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CAGED IN CHINA.

BY STANLEY LANE-POOLE.

LEGENDS about cages seem to take an unconscionable time in dying. There is the story how, after the battle of Angora, the "noble Tartarian" Tamerlane shut up his vanquished enemy, the Ottoman Sultan, in an iron cage and sent him on show round about the fairs of Asia Minor; and for three or four centuries this pitiable exhibition of Sultan Bayazid formed part of the stock-in-trade of historical and dramatic literature; in-somuch that Marlowe ventured to make the unfortunate Ottoman and the "Turkess" his spouse brain themselves in despair against the iron bars of their cage in full view of the audience of "Tamburlaine." There was just a substratum of truth in the fable, for Bayazid was certainly carried, on the march of Timur's army, in a latticed litter. There is probably better historical evidence for Cardinal Balue's iron cage at Loches than Quentin Durward of Glen-houlakin, Archer of the Scottish Guard. The latest (to leap over a few centuries) reputed engagement is that of Sir Harry Parkes and Sir Henry Loch at Peking in 1860, which never happened at all; yet when Sir Harry Parkes's Life was being written, confident assurances were given (by those who knew nothing of the matter) that the heroic consul and his friend were securely padlocked in a narrow cage, and in this helpless condition exposed to the jeers and insults of a Chinese crowd. Only the other day a grave and reverend signor vouched that he had heard the whole distressing story from the lips of Sir Henry Loch himself. Yet a glance at Sir Henry's *Narrative* of his experiences in China, or at the official reports from both prisoners in the Blue Book, would have shown at once that, severe as was the treatment of the two captives at Peking, the cage formed no part of their punishment.

Indeed, so far as published evidence goes, and the memory of old China residents, no case of imprisoning Europeans

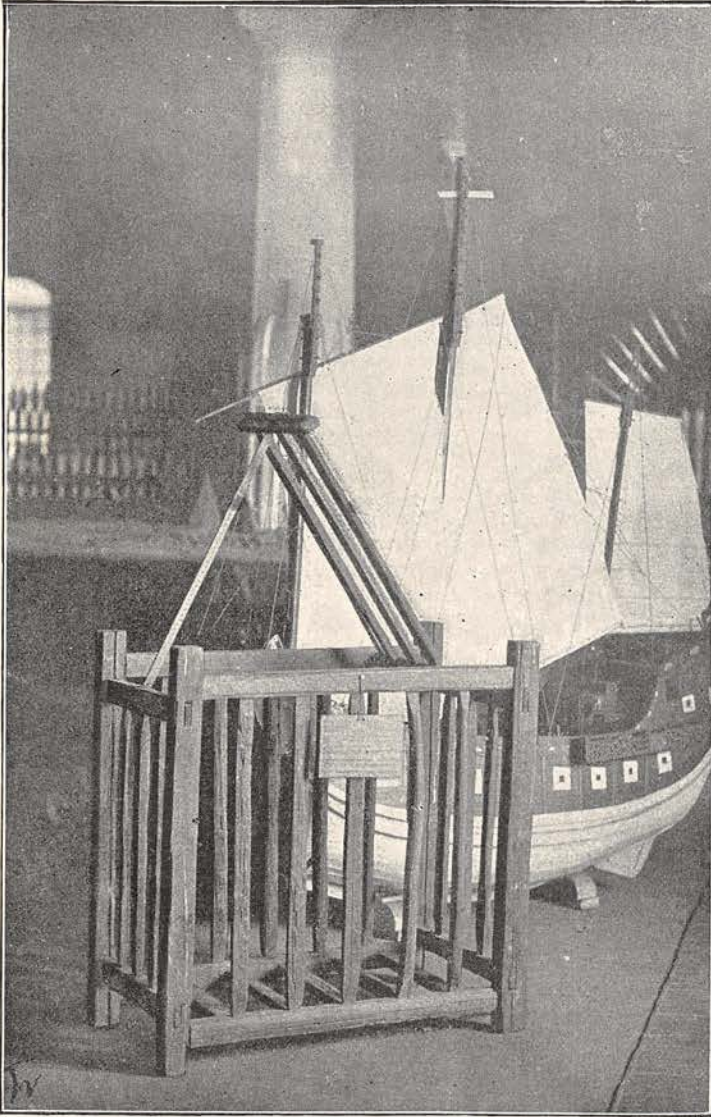
in cages has occurred for the past half-century. Natives are, of course, constantly caged, not by way of torture, but merely as a convenient mode of detention. Everything in China, from the houses downwards, is of a more or less temporary and portable nature, and it is quite in keeping with Chinese ideas to lock up a prisoner in a portable cage instead of putting him in a regular gaol. "Stone walls do not a prison make," necessarily, in China, "nor iron bars a cage." A wooden crate answers every purpose, especially when the occupant is fettered and manacled and chained to the top by an iron collar. At all events, Captain Anstruther and his associates in misfortune did not complain that their confinement was inadequate. They were uncommonly relieved when their cages were exchanged for a more substantial prison.

