the protection of some Chinese Augustus, or whether they wrote for the mandarin stage on their own account, is not known. It is tolerably certain, however, that they not only arranged the majority of the plots, but fixed the costumes, gestures, and stage business; and that, as a result of their labors, the drama became, from this time forth, a well-recognized, if not a popular, institution.†

The festival of this trinity of authors is celebrated once every year in the principal Chinese theaters of San Francisco, and the Chinese express their sense of the intimate relation that existed between them by honoring them collectively, and not severally, three days being set apart in their honor, and each being entitled to a third of a day. The play that is performed on these occasions is highly acrobatic in character, and is not produced at any other time. It is not, perhaps, a very characteristic specimen of the Chinese play proper; but it is, nevertheless, interesting as commemorating the beginnings of one of the most popular institutions of a people who

* It is a curious fact that the founder of the Chinese drama should have also been the enemy of the scholar class. It is related of Ming Wang that, taking the air one evening, he overheard some school-boys talking among themselves. One of them, looking up at the stars, said eagerly:

"See there! Look at Ming Wang's star! He will have trouble soon."

Now, though Ming Wang was eminently a practical monarch, and had little faith in star-gazing, he fully appreciated its effect upon a superstitious people.

"You find that my star is in trouble, do you?" said Ming Wang, quietly.

"Yes, great Son of Heaven!" replied the scholar, trembling.

"Well," said the emperor, dryly, "if any school-boy can tell when I am going to have trouble, how will it be when my enemies begin to conspire against me? I must put a stop to this!"

He accordingly ordered all the books of the scholars to be burned except those in his own family.

† Still it must be remembered that the theater was not thrown open to the people until about the year 1730, when an edict of Hong Hai, the second emperor of the present dynasty, permitted the organization of the first professional theater at Pekin. A company of young apprentices were trained and drilled, and bound over for periods of five years. Thus was formed the nucleus of the present professional class, who, in contradistinction to the amateur or mandarin actors mentioned above, were called "Sons of Sham Sword," or, as we would perhaps say in English, "Sons of Sham Battle." These facts give us the right to conclude that the professional stage of China, at least, is the most modern in the world!

seem to reject commencement of any kind, and refer everything back to the most remote and mythical antiquity.

It is Saturday; in the Jackson street theater in San Francisco; and two o'clock in the afternoon. The performance has not yet commenced, and the house is crowded with expectant Chinese. The drum beats monotonously to allay the impatience of the audience, and the young Chinamen are calling across the theater, exchanging jokes or the compliments of the season. The box above the stage is thrown open for the occasion, hung with lanterns and brilliantly illuminated; while far within can be seen an altar heaped up with offerings and smoking with incense and the blaze of a thousand candles. Another altar, at the extreme end of the theater, near the entrance, is similarly arranged. The candy-seller is busy plying a profitable trade, and the "post-office," a high pillar supporting the roof of the theater, is being frequently consulted. By the last advices, one Ma Chung is informed that his "wife is sick" and that he "must come home immediately," a request with which that worthy celestial seems most unwilling to comply. The women's gallery is full to the very top, and picturesque with many-colored handkerchiefs of flaming gold, blue, green, and yellow.

With the sudden sound of fire-crackers from the left of the stage the performance begins. One after another, the Eight Angels enter through the richly curtained door and take their places on the stage. Each gives his or her name. The chief angel says simply: "It is the birthday of the Goddess of Mercy; we will all go and congratulate her." This is at once the proem and the plot. After the Eight Angels have filed out, the King of the Monkeys enters. He and the rest of the monkey tribe are climbing the mountain in quest of a peach that has the power of conferring immortal life, which they intend as a present for the Goddess of Mercy.

Upon this slight thread is constructed what might be called an acrobatic ballet. The acrobats, of whom there are forty or more, are stripped to the waist, and wear rose-colored handkerchiefs on their heads. The prompter stands in full view of the audience directing the performance. As the play is given only once a year, disputes frequently arise as to what shall be done next. In such cases the performance is entirely suspended and reference made, with much squabbling, to the book which the prompter holds in his hand. Pyramids of twenty and sometimes thirty persons are formed; one little fellow carries valiantly around the stage six others larger than himself; another jumps from the apex of one of the pyramids full fifteen feet to the floor. In spite of occasional disagreement, the acrobats seem to be on the best of terms with themselves and with the audience, whom they amuse at intervals by playing tricks on the clown, who is as necessary an adjunct of such a performance with the Chinese, apparently, as he is in the circus with us.

As the acrobats pass around the stage they play with the children who are standing on tables with their backs to the wall. One of them, who is being carried aloft on the shoulders of one of his companions, still nonchalantly smokes the cigar, with which under no circumstances will he part. At this juncture two actors, beautifully dressed, can just be seen among the lanterns of the actors' box. The concluding event is now about to take place. The acrobats are arranged in two long opposing rows, holding one another by the hand.

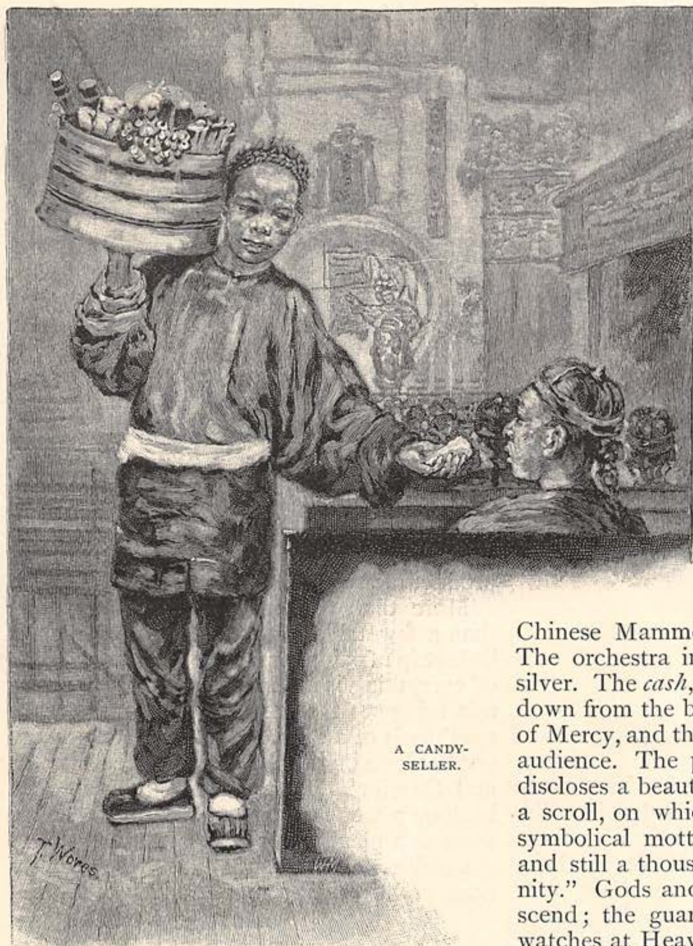
At the furthest end, just in front of the musicians' alcove, stand two men, one on top of the other. At a given signal they fall headlong from the height upon the living cushion of hands below.

This thrilling feat terminates the acrobatic part of the performance. The monkeys now assume the shape of a dragon and vanquish the guardian of the peach, who, though he is armed with a club, ineffectually opposes their advance, and, forming themselves into a procession, with banners, fans, and gauze hats, proceed with their prize to the Goddess of Mercy.

