

so ready, and said neither more nor less than was wanted.

Whether a good witness would always make a good lawyer, we need not decide; but it is certain that, in course of time, Sam made a very good one indeed. His was one of those not uncommon cases where supposed "deficiency" is superficial only, and where a far more grave deficiency is to be found in those

who, by constantly laughing at it, run the risk of making it a real life-long imbecility. Sam's relatives never laughed at him again after the first visit he paid them, though they often laughed *with* him, for his drollery was inexhaustible. He never married; but his sister Mary kept house for him, and was perhaps a great deal happier than she would have been anywhere else.

ARTHUR BROWN, B.A.

## HOW THE CHINESE AMUSE THEMSELVES.

BY SIR WALTER MEDHURST, LATE H.B.M.'S CONSUL AT SHANGHAE.



IF the character of a people is to be judged of by the amusements to which it is in the habit of devoting itself, that of the Chinese must be estimated at but a low and childish valuation at the best. Those sports and recreations, which to the European prove souseful in hardening the physical frame and strengthening the moral purpose of the

boy and man, are almost, if not entirely, unknown to the Chinese, and as a consequence they lack that muscular development of body with its combination of promptitude of purpose, fixity of will, and general hardness of constitution, which as a rule characterise the European and American. They have their amusements nevertheless, and feeble and puerile although these may be regarded from a European point of view, yet they are worthy of notice as elements which go to form the national character, and as evidences of the prevalence as well as antiquity of some of our own most common pastimes.

Let the reader imagine himself approaching a Chinese village on a summer's evening, when, labour over for the day, man and beast are enjoying their well-earned repose. The scene is rural and peaceful to a degree. Wooded hills and carefully cultivated plains, dotted here and there with quaint yet picturesque buildings, form a charming background to the view; whilst in front a brawling brook tumbles on in its merry but useful course through a high-arched bridge, backed by cottages of all shapes and colours, thrown together in the prettiest confusion imaginable. At doors, outside windows, and on every convenient perch, lounge men, women, and children, some with tobacco-pipe in mouth, others with rice-bowl and chopsticks in hand, preferring the balmy evening air to the close confinement of their small abodes. Cattle, pigs, dogs, and goats lie and wander about, and poultry, and even

birds, pick here and there, emboldened to confidence and familiarity by the gentle and kindly treatment which is uniformly their due. The first open space encountered will probably be the threshing-floor, which is common to the entire community, and is the spot where all disputes are canvassed, scandal talked, and gatherings held. Here may be seen different squads of children at their play, whilst their elders are busy chatting, or looking on at the fun. There is a general impression abroad that infanticide is prevalent in China, and children therefore, more especially girls, at a discount in that country. But the foreign traveller has only to remark the crowds of children of both sexes and all ages that swarm at cottage doors, and the affectionate pride with which they are contemplated and shown by their parents and grandparents, to convince himself that infanticide may be the exception, but that it certainly is not the rule in China.

To return to the threshing-floor. Look at that bright-eyed, active little fellow amusing himself with a ball of worsted, twisted so tightly as to be elastic. He does not throw it to another boy for a catch, neither does he take up a bat to hit it with. Catches and bats are things unknown to the tiny Celestial. But he strikes it as it bounds off the floor with the palm of his hand, the trick being to score as many bounds as he can possibly accomplish, without letting the ball drop. If he can manage to turn round sharply on his heel, whilst the ball is on the bound, and catch it again as he faces it, so much the more clever. When he misses the ball, the next boy takes it up, and so on until they all have had a turn. Hard by see another group of boys, one of whom is kicking a round piece of tile, about the size of a crown piece, whilst hopping on one leg. Approach closer, and it will be observed that the floor is chalked or scored out into compartments, which marvellously resemble, if not precisely reproduce, the complex diagrams through which the reader may in his own youth have kicked a tile at "hop-scotch." The rules of the game oddly enough will be found to mimic those of its English representative; and the conjecture will suggest itself, whether, after all, the Chinese is not the original game, and ours only a copy therefrom. Proceed a little farther, and two boys will be seen with a small bit of stick tapered to a point at either end, and a longer stick in the



player's hand. The smaller stick is placed on the edge of a step or bench with one end overhanging, and, the projecting end being struck, up goes the little stick into the air, when it is hit with the longer stick and sent flying. The observer will here, perhaps, rub his eyes, as a dreamy reminiscence comes back to him of a game he used to play at school called "tip-cat," but now to a great extent exploded.

the part of the stronger boys, who, in their anxiety to add to their pecuniary stock, are apt to come the "Heathen Chinese" over their weaker fellows.

