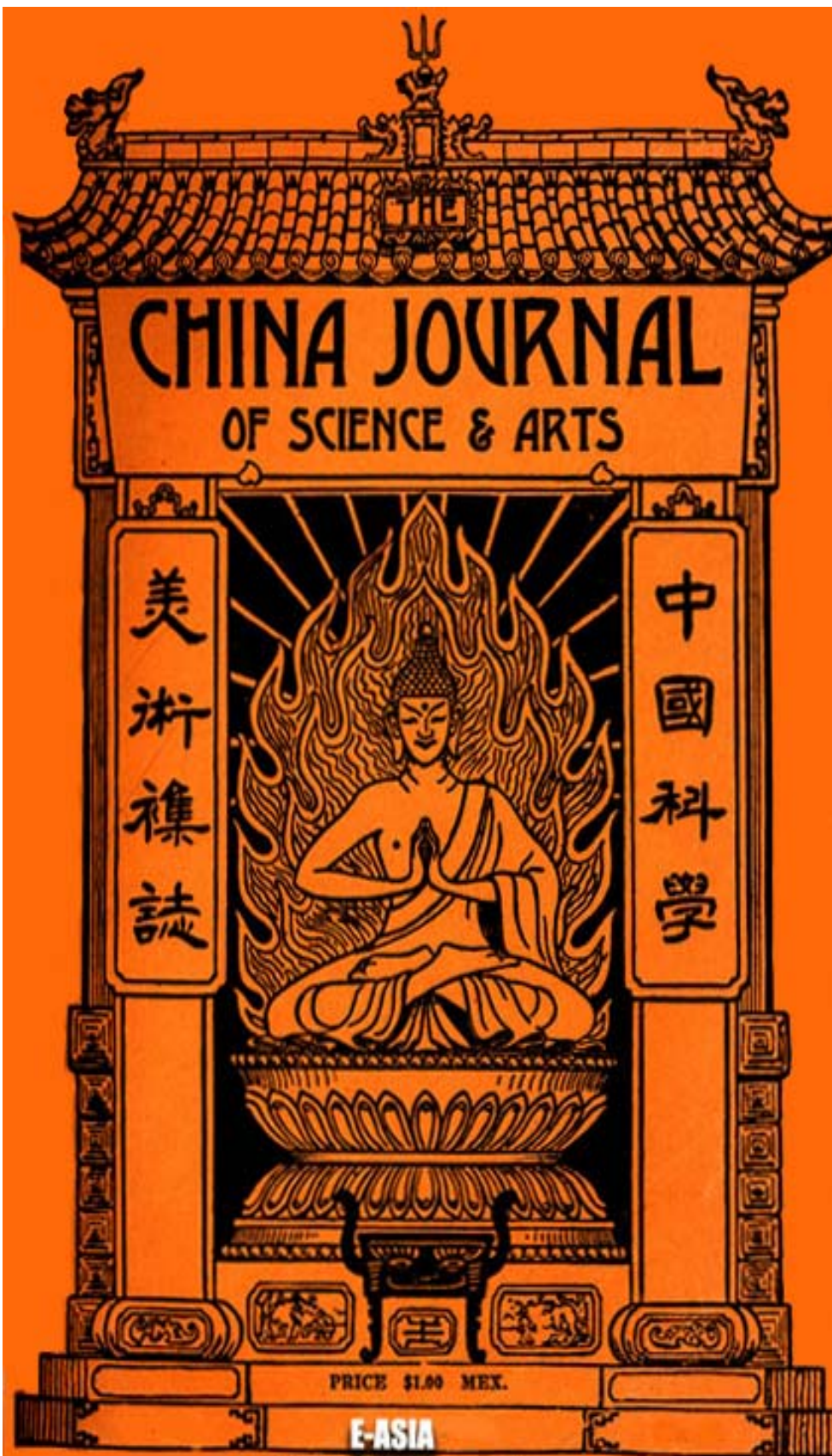




E-ASIA
university of oregon libraries
<http://e-asia.uoregon.edu>



CHINA JOURNAL
OF SCIENCE & ARTS

美術雜誌

中國科學

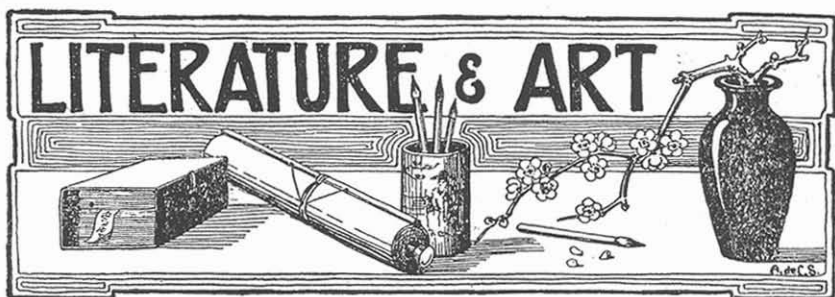
PRICE \$1.00 MEX.

