

Travel and Adventure, National Customs, Etc.

CHINESE FORTUNE-TELLERS.

In nearly all lands and all ages fortune-telling has, in some form or other, been highly popular, from the instinctive desire of the human race to become acquainted with the hidden and unknown. Every schoolboy knows how greatly divination was held in honor amongst the ancient Greeks and Romans; has heard of the power which the "medicine-man" wields in the Indian village; and has perhaps dreamed of the black-eyed gipsy, who with seductive smile might some day accost him in a quiet shady lane, and offer, for a slight consideration, to tell him of coming luck. In our own prosaic times and matter-of-fact country, however, gipsies and other professors of the art of reading the hidden decrees of providence seem to have fallen on evil days, and when they venture on too obtrusive a practice of their vocation, find themselves an object of extreme solicitude to the myrmidons of the law; but in China the case is different, for throughout the length and breadth of all the eighteen provinces of that vast and populous empire fortune-telling flourishes, and is quite a matter of every-day life. The Chinese being an eminently superstitious race are naturally eager to pry into futurity, and consult their favorite oracle upon almost every conceivable occasion. A Chinaman can neither be married nor buried, nor enter upon any business of the least importance, without the aid of one of the fortune-telling fraternity, so that it is no wonder that with them the craft is prosperous.

Mr. Doolittle, in his interesting work on the Social Life of the Chinese, to which we are indebted for some of the following information, tells us that in Far Cathay six modes of fortune-telling are in vogue, and these we will now proceed to describe as briefly as possible.

Probably the most popular method of telling fortunes is by the eight characters, which give the exact time of a person's birth—two representing the year of the cycle, two the month, two the day, and two the "period" of the day at which the event occurred. Many of those who follow this branch of the profession are blind; they are led about the streets by boys, and have commonly two ways of proclaiming their calling, one being by means of two small bamboo clappers, with which they make certain well-known sounds, and the other by a yueh-ting, which is a circular piece of copper hung by two strings to a stick, a second stick being hung between the strings; this pendulous stick when struck against the copper produces a peculiar noise, which any one who has ever been in a Chinese town will at once call to mind. The peripatetic fortune-teller is nearly always blind, and he is said by the Chinese to "calculate fortunes," for which he gets about a penny—while those who, not being afflicted with loss of sight, establish themselves in shops and wait for people to come and consult them, are said to "see fortunes," and being a somewhat superior class, they charge a double fee. They all make their predictions by reference to books, which teach them how to interpret the combinations of the horary characters, and whether they should deduce a propitious or unpropitious conclusion therefrom; of course, the blind man labors under considerable disadvantages in having to trust much more to his memory than is the case with his brother professor. To this class of fortune-tellers generally belong those who, when negotiations for a marriage are being opened, are consulted to determine whether the eight characters of both parties are sufficiently in harmony for them to become husband and wife; also those who choose lucky or propitious days for the transaction of important business. The aid of these soothsayers is invoked by the builder and proprietor of houses and hongs, and by the head men in the erection of temples, &c. In the case of temples, the ages of the elders and head men of the neighborhood are made known to one who is able to divine what month, day, and hour will be lucky for the performance of the several kinds of labor connected with the erection of the proposed temple. In the matter of building a house or hong, only the age of the owner and proprietor is made known to the fortune-teller. He applies the rules of his art to decide on the precise hour which will be favorable for beginning to "move the earth for the foundations; for putting up the ridge pole in its place; for hanging the great or main door of honor; for digging the well and making the fireplace in the kitchen."

A very popular, and at the same time the cheapest kind of fortune-telling, is by means of a bird and slips of paper. The professor of the black art, who adopts this method of divination, and is willing to satisfy the inquiring mind for the modest remuneration of about a farthing of our money, "traverses the streets in search of employment. He carries in one hand a piece of the small end of a cow's horn and a bamboo stick. These two are tied together loosely at one end, and he manages to strike or clap them together, so as to make a peculiar sound. In the other hand, or suspended from a front button of his coat, he has a small cage, containing a little bird of a particular species. He always takes with him on these professional excursions sixty-four small sheets of paper, on each of which is sketched a figure of a god, bird

beast, &c., and on every sheet is also written a short verse of poetry, usually 4 lines, each of 7 characters. These sheets are folded up in such a manner that the pictures and poetry are not visible. When any one applies to have his fortune told, he arranges the sixty-four pieces of paper on a table or on the ground, and places the bird-cage near them. He then opens the door, and the bird hops out and picks up one of the sheets with his beak. This the wise man opens and explains to the applicant."