Enter forthwith other divinities, also on their way to congratulate the Goddess: the Goddess of Flowers, the Eastern Goddess, and the Western Goddess. After they have shown themselves, a fish, shrimp, oyster, and turtle take the stage. These are presents from the four Kings of Ocean — East, West, North, and South. The culminating point, however, is the entrance of Kwun Yam, the Goddess of Mercy, "who looked through the world and saw it all." * She is attended by two standard-bearers, and on each standard is inscribed her motto. When she is fairly seated on her throne, the Goddess of Flowers and the Eastern and Western Goddesses enter and make obeisance.

"What do you come for?" asks the Goddess of Mercy in kindly tones.

* Kwun Yam, the Chinese believe, besides having been on earth in various disguises, also descended through the Ten Hells. Is it merely a coincidence that the same story is told of the goddess Ishtar of the Assyrians? See the "Records of the Past."



A CANDY-SELLER.

Goddess transforms herself into eight different characters, ending with that of a scholar who has received the highest degree at the imperial examination; an illustration of the doctrine of transmigration that indicates the respect with which the Chinese scholar is regarded. This over, the scene changes to the Temple of the Goddess of Mercy, where, by means of an ingeniously improvised staircase of chairs, the Goddess and her guests are enabled to ascend even as far as the actors' box, which, draped with white curtains, now serves to represent the gate of heaven. Presently the Chinese Mammon, or God of Cash, enters. The orchestra imitates the clink of gold and silver. The *cash*, in great quantities, are taken down from the box, presented to the Goddess of Mercy, and then thrown broadcast into the audience. The peach, miraculously opening, discloses a beautiful boy, holding in his teeth a scroll, on which is inscribed the following symbolical motto: "A thousand grandsons, and still a thousand more, and so on to eternity." Gods and goddesses ascend and descend; the guard of the Goddess of Mercy watches at Heaven's gate; and thus ends the festival of Tin, Tau, and Chung.

"It is your birthday, and we come to congratulate you."

At the invitation of the Goddess the visitors sit down to a banquet which she orders prepared for them. Next come the Kings of Ocean, bearing scepters. They are asked the same question, and answer in the same manner. Finally the King of the Monkeys arrives with the wonderful peach, which he begs the Goddess will accept as a slight token of regard. This the Goddess graciously consents to do, but, "as there is no longer any room at the table, will the monkeys kindly make themselves at home on the floor?"

"Certainly," they answer. "This would, in fact, suit them much better; monkeys are comfortable anywhere."

After some preliminaries the King of the Eastern Ocean, speaking for the company, expresses a wish to see the Goddess go through some of her marvelous transformations.

Then follows an interlude, in which the

The Chinese theater, however, is perhaps seen at its best in the evening. What pushing and chattering and quarreling there is, to be sure, as you make your way through the celestials who throng the box-office! The box-office, too, with its little pigeon-holes, seems rather small for the purpose. But, as the Chinese always bring the exact sum, no change is necessary, and everything moves with admirable dispatch. You have probably engaged a box, or "room," as the Chinese call it, and, as your name has been posted up conspicuously upon it, there is no chance of mistake.

The stage is ablaze with brilliant costumes of red and gold. The lights from the iron chandeliers flare heavily in the draught. Processions of armies, emperors, statesmen, and generals enter in rapid succession through a red-curtained door on one side and pass out through a red-curtained door on the other. Now the emperor is holding an audience. The next moment his troops are engaged in bitter combat with the retainers of some un-

THE GUARD OF THE GODDESS OF MERCY.

ruly vassal. Every species of crime, every form of human passion, is crowded into the brief moment of the fleeting scene. A messenger from heaven, standing on a chair, delivering his high summons to a fairy fish, is next presented to your confused imagination. Then, whirling in angry passion, a painted-face king, pulling his feathers fiercely, and loudly threatening all manner of dreadful things. The orchestra keeps up its infernal din. In shrill falsetto the characters sing through a sort of high-pitched recitative.

Presently you pass down behind the stage, through the paint-room, where an actor is making himself as ugly as vermilion and umber can well do it; then by means of a narrow stairway down to the dressing-room, rich in its very confusion, and strewn around with costly brocades and satins wherever the convenience of the last actor had left them. It is not long before you find yourself standing on the stage, so near the actors, too, that the emperor's robes touch you as he sweeps superbly by. Then you are hurried back to your box again, where it is explained to you that the fighting is still going on, and that So-and-So has killed So-and-So and is off on horseback. You leave the theater of the oldest people in the world with a confused idea of the plot, burlesqued by your interpreter and still more highly colored by your heated imagination, with the blare of the trumpet and the strident wail of the fiddle in your ears, with the smell of all Chinatown in your nostrils, with a headache, perhaps, but with little added to your stock of information.

It is safe to say that no stage is, or ever has been, so completely overlaid and incrusted with conventions as that of the Chinese. Even to Chinamen who have not been educated up to the theater from their youth, a dramatic performance must often be but a vivid pantomime — a dazzling spectacle, if you will, of color and of light. For all the characters in the drama, except perhaps the comedian, who may, to save his joke from falling flat, occasionally drop into the vernacular, speak a dialect unfamiliar to the mass of the audience. The costumes, again, from the humblest personage on the stage up to the emperor, are taken from an early period of Chinese history; and the gestures, instead of being the free and natural expression of emotion, are the studied product of a narrow school of art.

More than this, with little scenery other than a few tables and chairs, and perhaps a little strip of painted muslin, the representation of everything is attempted, from the building of a bridge to the storming of a fortress or the apotheosis of a saint. All this, of course, cannot be done on the Chinese stage realistically, and therefore the only alternative is to fall back on a stock of stage conventions that will serve at a pinch to eke out the exigencies of the action. To correctly read these conventions, and thus get some little idea of the real

A HUNTER.

meaning of a Chinese play, calls for more than an ordinary exercise of mental effort and intellectual sympathy. "When you are in the theater," say the Chinese, sententiously, "you must not ask"; and in a Chinese theater, at least, one stands in some need of the advice. A man who throws his leg into the air on the Chinese stage is supposed to be mounted on horseback; but this should not be taken as a realistic act, but only as a conventional sign to which the spectator must add his imagination. Again, an army of ten thousand who pass under a general's conquering sword are not supposed to be killed, any more than were the Roman hastati of old when they passed under the spear. The passing under is, in both cases, symbolical merely of defeat.

Besides these purely stage conventions, a second and still larger correction must be made for that peculiar difference of manners, feeling, and national history which seems to keep the Chinese people apart from the rest of the civilized world. To make this correction is perhaps more difficult still. Everything Chinese is, in our eyes at least, inverted. Where we would do one thing, they would do another. We seem at the outset precluded from any sympathy with them. But this, surely, is no reason for widening the breach. We know that the Chinese are different from us: we need very little to convince us of *that*. What we *do* wish to know is, in what do they resemble us?

If the Chinese theater is once looked at in this way, an intelligent stand-point will soon be gained. Take the stage itself, for instance, which bears the unmistakable stamp, as do all things Chinese, of an arrested civilization. It should not be compared with the Lyceum of the London of to-day, but with the Globe or Blackfriars of the London of Shakspere and Heywood. If this is done, what analogies at once present themselves! As in Shakspere's time, the audience are on the stage. The female parts are taken by men. There is no curtain, no scenery, no proscenium. The entrances and exits are from the back of the stage, not, as now, from painted "wings" at the side. Moreover, above these curtained entrances at the back appears, in both instances, a balcony or box!