E-ASIA

university of oregon libraries

**THE MYSTIC ART OF PULSE
FEELING IN CHINA
BY
L.C. ARLINGTON**

THE CHINA JOURNAL OF SCIENCE & ARTS
VOL. II, No. 5 (September, 1924), pp. 400-411



THE MYSTIC ART OF PULSE FEELING IN CHINA

BY

L. C. ARLINGTON.

The exact date when the feeling of the pulse to test the circulation of the blood through the arteries originated in China is unknown. It is, however, recorded in the *Lieh Kuo Chih* (列國志) that a man named Ch'in Yuen-jên (秦越人), who lived in the 5th cent. B.C., received from an old man named Ch'ang Shang-chún (長桑君) a certain drug which he was instructed to take for thirty consecutive days, and, on the expiry of which he was able to understand the "Nature of Things." The old man also presented him with books on medicine, and the art of healing, with which he set forth and travelled from State to State as a doctor, performing all kinds of wonderful cures. He is commonly known to the Chinese by his pseudonym *Pien Ch'üeh* (扁鵲).

He is said to have been able to look into the viscera of his patients, and the knowledge of the pulse is inseparably associated with his name. He was assassinated at the instigation of Li Hsi, Chief Physician at the Court of *Ch'in*, out of jealousy of his unrivalled skill. We find it recorded in the *Lieh Kuo Chih*, above mentioned, that *Chin Ching Kung* 晉景公, the grandson of *Chin Wên Kung* 晉文公, one of the Five famous rulers in the 7th cent. B.C. whose real name was *Ch'ung Erh* 重耳 (See B. D. No. 523), during a spell of sickness dreamt that two page-boys, the embodiment of his disease, hid in his vitals in such places as to be beyond the reach of either drugs or acupunture; hence, the saying 二豎爲災 "Twin calamity," means an incurable disease. He further dreamt that the twins came out of his nostrils and at once began the following conversation: "A famous doctor is coming to diagnose our father's illness," said one, "which will be very serious for us." "Well," said the other, "I'll tell you what we'll do, let one of us hide above the heart (膏之上), and the other below it (膏之下)." Hence, the saying "When the disease has entered the vitals it is a sure sign of death." 病入膏肓必死矣. Now it happened that two of *Pien Ch'üeh's* medical students

Kao Ho (高和) and *Kao Huan* (高緩) arrived to diagnose the case. The latter on feeling the sick man's pulse at once remarked "the disease has entered your vitals, nothing can save you, your hour is at hand." "That's wonderful," said the patient, "what you say exactly corresponds with my dream!" That same night he expired.

Although Chinese were among the first peoples to practise medicine and were also probably at one time the most advanced in medical art, when the nature of disease was well understood, the structure of the body and the functions of its different organs as well known, how is it that the people of China are no more benefitted by the healing art of their own countrymen in A.D. 1924 than they were 500 years B.C.? The answer is plain: China has never produced either a Pythagoras or a Hippocrates, so that the art of healing in Greece in the days of Hippocrates, 450 B.C. was better known and more skilfully practised than it is now in China in the 20th century! Like most of their arts, too, the Chinese physicians kept their medical art (such as it was and still is) secret, it being mostly handed down from father to son by word of mouth, and seldom, if ever, learned from books. Nor did they ever have any regard for the *Truth*. Hippocrates was the type of the philosophic physician. His highly cultivated mind and strong common sense enabled him to attain that depth of knowledge so difficult to secure, and which never seems to have been reached by a Chinese doctor, namely, *the knowledge of his own ignorance*: For notwithstanding their utter ignorance of anatomy, physiology, and pathology, together with their very imperfect symptomatology, and crude system of therapeutics, they are always ready to explain every disease no matter how complicated. The Chinese physicians have never examined and dissected animals, and thus by comparative anatomy, and by the study of pathological changes, as occurring in the lower animals, and by inductive philosophy, trace the structure and functions of health organs from the lower to the higher animals, and ascertain that with certain modifications the same diseases and the changes produced by them, are common to both. How, therefore, could a Chinese physician be expected to attain any real medical knowledge unless based on such inductive science and experience?

One of the worst features of the Chinese character, which is the greatest obstacle to their improvement is their utter disregard of the Truth. In the pursuit of every branch and department of science a love of truth must ever form the integral element from first to last. Truth must be loved for her own sake alone. So how can the science of medicine, which for its very existence leans on the love of truth, progress amongst those who are trained from their birth to falsehood, a people whose talents are measured by their ability to deceive?

