

alleys, and the troop pursues us, showing their sharp fangs, eager to bite.

The countenances of a few young Tartar girls, who have just got up, already appear at the doors of the little, low, gray-brick houses. Their broad, full-moon-like faces, befarded with white and vermillion, peep curiously after us, like a lot of kittens' heads; they have little airs of timidity; blankness and astonishment at the sight of this Western carnival passing by. Their large casaques and bulging pantaloons stand out in bright, raw colors against the gray walls of the houses; they poise themselves awkwardly on feet that are too small, in the pretty poses of little firescreen figures.

#### Old Yellow Town.

These images defile rapidly on each side of us; they disappear, and we again encounter an interminable series of deserted streets. We are in the Yellow, or imperial town, and all these old, dead districts bear an aristocratic character. Walls, walls without end; walls all crooked with age, all carpeted with moss and ferns. Behind them are immense parks, where a nature artificial and whimsically Chinese has been fashioned at great expense.

Occasionally entrances are opened, entrances with heavy oaken doors worn by time, and enormous pilasters. They have extravagant roofs, these entrances, yellow roofs whose extreme angles are raised skyward in capricious crooks, in grimacing forms of dragons and monsters. All are guarded by two marble beasts, half lions, half chimeras, which, with one clawed paw posed on a ball, regard the passer-by with a mysterious air.

And over all this the neighboring desert has placed its mark: a layer of gray dust, effacing the ancient colors and gilt, the

strange medleys painted upon these Yamen by the artists of long ago.

In the direction of Sitchemen, the Western gate, which will give us access to the country, we now follow a great, straight artery, entirely bordered by palaces. As we advance, the lines of monumental and imposing constructions emerge from the whirlwinds of dust, and the semi-obscurity of the luminous mist; a double row of hoar-frost, covered trees stretches before us in endless perspective; and on either hand there are always the same great walls, the same grand entrances with their pent-houses bristling with chimeras and monsters, the same marble lions squatting on the ground and grinding their teeth at the people who pass. These Yamen are academies, ministries, law-courts, temples, bonzerics, convents of lamas.

#### A Lively Scene.

As the hour advances, the boulevard becomes animated; we meet wagons, bourgeois on donkeys, cavaliers mounted on little Mongolian steeds, with large heads, and the ruse, knavish airs of learned horses.

Now the boulevard begins to fill with people; it is becoming a perfect tumult. Riders come and go, preceded by Mafoos in livery. They are all of a heap in their long gowns, and look as though squatting on their high saddles. They are attired in garments of silk trimmed with precious furs, and black velvet boots turned up at the tips, with thick immaculately white soles, made of layers of paper. Among them are physiognomies that, while very Chinese, are stamped with a kind of distinction peculiar to the upper classes.

They eye us as we pass with a certain expression of astonishment, with an imperceptible shade of irony, though in their de-

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