Knight, in his Shakspere, gives a cut of the interior of the Globe, in which this box is to be seen. He quotes Malone as his authority for the statement that it was called the private box, but remarks that it is still uncertain what were the purposes to which it was put. The stage directions of one of the folios, he says, call for its use in the balcony scene of "Romeo and Juliet;" and he further adds that, when not wanted for the performance, it was occupied by spectators who paid for this privilege a lower price of admission.

Now, all this would answer for a description of the actors' box on the Chinese stage.

A PAINTED-FACE KING.

Still another use there is of the actors' box which, it is needless to say, is not to be found on the early English stage. It is the means by which the patron *Joss*, who occupies the room just within, can at once witness and preside over the performance. Nothing bears such distinct testimony to the importance of the theater in China as this idea, firmly fixed in the Chinese mind, that their gods take pleasure in dramatic performances as well as themselves. *

A change of scene on the Chinese stage is indicated in two ways. If the change takes place from one part of the house to another, the characters of the play indicate their en-

* The Joss of one of the six companies in San Francisco was asked the other day, on the occasion of his birthday, which theater he preferred to attend, the Washington or the Jackson street. The sticks were thrown up. They came down on their flat side. The Joss had pronounced for the Jackson street establishment. He accordingly was carried through the streets of San Francisco with great pomp and placed upon the receiving altar.

trance into another room by means of pantomime; the comedian sometimes going so far as to stumble over the imaginary threshold. If, however, the change is total, and does not admit of being acted out, it is suggested conventionally by the whole *dramatis personæ* walking rapidly three times around the stage.

The Chinese have ceased, at least in San Francisco, to notice a division into acts. This, indeed, is only natural when it is remembered that there is no elaborate scenery to arrange and no curtain to hide the stage from view. Some time ago, when a new company arrived in San Francisco, the end of an act was indicated by the solemn procession of two supernumeraries, or, as the Chinese call them, "Great Eastern Melons," carrying banners. The Americanized Chinaman, however, grew very restive under this unnecessary conventionalism, and hooted and jeered the unlucky servants of Thespis off the stage, so that the practice had to be discontinued.*

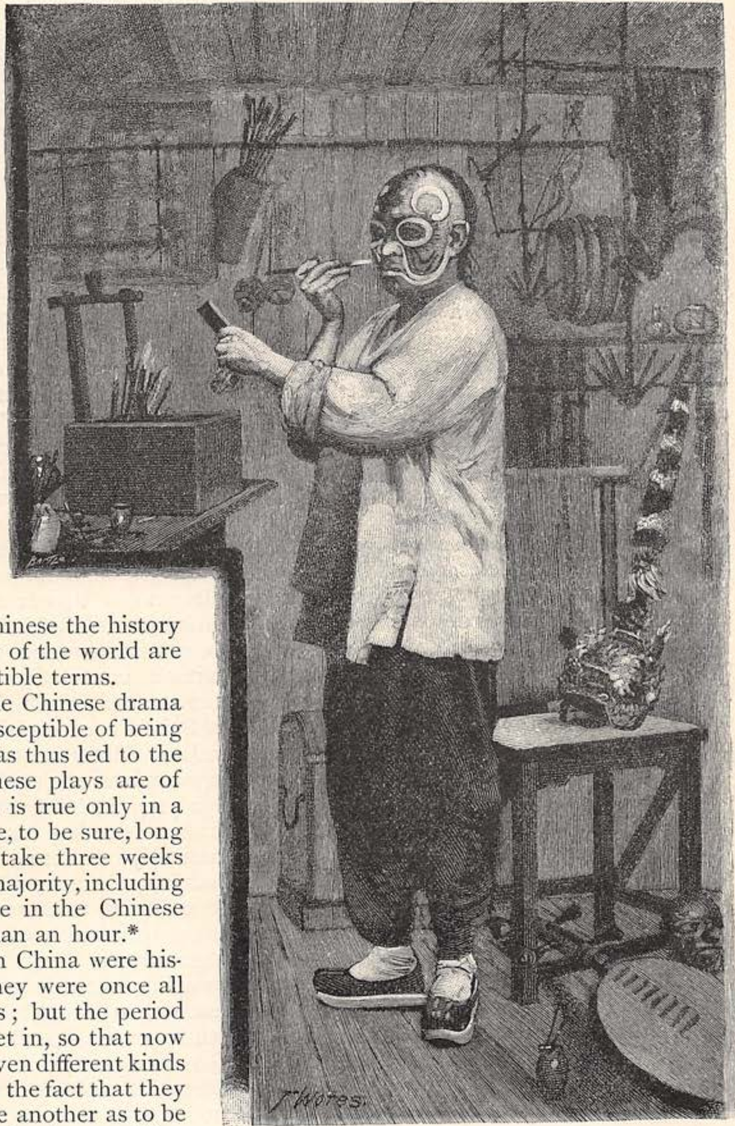
IN THE WOMEN'S GALLERY.

The Chinese, it has been eloquently said, "walk with their feet on earth and their heads in heaven," and throughout their plays we find the strongest evidence of this spiritualistic tendency. Then, again, nothing can equal the veneration and respect which the true Chinaman entertains for the imperial authority; for, whatever may be the sufferings and hardships the economic condition of the empire entails, it cannot be denied that the prestige of the government is very great. A third element is the educational one. Hardly a play is performed that some allusion or other is not made to a scholar's having received, or being about to receive, the first degree at the imperial examination. Fortunately for the spectator, the evidence of this degree seems to have been more conspicuous in Ming Wang's time, being on the stage a small red object, not unlike a lobster-claw in appearance, and easily distinguished at a distance. The first and third of these three factors of the Chinese national life can readily be reduced to terms of the second; for, in the minds of the Chinese, every play is conceived to be an intercepted portion of the history of China. This conception is as important as it is subtle; for only on such an hypothesis can be explained the frequent appearance and reappearance of the Emperor and his court, and the constant, if intermittent, conflict of the imperial troops with barbarians and with rebellious subjects.

The theory, too, is of wider application than it would seem. The Chinese recognize

* The Chinese supernumerary receives his name of "Great Eastern Melon" from the fact that the large melons grown in the eastern provinces of China are, in the process of unloading, *pitched* from the deck of the junk to the shore. The term is expressive.

no history other than Chinese, no life outside the Middle Kingdom. To say, then, that their plays are taken from the history of China is as much as saying they are taken from the whole story of life. Is not the Emperor the "Son of Heaven"? Do not all outside barbarians exist merely by his gracious permission? Why, even the English "red-haired devils" are allowed to remain in Hong Kong because the Emperor sees fit to permit it, and the President of the United States himself occupies his chair by virtue of the same indulgence! With the Chinese the history of China and the history of the world are synonymous and convertible terms.



MAKING UP.

This epic strain in the Chinese drama makes one play quite susceptible of being run into another, and has thus led to the popular error that Chinese plays are of inordinate length. This is true only in a narrow sense. There are, to be sure, long "amateur" pieces that take three weeks in performance, but the majority, including the most celebrated one in the Chinese language, play in less than an hour.*

Originally all plays in China were historical, as in Europe they were once all miracle or mystery plays; but the period of differentiation soon set in, so that now the Chinese recognize seven different kinds of plays, or rather (from the fact that they are so often run into one another as to be scarcely recognizable as plays) seven different elements of plot. These are briefly:

I.	Fu-Cheng	Historical Play or Tragedy.	
II.	Fai-Wood	Comedy.	
III.	Oi-Yue	Platonic-love Play.	
IV.	Tai-Mong	Court Play.	
V.	Hong-Koi	Chivalry Play	Melodrama.
VI.	Yuen-Wang	Persecution Play	Melodrama.
VII.	Po-Yeng	Merit-rewarded Play.	Melodrama.