Chinese medical authors have been numerous from very remote periods, and there seems little doubt that the art had been reduced to some sort of system before the days of Solomon. It is even recorded that the Emperor *Shên Nung* (2838 B.C.) wrote a treatise on Medicine. They have volumes describing minutely the practice of amputation and the nature of internal diseases said to have been written by Huang Ti (2698 B.C.). They have also several works on diseases of the Eye:

several on Fevers ; scores of volumes on the diseases of women ; many volumes on diseases of the skin ; on diseases of the blood vessels ; nervous diseases ; diseases of the mouth, teeth and the throat ; the treatment of fractures and wounds. In addition to the famous *Materia Medica* entitled "*Pen Ts'ao Kang Mu*" written in the middle of the 16th century in 52 books, there is a celebrated work on Therapeutics called "*Pu Tsê-fang*" said to have been written by the *Ming* Prince *Chu Su*. It consists of 160 volumes and contains about 1,800 lectures on some 2,000 subjects ; 21,000 different prescriptions ; 775 rules, and 235 diagrams. During the late Manchu dynasty the faculty of medicine was fixed by the Government to consist of 9 branches, namely : diseases of the skin ; diseases of the large blood vessels ; diseases of the small blood vessels ; diseases of the eye ; diseases of the mouth, teeth and throat ; diseases of the bones ; diseases of women ; fever and cases for acupuncture. There is also a work of 20 books on Hygiene, which treats of diet, rest, study, proper clothing, amusements, how to prevent disease, etc. It was published in 1591. The section on "proper clothing" is most interesting, so is the one on rest ; the only trouble seems to be that the Chinese, as a whole, have too little of the former, and too much of the latter, to be either comfortable or healthy.

There are also works on smallpox illustrated with diagrams of the disease, and prescriptions for its treatment, as well as works on cholera discussing methods of treating the disease, several volumes on the diseases of parturition giving directions for the management of children. Other works on Medical art might be mentioned, but enough has been said to show that, however fanciful and worthless the quality of the material is, there is no lack of quantity. In all their writings there is no evidence of disinterested industry, or yearning after real knowledge for its own sake ; their theories being based upon empty speculation and wild fancy ; lamentable ignorance and supercilious conceit. Most writers quote largely from preceding authors ; hence one mistake has followed another. In their endeavours to support what they think harmony and consistency in their system of physics, they sacrifice not only truth, but also intelligibility and reason ; their aim is simply to mystify and make every ill as mysterious as possible. Human and comparative anatomy as a science are practically unknown ; hence they make no distinction between nerves and tendons, or between arteries and veins. It is true that they have anatomical diagrams, but they are treated just like their painters treat their pictures ; sketching from memory, filling up the details out of their imagination, and portraying what according to their own opinions the details or parts ought to be, rather than what they really are. Chinese physicians say that Man's body is composed of the Five Viscera, which partake of the nature of the Five Elements, i.e., fire, water, metal, wood and earth, and these they connect with the Five Tastes, Five Colours and the Seven Passions (see *infra*) : diseases they say are produced by a derangement in the balancing of all these elements. Certain mysterious dual powers in nature called the *Yin* and *Yang*, corresponding to light and darkness, earth and heaven, male and female, strength and weakness, etc., also play an important part both in medicine and pulse feeling.

The heart is the prince of the body and the seat of learning. The soul is supposed to reside in the liver; the gall is the seat of courage; the seat of life is in the stomach.

But of all the systems of downright and solemn quackery, none is so evident or prevalent both in theory and practice as their doctrine of the pulse; and, as stated at the head of this paper, it is the pulse we are concerned with rather than medicines, diseases and their cures. And, as they are ignorant of the function of the heart, it stands to reason that they must be ignorant of the circulation of the blood. They claim that there is a different and distinct pulse for every part of the body, which is felt on both wrists, believing that not only does the pulse differ on both wrists or sides; but actually pretend to distinguish three on each arm, the first immediately on the metacarpus, and called respectively the "inch," the "bar," and the "cubit." (See Figures 1 and 2).

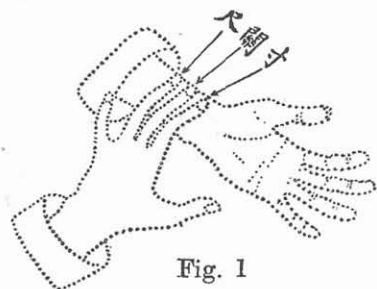


Fig. 1

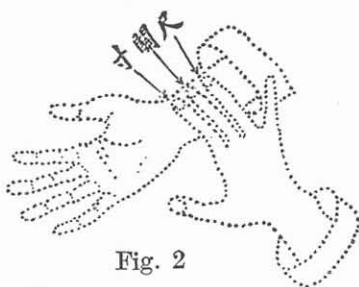


Fig. 2

Chinese physicians assert that the entire superstructure of medical practice depends on this theory of the pulse,—the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of every disease rest entirely on this.