The last recorded instance of the engagement of Europeans in China fell in the autumn of 1840. The captures took place in the early days of the first China war, when the tyranny of Commissioner Lin had driven the English admiral to measures of retaliation, and the island of Chusan had been occupied by our troops as a convenient station from which to exert pressure upon the Chinese Government. The Celestials, however alarmed at this act of aggression, did not lose heart, but organised a gang of kidnapers to cut off any British stragglers who might be found incautiously separated from their escorts. They succeeded in picking up eight or ten Lascars, and at last caught a prize. On 16th September, 1840, Captain P. Anstruther, of the Madras Artillery, was busy surveying in the neighbourhood of Tinghai, the chief town of Chusan, accompanied only by one old Lascar, when he was attacked by a crowd of Chinese soldiers armed with two-pronged spears and hoes.¹ Hampered by

¹ *Chinese Repository*, vol. x. pp. 506-510 (Sept. 1841).

the old servant, who would not leave him, Anstruther had to fight it out, and after vainly trying to save the old man, whose head he saw "pounded with large

ring on his neck. Very heavy leg-irons had been put on him when at the magistrate's. These irons, he supposed, weighed 18 lbs., and were worn for four weeks.



CAPTAIN ANSTRUTHER'S CAGE.

stones," he was overpowered, bound hand and foot, gagged, hammered on the kneecaps, and carried away to Ningpo on the mainland. Here in the gaol he "was forced to get into a cage with wooden bars, one yard long, one yard high, and two feet wide outside the bars. An iron ring was put round his neck, his hands put into handcuffs locked to a stick about one foot long which was fastened to the

the Fisherman in the *Arabian Nights* when the Efrif declared that he had been confined in the bottle under the seal of Solomon the Great. To quote Parkes's letter (16th December, 1849): "Among many other officers who had been in China and are now at Madras, I, of course, took care to see Major Anstruther. He is grown very stout, and, being tall in proportion, is an enormous man; short

In the cage, a chain was locked to his leg-irons, and by night a gaoler, with a light, slept close by him." "I found my head," he wrote, "handsomely laid open to the bone, my legs and arms covered with bruises, but no wounds of any consequence." In spite of his sore and cramped position, the prisoner managed to indulge his taste for sketching, and his drawings pleased his captors so much that they allowed him a larger cage, 3 ft. 6 in. by 2 ft. 1 in. "This," he says, "was comparative comfort!" The captain was a tall man, and a Procrustean cage was little short of torture to one of his size. Nine years later Harry Parkes saw Major Anstruther at Madras, whither he had transported his cage as an interesting souvenir; and his visitor was almost as incredulous of the possibility of the big major's getting into the cage, as

bristly red hair covers his head and nearly the whole of his face. In reply to some doubts I expressed as to the utter impossibility of his now getting into a Chinese cage, he replied that a series of taps from iron bars over ankles, knees, head, and shoulders might perchance get over that difficulty. His cage is kept in the artillery depot—where I saw it.”