The very existence of the melodrama in China is in itself an interesting fact, as it tends to prove that this species of theatrical entertainment is not merely a degraded form, but a distinct kind, of art. Why do the poor delight in hearing of sudden windfalls of good luck? What poor boy, struggling to get along in the world by honest endeavor, has not found solace in such stories as that of "Whittington and his Cat"? Indeed, there are few of us

* The Loke-Kwog-Fong-Shung, which claims the proud distinction of being the best play in the Chinese language, deals almost entirely with the consolidation of the six kingdoms of China by the prime minister Shung, several hundred years before Christ. There is little action in the piece, and most of the *talking* is done by Shung himself, who relates how he managed to get the first degree at the imperial examination and thus do good service to his country. It is retained in the professional *répertoire* probably because it is a costume piece; the introduction of the six kings and their wives on the stage at one time taxing the resources of the theatrical wardrobe to the utmost.

who have not at times wished for some talisman of potent charm, a wishing-cap or Fortunatus purse, with which to bend the stubborn world into conformity with our desires.

It is idle to say that this constitutes a low form of art. This is confessed at the start. Indeed, it is precisely the inartistic, improbable character of the melodrama that makes it popular with its votaries; for, to a down-trodden and unhappy people, who have long given up the hope of substantial justice in real life, an agreeable improbability will always be preferable to a disagreeable truth on the stage.

Again, in these three forms of melodrama we get our first true insight into the moral and political conditions of Chinese life. For the evidence that the Hong-Koi, the Yuen-Wang, and the Po-Yeng give is entirely unconscious. They were devised as much for the ruler as the ruled, and it was certainly never intended that they should be put to the base uses of telling tales out of school. But they do tell such tales, nevertheless; terrible tales of fearful outrage, despotism, and crime.

We should be careful, however, not to infer too much from the facts that are brought before us in this way. As the novel must sooner or later deal with the passion of love, so the melodrama must resort eventually, for its elements of interest, to the crime, the police court, and the jail.

Still, the government of China bears down very hard on the poor and humble. There is absolutely no liberty of press, and therefore no appeal to Pekin of official outrage, except through the guilty officials themselves. If one of these should choose to administrate or legislate against an individual, he can do so with comparative impunity. It would be next to impossible to expose him. When the judges are on trial, who shall try them? Here is at once a fruitful and potent source of plot. Let any official, or in fact any one with power and influence, either admire a man's wife, covet his property, or fancy himself in any way slighted, he immediately proceeds against his victim by judicial process, fastening some crime upon him, and, when the case comes up, deciding it in accordance with his interests or his spite.

These instances of official outrage, where the machinery of the law is invoked to the injury of the innocent, form the substratum of the very popular Yuen-Wang, or Persecution Plots. With this important distinction, however, that, whereas on the stage the guilty are always punished and the innocent escape, the reverse is quite too often the case in real life. But this improbability in *dénouement* is not a drawback to the popularity of a Yuen-Wang; though, to be sure, in making any inferences from the ending we should be guided by a rule of contraries, viz., that whatever is loudly applauded on the stage will be pretty apt to be conspicuous by its absence in real life.

The interest of the Po-Yeng, or Merit-rewarded Plots, is of a similar description. There are few self-made men in China. A man of inferior family is practically debarred from all the lucrative and honorable pursuits; and though promotion on the score of merit is the law of the Po-Yeng, nothing in reality is so unusual. So unusual is it, in fact, that for the most part these plots are rather barren of incident or invention.

A very popular Po-Yeng is the following: A strong man is out of work. So powerful, indeed, is this Chinese Strong-Back that, single-handed and without weapon, he overcomes and kills a tiger. This feat of prowess does not escape unnoticed. It attracts the attention of a robber chieftain, who, on the strength of it, immediately offers him a position in his band. As public opinion in China permits a man reduced in circumstances and without other means of employment to adopt the profession of highwayman, our hero is enabled to accept without any sensible loss of caste. Unfortunately the very first travelers upon whom Strong-Back is called to exercise his 'prentice hand turn out to be a family who had befriended him in his past life. Very naturally our hero intercedes for them. Very naturally, however, the robber chieftain fails to see what this purely sentimental consideration has to do with his interests. Finding argument ineffectual, Strong-Back appeals to arms, and without much difficulty succeeds in escaping with his friends to the imperial court, where a complaint is formally lodged against the robber chieftain for his misdeeds, and where Strong-Back, in consideration of his noble conduct, is knighted and becomes a high official in the imperial service.

Now, as the Chinese government has always stood in need of brave and trustworthy mercenaries, it is not unlikely that in a case like the above a man's pedigree would not be too closely scanned. But it is to be carefully noted, nevertheless, that the heroes of the Po-Yeng are always of the military class who, through misfortune, have rather lost their caste than never had it; the lift, therefore, does not seem to be so great after all. But even for this little the populace is grateful. With breathless interest they watch their hero in all his vicissitudes, and when, triumphing over all obstacles, he receives an imperial appointment at the hands of the emperor himself, even these stoics of the eastern world do not contain them-

selves. "Hoi! Hoi!" they cry, from all parts of the theater, in low tones, as if ashamed to show emotion.

The Hong-Koi, or Chivalry Plays, would hardly on our stage be thought melodramatic at all; but from the extreme rarity of the occasions on which one Chinaman helps another, they are perhaps entitled to that term. The inherent selfishness as well as the superstition of the Chinese character excludes from it the active feeling of philanthropy; and, as we should expect, the Hong-Koi deal chiefly with (if such a term is possible) negative chivalry: not doing a man an injury when you might, and doing him a kindness when it is no very great inconvenience to yourself. Still, however indifferent the Chinese may be to the claims of noble sentiment in real life, they are quite willing to admit them on the stage. In this respect they are not far different from other people. How often in a Surrey melodrama, or in a similar production at the Old Bowery, have not the same situations developed, to the untiring satisfaction of large and enthusiastic audiences. Enter heroine in white, the very personification of virtue and distress. Of course she has an old father; of course this old father has mortgaged his farm. Next enter the "heavy villain" in long mustaches. At first, in order perhaps to preserve a proper dramatic suspense, he urges his suit mildly; but afterward, on receiving but cold encouragement, he becomes urgent. Then follows a long tirade from the young lady in white. With that wonderful insight into character which all stage heroines seem to possess, she "knows" him, it appears, and, what is more, tells him so. Then the proper thing for the "heavy villain" to do is to take the young lady by the wrist. The young lady of course screams. At this juncture the good young man rushes in and hurls the villain aside, who, after muttering that he will have revenge, slinks off the stage. The lovers are left alone just long enough to allow the "heavy villain" to prepare his plans, when the plot thickens. The good young man is arrested on a charge of forgery, and the "heavy villain" forecloses a mortgage on the ancestral farm. Who is not familiar with the *dénouement?* The good young man, of course, turns out to be the son of a lord; the "heavy villain" is exposed; virtue triumphs, and vice meets its just reward.