Chinese physicians may not be to blame for want of astuteness, or natural talents, but they are certainly to blame for asserting that they know what they *do not* know, for declaring they feel in the pulse what they *do not* feel, for not seeking the truth, and for resting satisfied with their present knowledge, which is childish in the extreme.

THE CHINESE THEORY OF THE PULSE.

Extent, one inch or three fingers placed side by side on the left and right wrists (See Figures 1 and 2).

Division into three parts,—1st called *ts'un* 寸 (inch), 2nd, *Kuan* 關 (bar or pass), 3rd, *ch'ih* 尺 (cubit).

There are Four Principal Pulses: *Ssu Ta Kang* 四大綱, viz.: *Fu* 浮, (1) a light flowing (superficial) pulse like something lightly floating on water 輕取即見如水上浮物也; (2) *Ch'en* 沉, a deeply impressed pulse like a stone thrown into water 重按始見如石沉水也; (3) *Ch'ih* 遲, a slow pulse (three beats to one cycle of respiration); and (4) *Só* or *Shó* 數, a quick pulse (6 beats to one cycle of respiration) 快也 一息六至.

The 1st, 浮, indicates external (unimportant) complaints (表症), such as colds, etc. The 2nd, 沉, indicates internal (serious) complaints

(裏症), contracted in the Five Viscera, and connected with the seven Passions (see *infra*), internal injuries, non-mixing of food, drink, etc. The 3rd, 遲, indicates chills (寒症). The 4th, Shó 數, indicates heat (熱症).

The diseases contracted through external influences are: 溼, 暑, 風, 寒, 燥, 火, (or 六氣 six influences, *Yin* and *Yang*, wind, rain, light, and darkness). 溼 refers to diseases contracted through dampness, etc.; 暑 to diseases occurring through the sun's rays, etc.; 風 to colds contracted through wind, etc.; 寒, to chills contracted internally; 燥 to diseases contracted by being parched by the sun; and 火 to complaints arising through too much internal heat, etc. Diseases contracted through internal influences, *i.e.*, the "Seven Passions," are: 喜 joy; 怒 anger; 憂 anxiety; 思 melancholy thoughts; 悲 grief; 恐 suppressed fear; and 驚 to be suddenly frightened or startled.

(Note.—According to Chinese ideas Heaven has Six Influences, *viz.*: sunshine, moon-shine, wind, rain, darkness and light, or 陰, 陽, 風, 雨, 晦, 明; while human beings have Seven Passions, *viz.*: joy, anger, grief, pleasure, love, hatred and ambition: 喜, 怒, 哀, 樂, 愛, 惡, and 欲.)

The following are the pulse tests for internal and external heat and chills: if the pulse is 浮, superficial, and 數, quick (6 beats), it indicates external heat; but if it is 沉, deep, and 數, quick, there is internal heat. If it is 浮 and 遲 (3 beats), there is external chill; but if 沉, deep and 遲, there is internal chill. If the *left* 寸 is 浮 and 數, there is disturbance in the region of the heart, such as caused by external heat. If the *right* 寸 is 浮, superficial, and 數, quick, it indicates diseases caused by external heat in the chest and lungs; if the 關 on the *left* wrist is 沉, deep, and 數, quick, there is internal heat in the liver and gall; but if the 關 on the *right* side is 沉 and 數, there is internal heat in the spleen and stomach. If the *left* 尺 is 浮, superficial, and 遲, slow, it indicates external cold (表寒症) in the kidneys and bladder. If the *right* 尺 is 浮 and 遲, it indicates external chill in the kidneys and colon (腎及大腸有表寒症).

PULSES OF THE FOUR SEASONS; FIVE ELEMENTS; AND FIVE COLOURS.

In the spring when the element wood is predominant, the pulse of the liver is *hsien* 弦, a tremulous motion like a taut fiddle string; the colour element being blue. In summer the element fire is predominant, the pulse of the heart which answers to *hung* 洪, "overflowing"; the colour element being red. In autumn the element metal is predominant, the pulse of the lungs being *mao* 毛, "elastic," the colour element being white. In winter the element water prevails, the pulse of the kidneys which answers to *shih* 石, heavy, like a stone thrown into the water; the colour element being black. The stomach, however, is governed by the Four Seasons, as *that* particular organ may be disordered at any time, hence, it answers to *t'u* 土, earth, and the colour element being yellow (corresponding to earth); the pulse being *Ho Huan* (和緩), *i.e.*, "Slow" and in harmony with Nature. In addition to the above we have twelve