Looking on at these several games, observe a couple of children with live cicadas attached to bits of thread, on which the unfortunate creatures are swung about with most ruthless disregard of the torture to which they are being subjected. This atrocious habit of



CHINESE THEATRICALS.

There again are some boys busy with copper coins and a house-tile. They slant the tile against a step or stone, and each boy proceeds to strike it with his coin on edge, which makes the coin roll sharply away some ten or twenty feet. When all have so discharged their coins, the game is to pitch one coin from the spot to which it has rolled on to the next nearest coin, and he who is lucky enough to strike his opponent's coin pockets its value. This is a very favourite game with Chinese children, but leads to much cheating on

giving live insects to children to play with, and not unfrequently depriving these of legs or wings in order to prevent their escape, is unfortunately only too common amongst the Chinese, and no doubt tends to lay the foundation for that small value attached to human life, and cruelty of disposition, which are amongst the worst traits of the Chinese character.

The children so seen to be disporting themselves will probably range in age from six to twelve years, and all of them will probably be found to be boys.



Girls do not appear to play at all. One never sees in China the ring of merry rosy girls which so often adorns our English village greens, busy with puss in the corner, kiss in the ring, hunt the slipper, or a hundred other childish pastimes. Probably the seclusion in which the sex is more or less kept, and the custom of bandaging the female feet from infancy, have much to do with this curious result. The girls, nevertheless, do not altogether hide their charms under a bushel, as any one can testify who has passed through a Chinese village, and seen doors crowded with bright-eyed giggling damsels, eager to see the passing stranger, but shy at being themselves observed.

The brief list of games just described nearly, if not quite, exhausts the category of a Chinese boy's amusements, excepting of course theatricals, kites, shuttlecock, and other recreations, which boys share in with the men, and of which more anon. As will be seen, they all partake of that quiet childish character to which the more manly European youth would scarcely care to confine himself. Any pastime involving active, physical exertion, seems quite foreign to the Chinese boy's idea of fun; of foot-ball, cricket, prisoner's base, and such-like games he never dreamt; and he cannot even run, jump, box, wrestle, swim, climb, throw stones, fish, shoot, ride, or drive, nor would he care to try.

The pastimes of the men are equally limited in variety and puerile in character with those in which the children indulge. Kite-flying is a particularly favourite amusement with grown-up men in all the provinces, and they carry the art to a perfection of detail and finish to which we are entire strangers. There is no shape which the Chinese kite does not take, nor is there any bird, beast, or insect which their eccentric ideas of kite-flying will not induce them to copy for indulgence in this pursuit. The prettiest and most effective kite is that constructed to represent the centipede, and it is marvellous how true to nature the image moves as it floats suspended in mid-air, making

a train of forty to fifty feet in length. Hawks, too, are copied with great success, the colour and shape of the bird being faithfully reproduced, and its sharp and swift swoops shown in life-like style. Frequently a number of hawk-kites are flown from the same string, and are made to wheel about round and round one another, precisely as natural hawks may be seen to do on any windy day. The writer once saw a kite made to represent a steamer, the sails set and paddle-wheels

revolving in the most clever manner possible. Another favourite amusement of the men is the keeping of birds, which they carry out with them to promenades, tea-gardens, or other places of public resort, simply for the pleasure of hearing the pretty creatures sing one against the other. Thrushes and larks are principally reared for this purpose, and are often valued by their owners at fabulous prices, which they will not always accept when offered. The cages, too, are masterpieces of art, and men may be seen carrying bird and cage costing together from fifty to a hundred dollars, which represents to most Chinamen a considerable sum. Not unfrequently quails are carried about for fighting purposes, but these are carefully concealed in handsomely embroidered satin bags suspended to the girdle, a mode of conveyance



A CHINESE ARTIST.

which does not appear to affect the bird's life or liveliness in the slightest degree. Crickets are also kept with the same object in many parts, but the pursuit is not considered respectable.

In the south of China, shuttlecock is a very favourite game with the men, but played with the feet, not with the hands. A ring is formed of from four to six players, and the shuttlecock being first thrown up within the circle, it is kept up by striking it with the inner side of the thick felt sole of the shoe, which acts as a most effective bat. A proficient at the game will often turn his back on the descending shuttlecock and strike it with either the outer edge of the sole or the flat sole itself, and it is wonderful how successful they are in keeping up the round without letting the shuttlecock fall.