Now, strange enough, all these elements of plot exist as well on the Chinese stage; but instead of finding expression in one play, as with the English, they are, from a peculiar sense of division in the Chinese mind, kept carefully separate and distinct. In England there is but one form of melodrama; in China there are three. On the Chinese stage the misfortunes of the young girl and her lover would be treated at length in Yuen-Wang, or the Virtue-in-Distress Plot. The *dénouement* would be the escape of the innocent and the confusion and punishment of the guilty. The chivalrous assistance of the hero, which in the English melodrama is incident to the action, would on the Chinese stage be elaborated into a Hong-Koi, or Chivalry Play. We have in this country a very low but very distinct form of the Chivalry Play in such border dramas as those of Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack, where the protagonist is ever performing marvels of impossible heroism in defense of innocence and virtue. In this form of melodrama, however, the Chinese *dénouement* would not be the reward or promotion of the hero; this would be treated separately, in a Po-Yeng, perhaps. A far more artistic ending would be evolved out of the very conditions of the plot itself. Here we may stop to notice a piece of conventionalism only to be matched by the Italian harlequinade, where the pantaloon is always a merchant from Venice, and the harlequin a poor devil with parti-colored coat from Bergamo. The conventional hero of the Hong-Koi is always a painted-face military character, who, like the knight-errant of mediæval Europe, goes about doing good, in spite of the consequences. Though his motives are good, however, his methods are impulsive; the dramatic interest, therefore, is sustained by the trouble that these methods create, both for himself and his friends; and poetic justice is ultimately satisfied by the triumph of these methods at the end. The Po-Yeng, or Persecution Plot, usually to be found at the end of an English melodrama, has already been described and needs no further mention.

A word, however, must be said about the Oi-Yue, or Platonic-love Play. Like the Chivalry Play, the Oi-Yue is somewhat rudimentary in its emotional qualities. We, indeed, find nothing strange in the fact that a man should be in love. We find nothing unusual in the triumph of sentiment over passion. We associate no impurity with the idea of falling in love. But the Chinese dramatist indulged in the highest flight of his poetic fancy when he conceived the mere idea of a conversation on the stage between two unmarried persons of different sex. He, therefore, finds it necessary to guard against being misunderstood, and calls his dramas Plays of Respectful Love, or, as they have already been styled for want of a better name, Platonic-love Plays.

The strength of a Chinese play lies in its ingenuity of plot and strength of characterization; it cannot be said to excel in conver-

sation. Indeed, the civilization of a people must be highly advanced before it can be made to yield up much in this way. In order to talk well there must be something to talk about, and the Chinese life is peculiarly barren of great themes. Nobility of thought, Shakspere's subjective search for the infinite secrets of the heart, is nowhere to be found; the atmosphere of Chinese art is everywhere pervaded by a fantastic spirit of unrest.

Besides, most of the Chinese acting plays are, like those of the early Italian stage, the merest "outlines," the dialogue in most cases being left almost entirely to the spontaneous improvisation of the actor. Yet, strange enough, the conversations do not seem to lose much by the process, and appear quite as pointed and confined to the action as if they had been committed to memory. Indeed, in spite of the fact that there are often five or six characters on the stage at the same time, no one of the actors interferes with the other, the whole performance having the deliberate air of preparation.*

From a Fu-Cheng frequently played in the Chinese theaters of San Francisco is taken the following scene:

The Emperor of China is at war with a feudatory vassal; but thus far, owing to the abilities of an opposing general who is the military governor of a fortified place of great strength, the advance of the Emperor's troops has been effectually checked. It becomes a matter of some importance to win this general over. The Emperor, therefore, appoints a commissioner of great learning and tried diplomatic ability with a view to this end.

Arrived at the city's gates, the commissioner is received with great courtesy by the governor, who, it seems, is an old friend and formerly a good subject of the Emperor, but one who, embittered by imaginary wrongs and misled by false counsel, had gone over to the enemy.

The commissioner is invited to partake of a repast; but, once fairly seated at the governor's table (or, rather, at his own, for there is a separate table for each guest at a Chinese dinner), he delicately broaches the subject of the treaty which is the object of his mission.

The governor, who is a soldier merely, and distrusts his ability as a diplomat, refuses to discuss the question, remarking, by way of parenthesis, that he has made a law that any one who even mentions the name of the country the commissioner represents, much less anything relating to its affairs, shall receive for the first offense four lashes; for the second, eight; and for the third, he shall lose his head. As the commissioner is an old friend, he hopes that he will not push him to extremities,—a word to the wise, as it were.

The commissioner is quite unruffled by the governor's words, and replies gravely, "You are perfectly right; a law is a law, and must be obeyed."

He immediately, however, violates the law.

The sheriff approaches him and leads him out to be lashed. The orchestra plays a mournful air; the four lashes are distinctly heard; and the commissioner returns very sore and in great pain.

The governor is visibly affected, but controls himself with an effort.

"I am very sorry," he says, "and I have to apologize for the pain I have caused you; but you should have paid attention to what I said."

"Your order must be obeyed," replies the commissioner, with a low bow; "and if I have violated the laws, it is only right that I should take the consequences."

But, after some further conversation, the laws are again violated.

The governor is this time fairly transported with rage. Down comes his fist upon the table.

"Give him eight lashes," he bawls out.

The sheriff again approaches.

"Eight lashes?" asks the aged commissioner of that functionary.

"That is the order."

"But, Mr. Sheriff, I tell you, I can't stand it; I could hardly stand four! It must be, eh? Well, if it must, I suppose it must. Let's go quickly and have it over with as soon as possible. But I say, my good fellow," continues the commissioner in a lower tone, "go easy this time, will you?"

Again the commissioner leaves the stage. Again there is a moment of dread suspense. The eight lashes are indicated by the orchestra as before, and the commissioner returns. This time, as he enters, he fairly falls down on the stage with exhaustion, and is hardly able to take his seat. The governor is melted with sympathy, though he is out of all patience with the commissioner's obstinacy.

"You ought to have better sense. You are an educated man. You ought to be able to regulate your tongue. I tell you, once for all, this order must be obeyed."

"What you say," replies the commissioner, "is perfectly true. The mountain does not yield! The sun and wind do not stop! Your order must be obeyed."

But in spite of his expressed respect for law and order, the commissioner perversely

* It is a curious fact, not generally known perhaps, that the actors of the Italiens of Paris insisted, as late as 1783, on having "outlines" from the pen of Goldoni in lieu of his more finished pieces.

AN ENTRANCE.

sins a third time. The governor's fury knows no bounds. The sheriff is told to do his duty, and to lead the prisoner to execution. The sheriff accordingly approaches the commissioner for the third and last time.

"Cut my head off?" asks the latter.

The sheriff nods.

"By the Goddess of Mercy, it is high time I was doing some thinking. See here, friend of mine, it is true that I have violated your order three times; but you, look you, have violated three laws of nature. It is you therefore who ought to be lashed and have your head cut off."

"I!" replies the governor with great astonishment.

"Certainly. I will convince you of this, under three heads.

"*First.* You do not belong to this country. You belong, on the contrary, to my country. And yet you fight for this country against yours and mine! Are you not a traitor?

"*Second.* You are not without family ties in your country and in mine — you have a brother and sister, yea, a father, even. Are you not unfilial?

"*Third.* We were old schoolmates together, the same as brothers. And yet you gave me four and eight lashes, and now you seek to chop my head off! Is not this a violation of the principle of fraternal love? And have you not therefore violated the three natural laws of being?"