subsidiary pulses to consider: viz., *Hung* 洪, an overflowing pulse; *Hsü* 虛, a slow, weak and scattered pulse; *Ju* 濡, superficial hollow pulse like an onion-stalk, and small in compass (浮而芤小); *Ko* 革, hollow like an onion-stalk but taut like a fiddle string (芤而弦); *Fu* 伏, very deep and quick (沉極); *Lao* 牢, deep and strong (沉而有力); *Jo* 弱, deep and feeble (沉而無力); *Sê* 濇, moderately slow with strength (遲緩有力); *Chin* 緊, quick with strength (數而有力); *Ts'u* 促, hasty, the pulse beat irregular, with indications of strength (數脈時止時來而似有力); *hsien* 弦, taut and tremulous like a musical string; and finally, *hua* 滑, slippery, like a pebble rolling around in a basin with irregular movements (流利活潑時有時無). "Care" the books say, "must be taken not to confuse the different kinds of pulse which resemble each other." What fickle fancies of a distempered brain!

The kidneys are said to be the seat of energy (腎之神); therefore, the "bar" (關) on the left wrist is felt; if there is no pulse there is no hope of cure! The *Wu Tsang* (五臟) or Five Viscera, which constitute the *hsin* 心, heart; *kan* 肝, liver; *p'i* 脾, stomach; *fei* 肺, lungs, and *shên* 腎, kidneys, play an important part also in pulse feeling. In order to test whether all of the above mentioned are in good condition, the left *ts'un* 寸 is felt for the heart, in which, if healthy, the pulse should be superficial and wide-spreading in compass (浮大散). The *ts'un* 寸 on the right wrist is felt for the lungs, and should be—if in health—superficial, moderately slow and short; i.e., jerky (浮濇短).

As already stated above, the condition of the liver is tested on the left *kuan* or "bar," which, if in health, should be 沉弦長, i.e., deep, and taut like a tremulous musical string, and covering the full width of the finger placed on the pulse. The kidneys are tested on the *ch'ih* 尺, of both wrists; and as the kidneys belong to the element water 水, if in health, the pulse should be 沉石濡; deep, superficial, hollow like an 'onion-stalk' and small in compass, i.e., not exceeding the boundaries of the *ch'ih* 尺. The condition of the stomach is tested by the "bar" on the right wrist; in health, the pulse should be moderately slow (*huan* 緩). The pulse on the left *ts'un* 寸 is tested for complaints of the heart. The same test is made for *hsiang huo* 相火, the sexual spark or emotion (i.e., whether sexual excesses have been committed). They make confusion worse confounded, they claim that the *ts'un* 寸 corresponds to *Yang* 陽, the male principal of nature. The *kuan* 關 to half of *Yang* and half of *Yin* 陰; i.e., half male and half female nature; and that *ch'ih* 尺 corresponds to *Yin* 陰, Female Nature.*

One authority says that the pulse of a patient should be felt early in the morning, at sunrise. That the doctor should keep cool and collect-

*In former times, and indeed, up till quite recently, men were tested on the left wrist, and women on the right one. This silly practice has now become obsolete, both men and women undergoing the same tests on either wrists, and this in spite of the Male and Female Principals of Nature—what a concession on the part of Chinese physicians!

ed and show no signs of anxiety (this latter is one of the most, if not the most, sensible remarks to be found in the whole history of Chinese medical art). The doctor should pay particular attention to the patient's breathing, which should be regular, from 4 to 4½ beats to each cycle of respiration; hence, normal. Let us, however, delve a little deeper into this wonderful and mysterious circulation of the blood as discovered by Chinese physicians: A slight catarrh of the lungs is shown by the 浮 or superficial pulse. If the right 寸 is quick (數), and at the same time strong (實), it indicates a slight cold in the lungs; but if the same pulse is 數 and weak (弱), it shows that the patient is suffering from asthma.*

But to illustrate further: If the right 寸 is 浮 but 緊 (6 beats with strength), there is catarrh in the lungs and diaphragm. If the same pulse is 緩 moderately slow and weak, it indicates rheumatism. If the right 寸 is 浮, superficial, and 芤, hollow like an onion-stalk, there is loss of blood; and if the same pulse is 虛, very weak, it indicates illness brought on through sunstroke. Insufficient blood is indicated by the 寸 pulse if 浮, superficial and feeble. If either of the 寸 pulses are 浮, superficial, and 芤 hollow like an onion-stalk, and small in compass, there is insufficiency in both the blood and breath. In the case of colds, when the pulse is 浮, superficial, and 洪, overflowing, there is no danger because it is influenced by 陽 *Yang*, the Male Principal. If the pulse is 沉, deep, and 微, thin and thready, it shows that the cold has entered the vitals, and is difficult to cure. In cases of apoplexy, if the pulse is 浮, superficial and slow (遲), 3 beats, no danger exists; but if it is 沉大急, very deep, hasty and large in compass, there is little hope left. In cases of fever, the signs are favourable if the pulse is 弦, taut like a tremulous musical string, and at the same time is 數, 6 beats; if the same pulse is 遲, slow, 3 beats, it indicates an attack of malaria. It is very serious, however, if the pulse is 代大散, *i.e.*, stops and beats at regular periods, barely perceptible and scattered (less than three beats).