Chess, draughts, and cards, or rather assimilations to these games, as known to us, are not uncommon in China, the last more especially. In their chess, the pieces possess, as in ours, various values and powers, and there are the same elements of military organisation and antagonism which characterise the game as derived by us from Eastern sources; but the contending parties are curiously enough divided by a blank space or river, which only certain of the pieces have the power of crossing, and the whole game falls far short of ours in the strategy and beauty of its combinations. Their draughts, on the other hand, is a much more complicated game than the European one, and quite beyond illustration in a brief summary such as this is. The Chinese may be said to play at cards, because they have a game in which pieces of pasteboard, impressed with certain devices, and bearing various values, are used, and in which money is hazarded; but beyond this there is no analogy with the art as practised amongst European nations; and it may be doubted whether the tokens themselves are capable of a title of the numerous and wonderful adaptations which can be worked out of our pack of cards. Card-playing, moreover, is not universal amongst all the grades of Chinese society, but is chiefly confined to the poorer and labouring classes, and being invariably accompanied by money stakes, it is not regarded as a reputable pastime.

Dominoes are indigenous to China, and are as common in the tea-houses there as they are in the *estaminets* and drinking-shops of the Continent. The game is played, too, on much the same principles, but the dots are carried up to double nines.

It is a curious fact that the Chinese possess the game of "morro" in precisely the same form in which it is played in Italy. No feast is complete without it, and in the south of China they are apt to get very drunk and quarrelsome over it, in consequence of the number of cups of "samshoo" which are obliged to be imbibed as forfeits. The great time for feasting is the new year holiday, and then the otherwise silent streets quite resound with the uproar within the houses caused by the shouting at this game. It is only fair to the Chinese to say that this game is the only opportunity for drinking in which they allow themselves to be betrayed into excess. In the south, an intoxicated man may at times be observed; in the northern provinces, very rarely, and only at the new year festivals. Inebriation, happily, is not a Chinese weakness.

The Chinese are very partial to theatricals, but the stage is a very different institution with them to what it is in Europe. Such a thing as a theatre, that is a permanent building devoted to histrionic displays, is quite unknown in China, the stage being regarded as disreputable in the last degree, and even prohibited by statute. Women are not allowed to act, boys being brought up to personate them, and men professionals are looked upon as so degraded that they are placed without the pale of the law, and rendered incapable of filling office or entering for the literary examinations.

The poorest villager would not tolerate the marriage of his daughter to a player. Yet theatricals are a rage, and to satisfy the public appetite, troops of strolling players go about the country performing wherever they are wanted, either in temples or on temporary stages erected for the occasion. Every temple has a stage ready provided in the principal court as a main feature in its architectural construction, and there is seldom a festival held but that theatricals form an important part of the programme. No charge is made to the public for the show, and it goes on without intermission all day and through a greater part of the night for several days together, the spectators coming and going as they list. Sometimes a city magistrate or other high official gives an entertainment of the kind to a party of friends, the feasting going on in front of an improvised stage, whilst the mob pass in and out at their leisure. The pieces acted are mostly historical, the representations being generally of an extravaganza character, embellished by gorgeous costumes, and supported by the most frightful din in the way of music that can be conceived. Military displays and sanguinary battles form a favourite subject of representation, and it is remarkable how successfully these are put on the stage, taking into consideration the limited means and confined space at disposal. The assertion that a permanent theatre is an institution unknown to the Chinese needs to be qualified as regards the ports open to foreign trade. In the settlements at some of these places certain foreigners have availed themselves of their own freedom under treaty from the action of Chinese law, and the known partiality of the natives for theatrical displays, to establish permanent theatres upon the foreign system, and the speculation has not been without its success; but the native authorities complain to the consuls of the demoralising effect of the innovation.

The Chinese, although essentially a gregarious people, fond of gossip, and always on the alert, like the Athenians of old, "to tell or hear some new thing," seem to derive little or no pleasure from social intercourse. Dinner-parties, balls (they don't dance), soirées, and such-like opportunities for the interchange of kindness and sentiment, which amongst us serve to keep society alive, are practically unknown to them, and "the season" is a term which could not well find an equivalent in their language. This is, no doubt, to be attributed to the seclusion in which their women are kept, it being considered indecorous for a female to show herself prominently outside of her own home.

His Excellency Kuo Sung-t'ao, the Chinese Minister, may well be congratulated upon the bold and decided move which he has lately (19th June, 1878) made towards breaking through this unsocial and for some reasons pernicious custom, by issuing invitations for a soirée to the *élite* of London society, and inducing his lady to take the novel step of receiving as hostess the (to her, no doubt) formidable company.