Anstruther's cage is still in the Museum at Fort St. George, and by the kindness of the Inspector-General of the Ordnance and Mr. Edgar Thurston of the Government

Anstruther had been less than a week in his cage when other English prisoners, like “singing birds in silver cages hung,” came to join his captivity. A surveying vessel, the *Kite*, 281 tons, master John Noble, temporarily under the command of Lieut. C. H. Douglas, R.N., was wrecked in Hangchow Bay on the 15th September, and the survivors were picked up by Chinese junks and brought to Ningpo. Mrs. Noble, whose husband and baby had both perished in the wreck, wrote a harrowing account of her suffer-



Photo by Russell and Sons, Baker Street, W.

MRS. NOBLE'S CAGE.

Museum, I am able to reproduce a photograph of it. (See the Illustration.) The internal dimensions of this cage are thus stated: Length, 2 ft. 11 in.; width, 1 ft. 6 in.; height, 2 ft. 7 in.; from which it would appear that this was not the later and larger cage of “comparative comfort,” but the original cage. The dimensions agree fairly well with this, if it is remembered that the “one yard long, one yard high, and two feet wide” of Anstruther's memorandum was “outside the bars,” and probably only a rough guess.

ings,¹ and seems to have been treated with at least equal harshness with the men. She and Lieut. Douglas and a few more had come ashore in one of the ship's boats, guided by an apparently friendly junk. “We had scarcely ascended the bank,” she writes, “when, on looking behind, we saw a large party of soldiers, an officer, and numbers of Chinese, pursuing us. We saw at once we were betrayed; flight was impossible, resistance

¹ *Chinese Repository*, vol. x. pp. 191-204 (April, 1841).

as vain. I was leaning on Lieut. Douglas's arm ; he stood boldly in my defence, but it was of no use, for they struck me several times. They then put chains around our necks, hurrying us along a path not half a yard wide, to a large city, through every street of which they led us. The people thronged by thousands to stare, so that we could scarcely pass. Their savage cries were terrific. From this they led us to a temple full of soldiers, and one of the wretches stole my wedding ring from my finger, the only thing I treasured." The terrified woman was here separated from Lieut. Douglas (whom they tied to a post), and dragged through the rain, with dishevelled hair and bare feet, hanging on to the coat of the soldier who held the chain fastened to her neck. In this plight she reached another temple, full of "dark faces of frightful-looking Chinese," where the prisoners were subjected to a sort of anthropometric examination, only with true Chinese fatuity the gaolers took account not merely of their height and features, but even of so ephemeral a characteristic as the length of their hair. "We remained here two days and three nights, derided and taunted by all around us. On the morning of Monday, the 21st, they took the end of our chains and bade us follow them. They put our coats and quilts into small cages, just such as we should think a proper place to confine wild beasts in ; mine was scarcely a yard high, a little more than three-quarters of a yard long, and a little more than half a yard broad. They put a long piece of bamboo through the middle, a man took either end, and in this manner we were jolted from city to city to suffer insults from the rabble, the cries of whom were awful." After this barbarous fashion Mrs. Noble and the others were carried to a canal, where the cages were put into boats, and so they reached Ningpo on 23rd September.

Mrs. Noble's cage (see the illustration) is preserved in the Royal United Service Institution, Whitehall, to which it was presented by Captain W. H. Hall, R.N., of the *Nemesis*. The internal dimensions are almost the same as those of Captain Anstruther's cage—viz., length 2 ft. 10 in., width 1 ft. 7 in., height 2 ft. 4 in.

When Mrs. Noble reached Ningpo, she was rejoiced to find that Lieut. Douglas was already there. He had arrived the day before, with other survivors from the *Kite* ; and there were now assembled

sixteen Englishmen, one Englishwoman, one Italian, and about twenty Lascars, all in cages. Captain Anstruther's artistic talents found employment in this extraordinary spectacle, and his drawing of Lieut. Douglas in his cage (see the illustration) has been preserved by Mr. William Lockhart, F.R.C.S., who was among the first to welcome the prisoners at Chusan after their release. That it represents Douglas's cage is proved by a curious *Chinese* copy of the same drawing reproduced in the *Chinese Repository* (vol. x., p. 509), which is distinctly stated to be a drawing of Douglas's portable prison. It has been supposed to represent Anstruther's own cage ; but it was *a priori* more likely that the artist would draw another caged prisoner, whom he could see, than attempt to depict himself, whom he could not see ; and the evidence of the rude Chinese copy is conclusive.