If in cases of diarrhoea, any of the pulses are 沉小, deep but small in compass, or 滑弱, irregular and weak, the disease is curable; but if it is 浮數, superficial and quick, there is great danger, more especially if the patient cannot eat any food. In cases of vomiting, there is no danger if the pulse is 浮滑, superficial and rolling about like a slippery pebble in a dish. If the pulse is 弦數, taut like a tremulous musical string and quick (6 beats); or 緊濇, *i.e.*, very irregular, sometimes with strength,

* *Note.*—Dr. Hobson in an excellent paper in the *Medical Times and Gazette* in November 1860 says:—"The Chinese have no name for inflammation, and I had to transfer the term, or a contraction of it, before I could describe its symptoms and treatment. They have a term which means hot; but a hot disease is not inflammation, nor have the well-known characteristics of the disease ever been described in any book that I have seen or heard of in China; so that though they have a large nosological list, this most important pathological affection is not even so much as named." A more striking proof of the want of accurate observation in the study of diseases could not be given. But what can be expected from a class of men that are non-progressive, in bondage to uniformity, unimaginative, torpid, suspicious and superstitious?

or sometimes slow or moderately slow with strength, it indicates that there is no blood left in the intestines. Whether an attack of cholera is serious or not, is determined as follows: if the pulse is 洪大, overflowing and large in compass, the attack is slight; but if the pulse is 遲微, slow and feeble; the cure is difficult. Where there is a severe cough, if the pulse is 浮濡, superficial and hollow, also weak, there is no danger; but if the pulse is 沉緊, deep with much strength, there is danger of running into consumption. Where asthma exists, if the pulse is 浮滑, superficial and slippery, like a stone rolling about in a basin, no danger is apprehended; but if it is 沉瀦, deep, sharp, and slow with strength, and if the hands and feet are cold at the same time, there is great danger of death. If the body is overheated, should the pulse be 洪數, overflowing and quick, there is nothing to fear; but if 微弱, very small and feeble, a cure is difficult.

In wasting diseases, especially of the lungs, if the pulse is 浮軟, superficial and very weak, the disease is easily cured; but if 洪數, floating and quick, there may be serious complications.

In cases of loss of blood; if the pulse is 芤, hollow like an onion-stalk, and 緩小, moderately slow and small in compass; no further loss may occur; but if 芤, hollow, and 數大, quick, also large in compass, more blood will be lost, hence, dangerous. Congestion of the blood in the region of the heart (中畜血): if the pulse is 牢大, deep and strong and large in compass, a cure may be expected, but if 沉瀦, deep very slow, and irregular, there is great danger to the patient. In cases of stoppage of the urine, Bright's disease, etc.: if the pulse is 數大, quick (6 beats), and large in compass, the disease is curable, but if 細微, fine and small, the case is almost hopeless. In cases of venereal diseases, if the pulse is very tight, strong and large in compass (實大), the disease is easily cured; but if very slow, irregular, and small in compass (瀦小), a cure is difficult.

The Chinese physicians apparently do not know that syphilis, with which many Chinese are infected, is also due to the degeneration of the thyroid gland. In cases of insanity, if the pulse is 浮洪, superficial and overflowing, a cure may be expected, but if the pulse is 沉急, deep and hasty, the case is hopeless. Here, again, the Chinese doctors are at sea; they can probably note that there is a disturbance in the blood circulation of the brain-cortex, due to changes in the blood vessels, but it is very doubtful if they can note the destruction of the nerve-cells and nerve processes. Nor do they know that the degeneration of the thyroid is the fundamental cause of this disease. Convulsions, spasms, fits, etc.: if the pulse is 虛緩, superficial, slow, and large in compass, 浮而遲大, there is no danger, but if 沉小, deep and small in compass, or 弦急, taut like a tremulous musical string and hasty, or quick, there is great danger, especially if the liver is disordered. In cases of rupture in the groin, hernia, etc. (疝肝症): if the pulse is 洪急, overflowing and hasty, a cure is possible, but if 弱急, weak and hasty, death is near! In cases of swellings, such as a dropsical belly (脹滿症): if the pulse is 浮大洪實, superficial and large in compass, also overflowing and strong or tight, no

great danger exists, but if 沉, deep, and 細, or 微, fine and thready, danger exists.

In cases of jaundice (黃疸): if the pulse is 浮大, superficial and large in compass, or 數洪, quick and overflowing, the diseases may be cured, but if the pulse is 微瀯, fine and sharp, irregular and small in compass, there is danger of death.