Although society in China can have no existence



owing to the lack of that life and spirit which, in our more favoured countries, are imparted to it by the presence of the female element, yet the men are companionable enough, and are not without resources in the society of their own sex. The members of the official class are not supposed to venture abroad when in office, but they nevertheless meet at each other's residences, and amuse themselves with conversation, reading, composing, chess, draughts, and such-like harmless pursuits. Less responsible persons resort to temples, tea-houses, gardens, and other public places, where they drink tea, gossip, fly kites, exhibit singing birds, and talk over the latest bit of news. A very favourite resource is to go in a party to some grotto, hill-side temple, or other romantic spot, of which there are more or less in every neighbourhood, and there

have a little dinner under the trees, after which they compose poetry appropriate to the scene or occasion. The faces of rocks, the walls of temples, the bark of trees, &c., in such places may generally be seen to teem with the scribblings of visitors thus inspired, and to the credit of the writers it may be added that the effusions are as a rule more to the point, in better taste, and more cleverly composed than efforts of a like nature that boast of more civilised authorship in western localities of note.

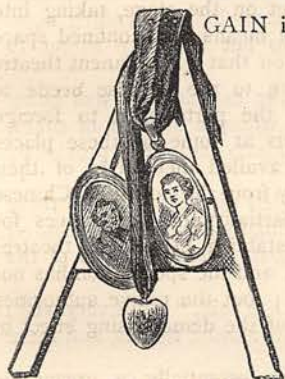
This last, and perhaps the most intellectual of the means which the Chinese adopt for killing time, must for the present close the list, and it is hoped that the summary thus given may not be without its interest in throwing additional light upon the customs and ideas of a still little understood people.

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## WHEN THE TIDE WAS HIGH.

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### CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.



GAIN it was spring, but a spring of not so transcendent a character as had been that spring, some years before, when the young lady of the Manor brought change into our lives. Indeed I have since heard this year noted as one devoid of spring altogether. It gained this harsh character from the fact that no sooner had the pale young leaves put themselves forth, than there came a nipping wind which scorched them.

Am I drawing on the subjective element which colours all we see, or say we see? It may be so. Let me then delay no longer in saying that a trouble had crept into our lives. The master we both adored had gone away, not to come again, though his great picture was still incomplete.

I shall try and relate how this came about, though I must confess beforehand, I suffer from considerable mental confusion when I revert to this period of my life.

I was twenty now, and under my master's influence I believe I had developed in the right direction. His manners were those of the great world, and I had copied them; moreover I had worked diligently, hoping to distinguish myself, for I had not foregone the idea of making myself known one day to my old friends.

In this spring Miss Beaufort seemed to awake suddenly to the fact of my existence, no longer as the boy she had protected, but as a man full-grown.

The Manor House had all at once emptied. No one

had any precise theory on the subject of this change, though certain whispers went abroad. The French maid had told the housekeeper, who had told Mrs. Carter, who had told her daughter, who—&c.

I can't tell you the rights of it, though I disentangled them once. It was a kind of repetition of "The House that Jack Built."

At the head of the ladder, however, stood a fact of moment. The dark lady in yellow satin—she had been laid to rest, as was supposed, by festivities—had suddenly reappeared. The guests had seen her, and being principally men, consequently of a logical turn, they had reasoned that as there is no smoke without fire, and as smoke is unpleasant, and fire dangerous, it would be well for them to go. They went accordingly—the poet, who made night hideous with his ravings; the philosopher, able, our farmers said, to argue the very nose off your face; and the soldier, with his chin in the air, and his general disdain for civil humanity. Tiny said our young lady was tired of them; the villagers maintained their theory; I, seeing that Mr. Clinton remained steadfast, did not trouble myself about the matter.

Yet it was destined to have some influence over me, for either our young lady felt that society would rub down my angles, or else she found the house dull. In any case, I was surprised one day by a visit from her. She was dressed, I remember, in a close-fitting dress of dark green velvet; her fair hair fell in wavy rings to her waist; she wore over it such a hat as was then only seen in pictures; it was of dark green felt, large-brimmed, turned up at the side, and crowned with a mass of feathers. The bewitching effect of this hat over her fair face, I cannot possibly describe.

As, shabby and untidy—for I was over my school-work—I jumped from my desk, I felt bewildered. I was accustomed to her appearance, and yet—well! I