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KITE-FLYING IN CHINA.

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The pastime of flying kites has probably been carried to a greater extent among the Chinese than any other people, for with them it is not limited to lads, and the group in the picture of the boy helping the old man with spectacles to raise his flying dragon aloft is not at all an unusual sight. The various devices of the kite-makers to get out new patterns for the kite-flying season stimulate the boys to show their dexterity in using them.

The Chinese name for a paper kite is the *che yao*, and has exactly the same meaning as our own term. The *yao* is a species of kite or glider common in Northern China, and many of these birds make their nests in the trees and towers of Peking, getting their

living as scavengers and pilferers from the streets beneath. The gliding flight of the bird, so smoothly sailing through the air with hardly any motion of the wings, has no doubt, in both countries, suggested the same name to its paper imitation. The Orientals, in this craft, have far exceeded the Occidentals, as every traveller who has watched the whistling, singing machines over the city of Canton on a breezy winter's day will testify. Another name is *fung chang*, or wind harp-sichord, from the contrivance often attached to the kite to make a twanging, burring sound while in the air.

The Chinese have a legend about this amusement, which dates from early times, and furnishes the authority for the annual festival of kite-flying in November on the ninth day of the ninth moon. They say

that a certain seer warned a friend of his to leave the house on that day with all his family. He did so, spending the time in visiting his ancestral graves and flying kites on the hills, and when he returned home in the evening found that all his domestic animals were dead. The usage thus suggested, now known as *tang kao* (ascending heights), has become general, and in the vicinity of large cities, like Canton and Foochow, the day, if fine, becomes one of the jolliest in the year, drawing tens of thousands away from their study and work to enjoy a much-needed diversion and exercise. It is really one of the few holidays they have, but is more observed in Southern than in Northern China, probably owing to the milder climate in November.

The shapes of the kites imitate birds, rep-

tiles, butterflies, tigers, insects, and fish, as well as wheels, men riding, spectacles, and baskets of flowers, etc. Their great skill in imitation is well shown when a fish-hawk is seen soaring over a harbor like that at Macao, and its paper counterfeit is flying to and fro over the same water, so closely resembling it that it was once mistaken by a sportsman for the real bird. Mr. Doolittle estimates the crowds gathered on the hills near Foochow, if the day and the breeze be favorable, as numbering over thirty thousand people, and that a large staff of policemen are in readiness to repress tumults. It is a part of the fun to try in every way to cut each other's kite-strings, or interfere in some way or other with its flying, so as to bring the kite down.

The form of a serpent or centipede is com-



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