Accumulation of humours in the body, 積聚症: so long as any of the Six Pulses show strong pulsations, there is no danger, but if any one of them is 沉, deep, and 細微, fine and thready, the case is serious. Disorders derived through evil-influences, such as ghosts, demons, etc. (中惡), are said to be serious if the pulse is 浮大, superficial and large in compass, or 浮洪, superficial and overflowing. But if the pulse is 緊細, quick, strong, and fine, there is no danger.

Cancer, carbuncle, etc.: 癰疽: if the pulse is 洪大, overflowing and large in compass, the case is not considered dangerous, but if blood or pus exudes (with the same pulse) it is critical.

In cases of abscess on the lungs, 肺癰: if the 寸 pulse on the right side is 短瀯, short, slow, and irregular, but small in compass, *i.e.*, not overflowing the space included in the 寸, there are hopes of a cure, but if the same pulse is 浮大, superficial and large in compass, the patient may as well prepare for death! Cancer in the stomach (腸癰): if the left 寸 or right 尺 is 數, quick, and slippery (滑), no danger may be apprehended, but if the same pulses are 沉細, deep and fine there is little hope of recovery.

THE FOUR ESSENTIAL POINTS THE PHYSICIAN MUST PAY REGARD TO.

1st, *Wang* 望, to note the expression of the face, complexion, condition of the tongue, etc. 2nd, *Wên* 聞, to note if there are any bad smells coming from the nose, mouth, body, or in the house the patient is living in. 3rd, *Wên* 問, to make inquiries into the probable cause of the illness, when the symptoms first manifested, in which part of the body, and whether the patient is fond of hot food and drinks. 4th, *ch'ieh* 切, to diagnose the case by the above-mentioned three tests, combined with the actions of the various pulses, and prescribe the remedy. In cases of stoppage of menstruation, if the three pulses on both wrists, 寸, 關, and 尺, are 滑數, slippery like a pebble rolling about in a basin and quick (6 beats), it shows three months conception. If the three pulses, as indicated above, are highly pulsating, it indicates 5 months conception. If the pulses on the *left* wrist are exceedingly quick, a male child may be expected, but if the *right* pulses are exceedingly rapid (疾速也), a female child may be looked for.*

*The Chinese believe that if a woman during pregnancy is suddenly called from a sitting or reclining position, and upon arising unconsciously puts her *left* foot out first, she is with a male child, and if it should be the *right* foot, it will be a girl. They also have a saying to the effect that it is much better to rear a male child after 280 days have elapsed than a daughter (寧養過頭兒, 不養過頭女), under the belief that the former is lucky, but not the latter. This is because they reckon the period for conception to birth at 9 months of 30 days each, plus ten days, or a total of 280 days.

THE MYSTIC ART OF PULSE FEELING IN CHINA

If the pulses on both wrists mingle or run together (*i.e.*, the 寸 pulse coalesces with the 關, or the latter with the 尺, or *vice versâ*), it indicates 9 months pregnancy, and birth may be expected within ten days. After the birth of a child, if the mother's Six Pulses are small in compass, and moderately slow, 緩小, she is safe, but if the Six Pulses are 實大弦牢, firm, large in compass, and taut like a tremulous musical string, she is in a very critical condition.

Indications of Pulse: If the pulse is weak, the "touch" must be very light (輕手取); the pulse should be drifting and buoyant, like wood floating on the water (泛泛然水漂木); or, like elm-seeds floating on water (榆莢). A distinction is also made between a pulse that is not exactly 浮, superficial, yet resembles it! If the pulse is 浮 with some strength, or 洪, overflowing, with 3 beats (遲), it indicates weakness in the entire system. If the pulse is 甚散, very much scattered, there is not sufficient oil in the system to lubricate it. If the pulse is hollow like an onion-stalk, 乳中空, and superficial, 浮, the pulsation barely perceptible on the tip of the finger, and covering a space no larger than a small pea, it indicates extreme weakness in the entire bodily economy, 甚則微, but these pulsations are difficult to distinguish, 難尋撫.

If the pulse is "hollow" and taut like a tremulous musical string, 乳弦看, the loss of blood has been excessive. If the hollow (花) feel is 浮, superficial, in other words, *ho mo* (合脈), pulse in harmony, there is no great danger, but if the 'hollow' feel is 沉, deep with 牢, force, there is absolutely no hope of recovery.

If the pulse indications are very deep 沉象, like a stone cast into the water 石投水, the pressure of the fingers must also be heavy and deep, the pulse can then be felt, 乃能得. If the pulse beats are irregular, stop and then beat again, 幾至後止復回, it indicates, in a woman, that she is *enceinte*, and, in a man, serious injury in the vitals.