This extraordinary exordium proves quite too much for the man of war. He breaks down completely, in fact, and is persuaded to accompany the commissioner. So they both throw their legs over their imaginary steeds, and are off to the Emperor's court.

THE question is often asked, Have the Chinese any spectacular plays? In one sense of the word they have not. Music invariably accompanies the action, and rude scenery and "properties," such as they are, are introduced when needed. But the Chinese have hardly arrived at the point where they would play a piece merely for the purpose of exhibiting the scenery. The nearest approach to anything of the kind is advertised in the play-bill, of which the following is a close translation:

TAN-SAN-FUNG.

(Red Mountain Peacock.)

29th day. Performance day and night continuously.

New Play for the Matinée, entitled:

CHE YOUNG KWONG

BUILDS A SHIP THAT SAILS ON LAND.

Leading Lady AH MA CHU will appear.

THE DRAGON AND PEACOCK JUNK!!!

BEAUTIFUL LANTERNS OF DIVERS COLORS!!!

GORGEOUS COSTUMES!!!

Special Notice.— Four genuine girls will draw the junk.

To conclude with a short piece entitled:

THE FISHERWOMAN KILLS HER WICKED HUSBAND.

In which will appear

AH LOW.	ME BOW.
AH KEE.	KING BOW.
PIN HAW.	SIN LEE.

—o—

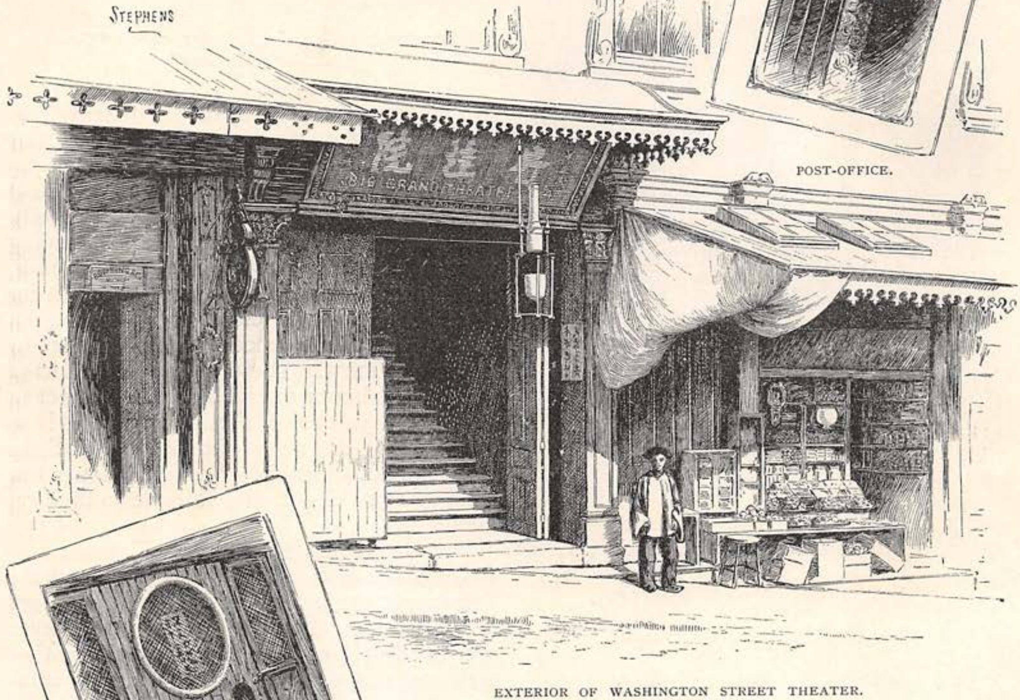
Come Early! Come Early!

This play is, of course, a Fu-Cheng; but, from the fact that the dramatic portion is made subordinate to certain details, it perhaps merits being called spectacular. It is performed generally on Saturdays, and, whenever produced, draws large crowds. In construction it is not unlike the Fu-Cheng of Tin, Tau, and Chung. There the action hinged on the search for the wonderful peach and its presentation to the Goddess of Mercy. In this play also the thread of construction is slight, being little else but the building of a bridge.

The especial feature of the performance is undoubtedly the progress of the Goddess of Mercy in a marvelous junk, which, as the play-bill truly announces, "sails on land." The *Dragon and Peacock* junk is certainly a wonderful object; but its chief "drawing" power, if one may be pardoned the bad pun, are the four "genuine" girls. It is easy to see from the pretentious advertisement that the Chinese have no real objection to the appearance of women on the stage, and that it is the lack of intelligence of the women rather than the sense of propriety of the audience that keeps them off. Indeed, there is already one Chinese actress in San Francisco, who, whenever she appears, is received with acclamation. She is attached to the Jackson street theater, and, it is safe to say, earns a much larger salary than if she were a man. The "leading lady" mentioned in the bill is, of course, not a woman, but in fact the principal male actor of the theater. The necessity of the Goddess of Mercy being suitably represented no doubt occasions his appearance in the cast.

A beautiful incident of the performance is the "Cloud Ballet." The *raison d'être* of this ballet is the necessity of the ocean's being calm enough to allow the building of the

bridge. The King of the Eastern Ocean has been consulted, and has promised to keep the wind down. The ballet begins. Supernumeraries enter completely clothed in white, each carrying in his hands two lanterns skillfully painted in imitation of clouds. After moving gracefully about the stage for a time, meeting and retreating as if in recoil, the movement becomes definite, the clouds coming together by twos and fours, until, in the process of this movement, they spell out in five tableaux (each tableau representing a Chinese character) the glorious sentence of charity and love: "Peace on earth, good-will toward man." The allegory is complete, the clouds are resting, and the ocean is calm.



POST-OFFICE.

EXTERIOR OF WASHINGTON STREET THEATER.

BOX-OFFICE.

The final building and dedication of the bridge is worked out with much spirit and no little fidelity to nature. We are afforded glimpses of the folk-life of China and character sketches of junk-peddlers, market-women, and street *gamins*. The dedication service, too, is not without its touch of humor. The old Buddhist priest who has the thing in hand chants away at the service, invoking all the gods nether and upper; but, unfortunately, he forgets in his enumeration a deity of well-recognized standing. A mandarin calls his attention to the fact. "It's all right," remarks the priest; "I'll begin all over again." Finally the little bell rings three times, and the bridge is consecrated. A dramatic event at the close is the appearance of an evil spirit, who is driven off by a scholar who has received the first degree at the imperial examination. The obstacle is but momentary, therefore the surging crowd pass over and the play ends.

A curious feature of the Chinese stage is its minutely divided cast. Every actor has his particular "line" of characters, from which he seldom departs. This makes it necessary to have very large companies, which adds little to the artistic side of the performance and greatly to the expense account. A complete list of these different *rôles* is a rather complicated affair; but without some little knowledge of their strange and conventional classification, a performance would be abso-

A PIRATE.

lutely unintelligible. The characters are divided, it will be seen, into two broad classes:

CIVIL.

Men.

Emperor.

(Gen. Chief Singer.)

Mandarins.

1st and 2d Old Men.

1st and 2d Young Men.

1st and 2d (Light) Comedians.

3d (Low) Comedian.

Women.

Leading Lady.

(Must sing well.)

Old Woman.

Pretty Girl.

(She is the *première amoureuse* of the French stage; also does juvenile characters.)

Female Comedian.

(Must be good-natured in appearance, but not over good-looking.)

NOTE.— Pretty Girl and Leading Lady sometimes *wear* small feet.