The only other prisoner of the group who has written an account of his sufferings is Mr. John Lee Scott, an apprentice of the *Kite*, who published in 1841 his *Narrative of a recent Imprisonment in China after the Wreck of the "Kite,"* an interesting little work, with quaint illustrations, which went into a second edition in 1842. Mr. Scott is still alive, and retains a vivid recollection of his sufferings. In a recent article¹ he has summarised his experiences, and the following is his account of his cage :—

"At the end of the second day a procession of cages was brought in and arranged down the centre of the great hall of the temple. We had evidently been kept there whilst the cages were being made, for they were all new, and there were the exact number—not one more nor one less. Into these contrivances each one was lifted, and then a stout bamboo thrust through the sides was hoisted on two coolies' shoulders and carried down to the water side, where we were again embarked in sampans and taken down to Ningpo.

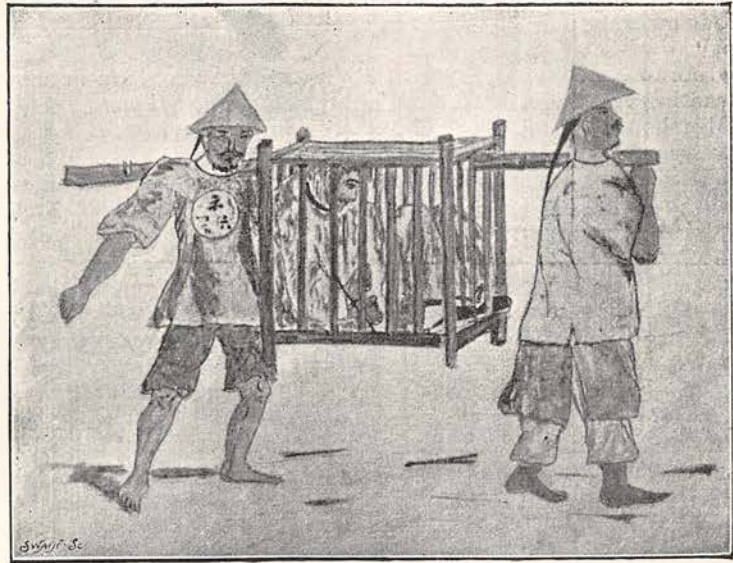
"The cages were made of fir—top, sides, and bottom of wooden bars between two and three inches wide and the same distance apart. There was not room to sit up straight nor lie stretched out, and we had to squat with our knees drawn up to our chins, and our chins resting on our knees. There is a book descriptive of Chinese punishments, and amongst them the cage ; but in the picture the cage is represented as a small

¹ *St. James's Gazette*, February 20, 1894.

room, and the occupant as comfortably seated on a mat, with room to stretch himself out in any direction. Not so ours: we could not stretch any way, and had to sit on bars, which, to say the least, is uncomfortable; and in these cages we remained for twelve days. The tops, which went with a sort of hinge, were thrown back in the daytime, and we could stand upright or sit on the edge, but at night the lids were rigidly closed and we all fastened securely down. And, to prevent any escape, the cages were ranged round three sides of the room of the prison to which we had been taken, a chain passed through each cage, over the chain of each prisoner's leg-irons, and then the two ends brought together in the void fourth side and there padlocked together, so that no one could move without taking the whole party with him. Truly safe bind safe find. Here we were kept for twelve days, seeing no one and hearing nothing; when, on the afternoon of the twelfth day, we were surprised by being all taken out of our cages and carried in sedan-chairs to another part of the city, where we found quarters prepared for us in a temple. We were placed in a moderately sized room, where straw mattresses were spread on the floor for us, and there we remained for six weary months. I was only out four times altogether, when I was carried down in a sedan to some mandarin's place to read letters to the interpreter; but I expect we made a hash of them between us."