The blood is controlled by *yin*, cold, and the breath by *yang*, heat, (血爲陰分, 氣爲陽分). The pulse in actual sickness is as follows: if the pulse is 浮, superficial, it indicates disease of the lungs externally contracted (浮主表肺病興). If the 浮 pulse is strong it indicates that a cold has been caught through wind, cold air, etc. (有力浮風所乘). If the 浮 pulse is very weak, 浮無力, there is deficiency of the blood corpuscles (虧陰血). If the 浮, superficial pulse is 遲 slow (3 beats), cold has been contracted externally, 表冷. If the same pulse is 數, quick (6 beats), it indicates internal heat caused by cold air through the pores of the skin 風熱. If the 浮 pulse is 緊, quick with strength, it indicates an external cold, 風寒中; if the 浮 is 緩, moderately slow, it indicates rheumatism, 風溼病. If the 浮 pulse is 虛, superficial and slow, and large in compass, it denotes illness brought on through the sun, such as heat appoplexy 傷暑暈. If the 浮 is 乳, hollow like an onion-stalk, much blood has been lost 必失血. If the 浮 is 洪, overflowing, it denotes weakness and internal heat caused by sexual excesses. If the 浮 is 微, small and feeble, there is loss of vitality through over-work,

mental or physical, 勞. If the 浮 pulse is 濡, hollow like an onion-stalk, and small in compass, there is insufficiency of semen 陽虛所致.

PULSES WHICH INDICATE DANGER OF DEATH.

If the left 關 is sharp as a knife, it indicates serious complications in the liver, and death may be expected within eight days. If all the Six Pulses, or the right *kuan* in particular, resembles the noise of a bird pecking, the noise of running waters, or is like the sound of water dripping from a roof, or like the noise of the upsetting of a cup containing water, 鳥啄, 水流, 屋漏, 杯覆, it indicates serious congestion in the bowels, and death may be expected within seven days. If the Six Pulses, or the right 寸 especially, resemble hairs blown by the wind 風吹毛, there is congestion of the lungs and the stomach, and death comes within three days. If both the right and left 尺 resemble the sudden snapping of a cord, 解索, or like the flipping of the finger against a stone, 彈石, there is non-action of the kidneys, and death may be predicted within four days. If the Six Pulses act like a fish or shrimp darting about in the water, 魚蝦在水中游者, or like water bursting forth from a spring 如湧泉流水, death is certain within one or two days. Who can say, with this theory before them, that the Chinese physicians know anything about the true circulation of the blood? If, in addition to the pulse indications, the perspiration is of an oily nature, the eyes are dim, there is a sweetish taste in the mouth, a numbness of the tongue, and the breath is cold, it shows the patient to be *in extremis*! *Ex pede Herculem!*

In Spring, they say the lung pulse is mortal, because the pulse of the heart is set aside, for the latter is the son of the liver, which has the kidneys for its mother, and the stomach for its wife. Then, again, they say if you wish to know whether a patient will recover, you must carefully examine the various actions of the pulse. If the pulse frisks about like a fish that dives, and comes up very slowly, so slow in fact, that one would think it was held back by the tail, and yet makes its escape, such a pulse is absolutely useless, since the most skilful doctor "under the Heavens" could not save the patient. Too many beatings of the pulse proceeds from excess of heat, and too few from excess of cold. This is a constant tradition handed down from all ages, the various degrees of which are set down clearly in the book of the eighty-one difficulties. It is really difficult to repress a feeling of rising laughter against a system which every Chinese physician *must know to be utterly false*, and because, being false, is in unison with all the other systems prevailing in China.

Before concluding this paper, I must not omit to mention the following opinion of Dr. Hobson, who practised for 18 years amongst the Chinese: "While they—the Chinese—write learnedly about the wonderful properties of the pulse, and palm a lie upon the public in professing to distinguish its minute and varied forms, yet I have never met with one Chinese medical practitioner who dared affirm to my face that he had done so; or was willing to try his boasted skill on a patient of mine,

THE MYSTIC ART OF PULSE FEELING IN CHINA

though offered a considerable reward to point out any well-known disease by the pulse alone."

It is only fair, however, to see what Chinese physicians think of Western medical art. They believe that our ideas of the true circulation of the blood are based on a "false hypothesis, because they contradict the doctrine of their ancient sages." They ask, "How could any *post-mortem* examination show the blood freely flowing through the veins of a corpse, or ascertain the age of the uterine formation?" "And scout as ridiculous, the idea that the moral qualities of courage have no dependence on the size of the gall-bladder."

The Chinese, as we know, procure the gall-bladder of such animals as tigers, bears and snakes, also of men, especially notorious criminals executed for their crimes, to eat the bile contained in them in the belief that it will impart courage.

In conclusion, I beg my readers to pardon my efforts to explain what is unknown by what is even less known—*Ignotum per ignotius*.