MILITARY.

Men.

1st Class.

Generals or Officials of high rank (bearded, old, and sometimes poor).

2d Class.

One Principal and three Assistants (young, unbearded; these never paint their faces).

1st Painted-face Military Character (ugly "heavy villain," always the enemy of the First Class of Military Characters).

2d Painted-face Military Character (the opposite of the above, a knight-errant who succors the unfortunate; the impulsive hero of the Hong-Koi, or Chivalry Play).

Four Painted-face Generals.

An Acrobat (who plays the *rôles* of strength: thief, burglar, etc.)

Women.

One Principal Military Character and three Assistants.

Female Acrobat.

Supernumeraries of all classes, called "Great Eastern Melons."

The costumes worn by these different characters are not only effective on the stage, but they bear the test of close examination, the gold cloth of the more costly being picked out and heightened by innumerable silk threads of many different colors, all blending harmoniously and exquisitely. They do not, indeed, vary much in general cut, and are for the most part chiefly distinguished from each other by some difference in the head-dress or minor ornament. The emperor and his suite wear huge hoops or circlets, which gather in their robes just below the knee; and it is *de rigueur* that the actor who personates these *rôles* should, when sitting, turn his shoes out well, so as to display the costume to the best advantage.

But the most distinctive of all these costumes is the general's. In his head-dress are four dragons rampant, and on the flap in front a lion's mouth. In time of action his sleeves are rolled up, and his loins are girded with a sash and rosette of light-blue silk. An enormous butterfly laps over and partly covers the side-pieces that protect his thighs. His boots are high-soled and add much to his stature. Two long feathers sweep from his helmet behind. As a symbol of power he wears four flags in his back, and as a token of strength a cockade of black silk on his forehead.

The convention of painting the face is applied in so many ways that it is at first rather puzzling. All barbarians, or "outlanders," are represented with painted faces. This is necessary conventionally, if for no other reason, to distinguish the commander of the enemies' forces from that of the home or imperial troops. This distinction serves in place of a difference of costume, and is about the only way the Chinaman recognizes on the stage the existence of any nationality other than his own. Besides this primary use of the painted face, it is used also to indicate moral

or physical ugliness, and is therefore applied indifferently to the good-natured King of the Eastern Ocean, the "heavy villain" of the Yueng-Wang, and the plain-featured but generous harlequin of the Chivalry Play.

But probably the most striking thing in the whole Chinese theatrical cast is the presence of the female military characters. The fact that it is necessary to have a certain number of actors to do this work exclusively sufficiently attests their importance. These Chinese amazons not only assist their husbands when they *are* able to fight, but not infrequently when they are *not*. A curious thing this, to see a scholar, upon whom may rest the direction of an empire, obliged to have his wife do his fighting for him.

An important part of the organization of a theater is the orchestra. This is composed of a leader who plays the ox-hide drum, a fiddler, a banjoist, a gong player, and a cymbal player. The instruments are of beautiful make, and the majority of little cost. Indeed, no prettier souvenir is there of San Francisco than the Chinese banjo, a beautiful instrument of dark polished wood, with a blue snake's skin stretched over the drum. The cymbals are much larger than ours, and beaten out artistically of brass; the dents of the hammer giving them all the effect of beaten gold. The cymbal player is sometimes very expert, and is the only one of the orchestra who does not remain always at his post. He moves about anywhere where the inspiration of the piece may lead him, often throwing up one cymbal in the air and catching it on the flat side of the other, which he holds in his hand. As a Chinese cymbal weighs upward of ten pounds, the difficulty of this feat can well be imagined.

The Chinese theater in the morning is, so to speak, *en déshabillé*. Everybody is sound asleep: the actors in their comfortable sleeping-rooms over the stage; the supernumeraries and petty comedians on some trunk in the dressing-room, or, more frequently, on the floor. No one hinders your approach. It is supposed that you have some business or you would not have come. Leaving the boxes on your right, and finding your way with difficulty along a dark and narrow passage-way, you open a little door at the end, and find yourself presently in the actors' hotel, an intricate rookery of rooms and corridors where the helpless and luxurious histrion is lodged, fed, shaved, and dressed. For everything necessary to his existence the actor finds within the four walls of the theater. There he has with him his barber, servant, wife, and household gods, and he seldom leaves the theater, except for an occasional dinner at the restaurant or a walk through the streets in the afternoon. Indeed, he does not leave it even to get married; for he does not go to his wife, his wife comes to *him*.

A marriage in the Chinese theater takes place in this wise. The bridegroom sends a carriage for the bride. When she arrives they worship their ancestors together. Then she presents him with a cup of tea or Chinese whisky, as if to say, "I am your humble servant." After which follows a curious cere-

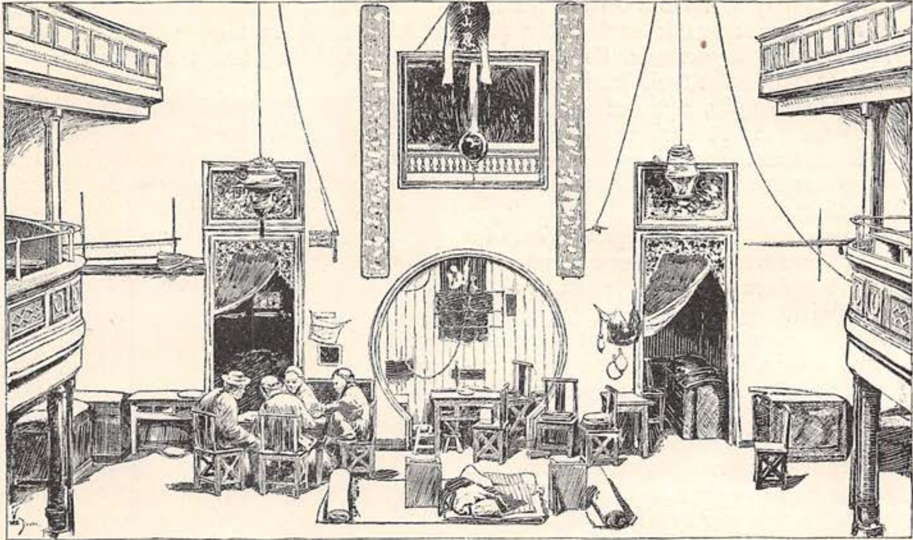
A GOD OF THUNDER.

mony. The bride, attired in a red skirt of flowing silk, and a gorgeous head-dress on her head, proceeds to pay her respects to every Joss in the theater; as there are thirty or more Josses in every conceivable situation, in niches at every turn of the underground and winding passage-ways, this journey leads her far. Having propitiated the infernal deities, she takes leave of her bridesmaids, is domiciled, and passes under the dominion of her husband.

The management of a theater lies in the hands of three men. One buys and takes care of the costumes; another looks after the food and lodging question; and the third fills the important post of treasurer and paymaster.

Virtually, however, the theater takes care of itself. The Chinese have little taste or talent for organization, and everything is regulated pretty much by unwritten law.

