

concubines. The first empress is never allowed to see or speak to any member of her family after marriage. There is a story told about the present regent, that when she was sent on approval with the other Manchu maidens, her parents were so anxious she should not be chosen, that they padded her out to make her look hunchbacked, notwithstanding which she was the choice.

Only twice has an audience been granted to foreign representatives. The first was during the last reign. The memorable event, which the diplomatists of the two worlds valiantly fought to bring about for months, meeting with a stubborn resistance on the part of the Chinese government, took place on the 29th of June, 1873. The fight had been to get the Chinese to accede to the foreign ministers' dispensing with the Ko-tou, or prostration on being presented to the Emperor, which had been from time immemorial required at the court at China. Genuflections were equally impossible for the diplomatic corps, so, our less imposing, but more easily performed bow, was at last agreed upon. The audience took place in an out-building, called the Tgu Kuang Ko, or Purple Pavilion, outside the palace walls, and near the Catholic church, Pei Tang. After hours of waiting the foreign representatives were introduced into the hall, where the Emperor sat cross-legged on his throne. They stood behind a table, some distance from him, and deposited their letters of credence on it. The Emperor murmured some words to Prince Kung in Manchu, and he came and repeated them to the ministers, and in five minutes this imposing scene, which the *London Times* called, "Breaking the Magic Circle," was at an end.

On the 5th of last March the same privilege was again accorded to foreign representatives.

The railroad question is agitated with the energy of despair. A miniature train was sent from America not long ago, and the track laid in the palace ground, it is said much to the edification of the Emperor and regent. A country which heaves with sacred graves, like a stormy sea with billows, is scarcely a promising field for the engineer. Every grove has its god, every rock its spirit, and the people want them undisturbed.

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OLDE customs, that be good, let no man dispise.

At Christmas be mery, and thanke God of all ;

And feast thy poore neighbcurs, the great with the small ;

Yea, all the yere long have an eye to the poore,

And God shall sende luck to keep open thy door.

—*Thomas Tusser.*