For the first two weeks of their imprisonment, the captives were kept in cages. They were allowed to take exercise at intervals in the daytime, but at night they were locked up again in their cages. The confinement, added to dysentery and the spear wounds inflicted at the time of their capture, thinned their ranks. Two of the marines of the *Kite*

had died on the road to Ningpo; three more and one seaman died in irons during the captivity. The rest seem to have kept up their spirits pluckily enough, and the two officers maintained a cheery correspondence with Mrs. Noble and exerted themselves to lighten her troubles. They were also in communication with their friends at Chusan, who sent them clothes and necessaries which they distributed among the whole party; and they were buoyed up by the hope of a speedy release. It was known that the English and Chinese had come to terms—as it turned out, merely illusory—and that Chusan was to be evacuated; and of



LIEUT. DOUGLAS'S CAGE. FROM AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY LIEUT. ANSTRUTHER IN NINGPO PRISON.

course this implied an exchange of prisoners. It was in this cheerful belief that Captain Anstruther sent Mrs. Noble the following letter, which she afterwards gave to Mr. Lockhart, to whom we are indebted for a copy:—

“MY DEAR MRS. NOBLE,

“I wish I could give you any news, but I cannot; however, we are quite sure to get answers from Chusan in the course of a few hours, to-morrow certainly, or on Monday at farthest. I do not expect that they will send the things we wrote for, but that they will write and say it is not worth while for so short a time. The ships, we hear, were to leave Chusan in four or five days, and of course we must

be released before the admiral would leave the neighbourhood. We have really nothing to send in the sewing way, nothing to mend at all. On Monday I will do a picture of, or for, the little gentleman who brought your note (unless we start for Chusan on Monday morning, as I expect). I am now busy with a huge clergyman, long robes, and clasped hands, all very orthodox, for Mr. Wong, the Taloya. Keep up your spirits; a very short time now will free us all. Douglas and Witt send their best regards.

“Ever yours sincerely,

“P. ANSTRUTHER.

“PRISON, *Saturday, 17th October, 1840.*”

The “very short time” dragged on for four months, during which the sanguine officer was “terribly bothered,” as Douglas wrote to Mrs. Noble, “with these people wanting drawings.” At last, after many false hopes, the day of release was announced. On 22nd February, 1841, Mrs. Noble, Anstruther, Douglas, and the eleven other English survivors, were carried in palankins, with no little state, through a vast crowd of Chinese of all ranks, to the port of Changhai, where they found their Lascar fellow-prisoners awaiting them. Four days later they were safe on the deck of H.M.S. *Blonde* in the harbour of Chusan.

In spite of the apparent harshness of their treatment, it may be doubted whether the Chinese intended to ill-use them. Mr. Scott, at least, bears the following testimony to his gaolers:—

“*Malgré* the cage, the Chinese on the whole treated us well. We cannot look upon them as quite up to date in civility to foreigners, and at that time less than now; but with the exception of the prod from the soldier and a few stir-ups through the bars of the cage from hot bowls of pipes, we were never molested. The crowds we met or who met us were enormous and noisy; but though there never appeared to be any one to keep order, order was kept, and on many occasions I had small kindnesses shown me. For instance, when I was nearly fainting from pain of the binding of my hands a good Samaritan brought me water and a few small cakes, and wherever we stopped there were always some who would give us a few cakes or a pinch or two of tobacco. Even the soldiers were good-natured. In one of the sampans I was placed with a Lascar for whom there were no irons, consequently his hands were still tied behind his back, and he was lying down groaning in his agony. I called the attention of the guard to the poor fellow, and one of them immediately loosed his bonds altogether. When I fell down and broke my chain I cut my knee badly, so that the blood was trickling down my leg; one of the officials came, and from a bottle which he took from his pouch he sprinkled a powder over the cut, which stopped the bleeding. Altogether we caged Britishers came to the conclusion that the Chinese were not so bad as they had been painted.”