There is no stage manager. When a new play is to be produced, the author, who is generally also an actor, superintends the rehearsals as well as the performance. The cast is written down in a book and hung up in a conspicuous place in the green-room. No parts are given out; the author merely tells the actor in a general way what he is to do, and that is all. The "cues," however, are written out, as well as the important sentences,— *couplets de sortie*. A Chinese actor, therefore, must be a man of intelligence, good education, and ready wit. He must possess in addition to these qualities an accurate knowledge of the history of China, and of the etiquette and ceremonial of the imperial court as it is popularly understood. He must be suitably dressed, and his action must conform as much as possible to the character of the personage he represents, who is often historical and well known to the audience. These requirements make acting in China no easy matter; and a really good artist is, therefore, quite properly treated with great respect by his fellows, who watch him carefully when he acts, and, in case they approve, reverently salute him with the title of "Master."



INTERIOR OF JACKSON STREET THEATER. MORNING.

Owing perhaps to the prevalence of the "stock" system, but one actor has raised himself above the mediocrity of his fellows. His name was Ah Wah Chai. He died twenty years ago at Pekin, and the period of his greatest fame was about forty years earlier. He was, of course, a professional; no mandarin actor having any celebrity whatever. In spite of its great inferiority, however, the mandarin stage continues to exist. In the opinion of the chief actor of the Jackson street theater in San Francisco, the amateur actor's forte lies in his delicacy and refinement rather than in his force. A small company of amateur actors came to San Francisco a few years ago, and gave representations by the side of their professional brethren. At first the people were delighted with them, and so great was the enthusiasm that the managers of the theater were induced to engage them in addition to the regular company. They failed utterly to realize the expectations that were formed of them, or to meet the severe exigencies of the professional stage.

Once a year the company of a Chinese theater is reorganized. The details of the reorganization are discussed at a dinner which takes place at the restaurant, and at which the whole company are present. The theater is then closed for three days, at the end of which time it is opened again with great *éclat*. Very often nothing is done but to continue the arrangements of the past year; still the ceremonies of reopening are never dispensed with.

The salary of a Chinese actor runs from two hundred to seven thousand dollars a year. On the other hand, he occupies in China the lowest place in the scale of caste. He is incapacitated from holding any position of trust or emolument under the government, and this rule applies with all its rigor to his sons and grandsons as well. Nothing but the most desperate fortunes and the extremely large profit accruing would ever tempt a Chinese subject to embrace a profession at once so unlucky

TWO PRINCES PLAYING CHECKERS.

basis of the lowest-paying rank in China. The same decreasing scale is observed, however, so that a Chinaman pays five cents an hour for his theatrical amusement. Return checks are given at the door to all except the white barbarians, who pay their fifty cents once for all; and on leaving the Chinese theater any evening a large number of poor devils who cannot afford to pay the admission price can be seen shadowing the door of the theater and soliciting the return checks of their more fortunate brethren.

and so proscribed. Legally debarred from all other pursuits, with a political curse resting on their lives and those of their children, Chinese actors have little incentive to save, and as a consequence we find that they are almost always in debt. From this has resulted the paradoxical fact that the best company is to be seen in San Francisco, so very many Chinese actors having been obliged to leave their own country on account of business complications. An actor who in China would act the *rôle* of first general, must in San Francisco be content with an engagement as second, and sometimes third general; a first comedian, that of second comedian; and so on through the whole cast.

Besides, the source of revenue is greater in America. In China there are but comparatively few stationary theaters, and the majority of the actors belong to strolling companies that depend in the main on the support of some wealthy nobleman who commands the play. Even in the large cities the pit is free, and the revenues are derived entirely from the galleries. These galleries are divided into three ranks.

First rank, teak chairs with high backs	$1.50
Second rank, bamboo chairs without backs	.80
Third rank, for the first hour	.25
" for the second hour	.20
" for the third hour	.15
" for the fourth hour	.10
" for the fifth and each succeeding hour	.05

All this is much simplified in San Francisco. Here the pit is *not* free. With the exception of the boxes, only one rank exists, and all must pay something; the price fixed being on the basis of the lowest-paying rank in China.

The Chinese theater is rich in sign literature, and signs of all descriptions exist, suited to all needs and addressed to all intelligences: "The utterances of God are blessings to men"; "Glory to the spirit forever"; "The people with a loud voice praise him for his blessing." Then, not a foot away perhaps: "Ladies and gentlemen must be separated and treat each other with proper respect"; "Go up and down peaceably"; "Harmony is the best policy." On the principle, perhaps, that praising a man is sometimes the best way to get him to act up to the character you give him, a large sign overlooking the pit or orchestra proclaims that "The seats are full of gentlemen." Those in the dressing-rooms are addressed exclusively to the actors, who are advised that they "must not come up in this dirty place [the paint-room] with their costumes on," and that "people who wash their faces should not spill water on the floor." A very common green-room sign is the bill which the restaurant keeper posts for sundry lunches due him on matinée days. The signs on the stage are rather ornamental than instructive. But over the door of entrance the actor is warned to "come in in good spirits"; by the door of exit he is told to "go out and change his costume." Among other injunctions are these: "Let the voice be clear and the music loud"; "Let the gymnasts excel themselves"; "Let man have the spirit of the dragon and of the horse." From a sign in the musicians' box we learn that "When the performance begins there will be good luck to all," and scattered about are many other "lucky" signs: "May your happiness be great"; "May you receive what your heart desires." Over the doors of entrance, however, as if in contrast to the auspicious signs just mentioned, are two decorative pieces, not inappropriately repre-

senting those two great, and to the Chinese unexplained, terrors of nature, the water-spout and the eclipse. The former is typified by the figure of a dragon spouting out a column of water, and the latter by a bat eating up the sun. A nimbus of colored clouds surrounds the bat, and a piece of gas-pipe let into the animal permits of lurid and realistic effects.

A word in conclusion. It is related of the late Mr. Ticknor, who labored in the cause of Spanish literature for the greater part of his life, and whose work has been translated into Spanish and adopted as a text-book by the universities, that he was asked by his daughter whether he would advise the study of Spanish on account of its literature.

"No, I would not advise it," he said; "there is nothing in their literature to repay a study of the language."

A similar question might be framed in reference to the Chinese theater. When one has taken the trouble to understand it, does it pay? The writer of this necessarily imperfect sketch can only say that he has not entered the lists in behalf of the Chinese literature; and that on the function and purpose of their drama he should much prefer that the Chinese should speak for themselves. On two long, red signs, which hang on either side of the musicians' alcove in the Jackson street theater, are written these words:

"NEIGHBORS ALL, OBSERVE WITH YOUR EYES AND LISTEN WELL WITH YOUR EARS. BE AS ONE FAMILY, EXCEEDINGLY HAPPY AND CONTENTED. IN HEAVEN ABOVE AND ON EARTH BELOW, THINGS GREAT AND SMALL ARE JUDGED AND IMMEDIATELY RECEIVE THEIR REWARD. YOU SEE BEFORE YOU THE WHOLE STORY OF LIFE. CONSIDER WELL WHAT YE SHALL CHOOSE, THE REWARD OF THE GOOD OR THE REWARD OF THE EVIL."

Henry Burden McDowell.

THE ECLIPSE.

IN NOVEMBER.

FROM my hill-circled home, this eve, I heard
The tempest singing on the windy height—
The first wild storm of winter in its flight
Seaward—as though some mighty Arctic bird
Had left its snowy nest, and on the firred,
Steep mountain summit paused one boisterous night
To fill the valleys with its fierce delight.
Ah me, I thought, how every pine is stirred,
Till all its deep storm-music is unbound;
How every waving bough gives forth its roar,
And the firs shout, as though some harper hoar
Laid his great hand upon the hills around,
And drew a loud hymn forth, a voice to sound
Far, far away, beyond the world's dull shore.

W. P. Foster.