Another class of peripatetic fortune-tellers devote themselves to inspecting the physiognomy; they are to be known by certain characters that are inscribed on a satchel which they carry with them. They select a favorable and convenient spot in the street, where they can spread out a chart, which they consult in reference to the personal peculiarities of their customers. They carefully inspect every feature of the person who wishes to look into futurity, and compare together what they term the "five governors"—that is, the ears, eyes, eyebrows, nose, and mouth—to see whether they are in harmony, and whether the combined expression is good or not. They note the way in which the applicant walks and sits down, and so foretell his future. Furthermore, they examine the length of each finger, and pay particular attention to the lines or creases in the palm of the hand, taking careful note of its color and thickness.

Yet another mode of gaining an insight into the decrees of fate is by dissecting the written character. Those who practise this branch of the art take up a position at the side of some frequented street, where they spread out a cloth, and arrange their writing materials. They also have with them a box containing a number of pieces of paper folded up, on which a single character is written; their fee is but small, being usually about a half-penny. The inquirer into futurity chooses two of these pieces of paper, which the fortune-teller opens; he then dissects the characters on them, writing out their various component parts. He next talks over the matter, about which his customer is anxious for information, working in the meaning of the fresh characters, obtained by the subdivision of the two originally selected at random, often increasing the number by skillfully adding strokes to, and thus changing the meaning of, the characters. Upon the materials thus got together he founds an oracular response as to the coming events about which he had been consulted.

Those who profess to reveal the secrets of futurity "by the use of the tortoise-shell and three ancient cash, have shops or offices where they may be consulted by those who prefer this method of ascertaining their fortunes. The cash commonly used are a certain kind coined during the Tang dynasty (some twelve hundred years ago). They first light incense sticks and candles, placing them before the picture of an old man, whom they worship as the deity who presides over this kind of divination. They then take the cash and put them into a tortoise-shell, which they shake once or twice before the picture, invoking the aid and presence of the god. They then empty the cash out, and taking them in one hand, they strike the shell gently three times with them, repeating at the same time forms of incantation. The cash are again put into the shell, and shaken as before three times, when they are turned out upon a plate, and careful observation is made of the manner in which they have chanced to fall. After noting how many have the reverse side upwards, the same cash are put into the shell, and a similar operation is repeated once and again. At the conclusion of the third shaking, and the third observation of the relative positions of the coins, the fortune-tellers proceed to compare the diagrams with the "five elements" according to the abstruse and intricate rules of this species of divination. After a tedious process of observations and comparisons, they pronounce judgment on the matter under investigation.

What is termed "geomancy," in so far as it has to do with the selection of a fortunate burial place by a critical examination of the earth and scenery, comes fairly into the category of fortune-telling, for the Chinese consider that the future prosperity of the family of the deceased depends greatly upon a lucky place of sepulture being chosen. The Chinese expression for this is Feng-shui, that is, wind and water, and whatever, in the opinion of the wise man, interferes with the Feng-shui, is looked upon as very unlucky. It may be interesting to mention in passing, that this superstition with regard to the Feng-shui is one of the great obstacles to the introduction of telegraphs, railways, &c., into the country.

The man who "looks at the wind and water," armed with a compass and other implements of his art, accompanies a near relative of the deceased to some spot in the hills, which is thought suitable for a burial place, and he then proceeds to make his observations secundum artem. He notes "the nature of the ground, the color of the soil, its relative position to surrounding hills, valleys, stream," &c. If large rocks are found in the earth, or if the spot prove to be wet, it is at once condemned, and a fresh search has to be made for a place where the soil is dry and of a yellowish color. This species of fortune-telling is the most tedious and expensive of those which we have described, but the Chinese attach extreme importance to it.

Besides the foregoing methods of fortune-telling, Sir John Davis informs us that the Chinese have in some parts a mode of divination by certain pieces of wood, in shape the longitudi-

nal sections of a flattish oval. These are thrown by pairs, and according to the mode in which they turn up, a judgment is formed of any future event by consulting the interpretation afforded in a Sibylline volume, which is hung up in the temple. If the throw, however, happens to be unlucky, they do not mind trying their chance over again, until the answer is satisfactory.

