

Mr. Goforth, Mr. Perkins and I attended a feast at the invitation of the leading banker here. It was not a very formidable affair, although among other dainties we ate dove's eggs, fish cartilage, lily seeds and sea weeds. I enclose you the invitation. My name is outside ; inside, our host's name on the left and time on the right. The time stated is *noon*, but owing to some Chinese delay on the part of the restaurant which had orders to serve the feast, we did not sit down till 5 *p.m.* There were five or six courses, each numbering perhaps fifteen or twenty bowls of different food. These were placed in the middle of the table, which was made round to accommodate nine guests, and having a large round table-top placed on top of the common square table. Before each guest was placed, instead of cloth napkins, a piece of brown paper, which seemed rather to save the table than to be of use for us. Besides, on this paper was placed a two-pronged fork, a large spoon, two red-painted chop-sticks, a small bowl of black vinegar and a saucer for the eatables ; also a little cup of yellow wine, which, of course, we did not drink. There was a good deal of arguing before we took our places, the guests in good style declining to take a high seat, wishing to appear humble by taking a less honorable seat than that offered by the host. The guests reached out their chop-sticks and took a morsel out of the bowls. From time to time they helped the foreign guests, much to the latter's comfort, and we returned the compliment by putting something on their plates. The old banker is very deaf, and most of our conversation was bell-wed into his ear by one of his partners. The table was in the open air, under what the Chinese call a *p'ing*, which is a mat covering in four parts, to ward off the sun's rays. The yard was very small, being that which pertained to the shop only. In the yard was a very large *lotus*, or lily, the flowers of which had not yet bloomed. I thought of Tennyson's *Lotos Eatus*, in which, you remember, he describes that land as a land in which it seemed to be always afternoon. With us, considering our delay, it was always *noon*. Time is no object in China. About seven o'clock we returned home. The wine drunk by the guests was astonishingly small in quantity.

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