AN ADVENTURE WITH A TIGER.

I have something to tell you of an adventure I had on the 14th of May last. I should have written the account of it home last fortnight, but I was so pressed for time in consequence of the date of despatch for letters to England having been changed, that I was unable to. B— and I (he is our doctor), having heard that there were a great many pea-fowl to be had four or five miles off, at a place called Heeracode, obtained three days' leave on the 14th May to go out and shoot some. We subsequently changed our destination from Heeracode to Iumrah, a place two or three miles further on. Early on the morning of the 14th we started riding, while our ghorwallahs carried our guns behind us. About four and a half or five miles out we came to a large hill covered with jungle with some smaller hills around it, and as we heard the pea-fowl calling we dismounted and loaded our guns with Number 2 shot, hoping to be able to bag a bird for that day's dinner. I particularly dislike carrying powder and shot flasks myself, and generally have some one following me to carry them, but on this occasion we had none but our ghorwallahs with us, and they were required to hold the horses, so we had to go alone. I left all ammunition and everything behind except the two charges I had in my gun, intending to fire both barrels at some pea-fowl and return at once, so as to get on to our camp before the sun got too hot. It was now about 6 a.m., the sun had slightly risen. B— went up the hill, slightly to the left, and as our chance would be doubled by our not keeping together, I went somewhat to the right and we both ascended the hill. The growth on the hill was mostly saplings, no large trees hardly, and these were rather close together, and from this cause as well as that the hill was covered with rocks and rolling stones, the ascent was rather difficult and slow. However, as at this time of the year there are few if any leaves on the trees, everything being withered up, we could see a good distance around us. After we had proceeded some time the birds became suspicious and ceased calling. I crossed over a little to my left, and hearing a noise below me looked and saw B— turning back to the horses; however, as at this moment I heard a peacock call at some distance above me I determined to go on alone and try and get a shot at him, and went along as quickly, but above all as quietly as I could. Ascending some way further I saw a sort of crown of rocks above me, on the very top of the hill, and the pea-fowl from its noise seemed to be there. After a short time more I surmounted this rocky peak, which was itself ten or twelve feet high, and looking around saw a very fine pea-fowl walking away from me about ninety yards distant. I followed, but the bird seeing me quickened its pace and was soon lost in the jungle. However, I noted the direction it had taken, and pursued, hoping to come upon it again. After going some distance (the ground on the top of the hill where I now was was nearly flat), I came to a small pathway, three feet or so wide, going to my left, and I followed it. Suddenly, turning to a small bend, I saw thirty yards to my left front something large lying under a bush, and looking a second time, I saw its body heave with each breath. Perceiving it was some animal, I thought that when it heard me coming it would move off; so I paid no more attention to it, but went on. I then heard a shrill trumpet like kind of noise close by, such as I do not ever remember having heard before, close to the beast, and about where the pea-fowl should be. Going on a little further brought me to a small bush by the side of the path, and as I then saw that the beast did not move, and also that he was only about twelve paces from me, directly on my left, I turned to have another look at him, when, to my horror, I found I was face to face with a huge tiger! I felt so taken aback by this discovery, that I instantly stopped behind the bush to collect myself a little, and think what I had better do, and then for the first time the place seemed lonely. It was evident that the tiger had not seen me as yet, for he lay basking in the morning rays of the sun, lazily opening and shutting his eyes. But unfortunately he was lying end on to and facing me. He was beautifully striped. Of course it was worse than useless firing at a tiger in that position with only shot in your gun, as it would only enrage him, and be certain to precipitate an attack on me; so that idea had to be given up. I thought it would have been madness to turn and try to retrace my steps along the path, as now I knew I had such a dangerous neighbour, I was certain to make some noise, which would attract his attention, and then, if he saw me retreating, he would be sure to attack; so I gave up that. The third and last thing left me was to remain where I was, keeping my gun as a reserve, not to be used except in the last extremity, and endeavor to frighten the tiger away. Just at this moment I again heard the shrill sound before mentioned, and then the tiger began purring like a cat, and the noise seemed to fill the jungle all round. I quite made up my mind that I was a dead man, or at least that I should never get out of

that scrape with a whole skin; but, under the circumstances, it was quite wonderful how cool I became. I then raised myself again to have another look at my enemy, when he immediately saw me! He at once stopped purring, and began showing his teeth and growling angrily, while I felt the locks of my gun to see if all was ready. He was gently raising himself from the ground most stealthily, and I thought was going to spring, or to bound forward on to me, so I continued staring at his eyes, he growled louder, and appeared to be angry, when, like a flash of lightning, he whisked round, and in a couple or three bounds, was out of sight and lost in the jungle." I dare say you can imagine how glad I was to find myself alone once more, and then the full danger of my position seemed to break on me. Just after the tiger had gone, I heard the pea-fowl call from within a few feet of where the tiger had been. I then thought I might have been mistaken as to the distance, and so I again looked at where the brute had been lying, and a second time estimated it at twelve paces about, one bound would have brought him within striking distance of me. I immediately descended the hill with all speed (it is needless to say without my pea-cock), and as soon as I arrived within earshot of B—, halted him, and we rode on to camp together. Had that tiger been hungry, or been a man-eater, nothing on earth would have saved me. I then asked B—, why he had gone back so soon? and he said the place was very wild, and as he quite expected every moment to see a cheetah, and was feeling rather lonely, he returned. I did not notice the loneliness till I saw the tiger, and, moreover, I had not a suspicion there were tigers so close to Sumbulpoore. When I was behind that bush, I could almost feel his breath on me.

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EDUCATION IN CORNWALL SIXTY YEARS AGO.

Few persons then could either read or write, except one here and there, who passed for a great scholar if he could sign his name and read a chapter in the Psalter without much spelling. The overseer, not knowing how to write a cipher, kept the accounts of his monthly disbursements on the dairy-door, in round o's for shillings and long chalks for pence. The last Saturday of each month he took the dairy-door on his back and carried it to Church-town, that the clerk might enter his accounts in the parish book. "One Saturday, in the season when days are short and streams high, the overseer couldn't make out his accounts and reach Nancherrow Water before dark; and in passing, with the door on his back, over the wet and slippery stones, he lost his balance and fell into the stream. By good luck the door was under, and floated him down to a place where the water was shallow, there he landed, but all the accounts were washed out. 'Tis said that the overseer's mishap was the reason why the first bridge was built over Nancherrow Water." Sixty years ago there was full faith in the story of how Sir Cloudesley Shovel came to be shipwrecked in 1707, as he neared the coast with his fleet from Toulon. There are many Cornish men of three-score years of age who believe the story now: "The day before the Admiral's ship was wrecked one of the crew, who was a native of Scilly, and well acquainted with the channel, represented to Sir Cloudesley that the course the ship was taking would bring her on Scilly rocks. The Admiral and his officers were incensed at the man's interference; and because he persisted in affirming that the ship's way was wrong and would bring them to destruction, Sir Cloudesley Shovel—rather summarily, one might now think—condemned the man to be hanged for insubordination and endeavoring to excite a mutiny. When the poor fellow was tied to the mast, preparatory to his being suspended by his neck from the yardarm, he begged, as a last favor that a Psalm might be read before his execution. His request being granted, he selected the 109th, and repeated certain imprecation portions of it after the reader; and the last words he uttered were to the effect that Sir Cloudesley Shovel and those who saw him hanged should never reach the land alive. His body, shrouded in a hammock, with a shot to sink it, was cast into the deep, and but little heed paid to the dying sailor's sentence. Shortly after, however, the sky, which had been gloomy all day, became much darker; black, lowering clouds hung over the fleet like a funeral pall, and the gale rose to a violent tempest. Then the hang-d man's curse was dreaded; and lo, to the crew's consternation, they beheld his corpse—divested of its rude winding-sheet—floating near the doomed ship, which it closely followed, with its face turned toward her, in all her varying course, through eddying current, until she struck on the Giltstone, when the hanged man went down with the ship and his messmates."—*Traditions and Hearth-side Stories of West Cornwall.*

MACCARONI PUDDING.—Melt a handful of powdered lump sugar with a small quantity of water, and let it boil until it acquires a deep brown color; pour it into a warmed plain mould, which is to be so handled as to receive a coating of the browned sugar all over. Boil 3oz. of small Italian paste in a pint of milk sweetened to taste; when quite done turn it out to cool, and work it into the yolks of four eggs; place the mixture into the prepared mould; bake for about fifteen minutes, turn out, and serve.