CHINESE THEATRICALS AND THEATRICAL PLOTS

"Chinese Theatricals and Theatrical Plots."

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ARTICLE VIII.

CHINESE THEATRICALS AND THEATRICAL PLOTS.[1]

At the suggestion of Mr. GILES, a circular was addressed to a number of members of the Society calling for short sketches of Chinese Theatrical Plots, in response to which the subjoined short papers have been received. These sketches represent the substance matter, reduced to as few words as possible, of a number of Chinese plays now on the stage, and will give the foreign reader an idea of the dramatic literature with some of its characteristic features without entailing on him the trouble of working his way through the lengthy dialogues of a translation.

"THE BEATING OF A GOLDEN BRANCH" (*Ta-chin-chih* 打金枝).

Among the statesmen who flourished in the reign of Tai Tsang, in the T'ang dynasty, there was a Minister named Kuo T'zu-i, who had been raised to the rank of Prince of Fen-yang. This man had seven sons and eight daughters; among the former of whom was one named Kuo Ai, who had married a Princess of the Imperial House. One day, it being the birthday

of the Prince of Fen-yang, six of his sons, accompanied by their respective wives, went to offer him their congratulations; but Kuo Ai appeared alone. This was because his wife was daughter to the Emperor. Although, according to domestic etiquette, she was the daughter-in-law of Kuo Tzu-i, according to State etiquette she was, quoad her father-in-law, in the position of a sovereign towards a subject; wherefore the Princess refused to conform. Her husband, Kilo Ai, was much annoyed with her, and used some sharp words to her about it; but as this was

ineffectual he gave her a couple of good slaps. The Princess roared with rage, and flew off to complain to the Emperor her father, accusing her husband also of having said that the Emperor owed his Throne to *his* father, Kuo Tzŭ-i, who indeed might have ascended the Throne himself had he been so minded. —The Emperor replied calmly that what Kuo Ai had said was not very polite, but it was true enough; that he and the Princess were a very young couple, and that they ought not to be always squabbling. Then came KuoTzŭ-i, for the sake of whose honour Kuo Ai had got into all this trouble, bringing his son bound and pinioned, with the ungrateful request that he might be executed for his disrespect to the Emperor's daughter. It is satisfactory to record that this monstrous piece of injustice was not sanctioned by the Emperor, who on the contrary issued an Edict pardoning everybody all round; and the piece concludes with the restoration of domestic harmony.

The term " golden branch" is a poetical designation for an Imperial Prince or Princess.

FREDERIC HENRY BALFOUR.

" THE WIDOW NO WIDOW" (*Kua fu-shang fên* 寡婦上坟)

Liu Lu-ching is a native of Chi-nan Fu in Shantung, who, after passing a brilliant examination at Peking and obtaining an official position, returns by Imperial command to offer sacrifices at the tombs of his ancestors. As he and his suite are nearing the end of their journey and have reached the burying place of his family, he is surprised to hear the sound of a woman weeping there. Halting, he sends his servants to enquire the cause, and the dialogue is carried on by these servants as intermediaries. They convey their master's questions to the woman and her replies back to him. On being questioned, she asks to know who her interrogator is and learns that he is an official from Peking who is willing and able to help her if she is in need. Thus assured she tells how her relations have died and how she has been beaten and abused by her husband's

family; how her husband himself had gone to Peking three years before and never returned; how she had sought him there without success and had just received intelligence of his death.

Liu's suspicions here begin to take the right direction and he asks her name, which turns out to be Hsiao Su-cheng. He further enquires whether she has certain signs, which it appears she has, and he then announces himself to be her long lost husband. It is now her turn to enquire proof, and she puts some test questions on her own account. "Where were you born? What was your father's name? Into what family did you marry?" These being satisfactorily answered, there is mutual recognition, and the supposed widow finds herself reunited to the husband she had come to the tombs to mourn.

G. M. H. Playfair

"TATTOOING" (*Tz'ŭ-tzu* 刺字).

Chinese plays seem to be the most realistic to be found in any country. They do not transcend the actual. Nor do they make any use of supernatural elements. They aim to exalt virtue, to exhibit the pathetic and the comic, and to hold up fidelity and self-sacrifice to admiration.

The performers are usually three, four or five. Three is very common. The speakers are called tan, shêng, ching, mo, ch`ou, etc., just as in Greek plays there were three performers who were called the 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The first of the five masques is the chief person in the piece, who is always called *shêng* 生. When there is a female character the word *tan* 旦 is used. A messenger is *ching*. The dress of the masquers may vary. Thus Yo-fei in the play "Tattooing" is introduced wearing a general's hat and satin short robe for riding.

The play begins with a short song chanted by Yo-fei's wife, who then tells who she is and describes her husband's past career. After the death of his father he was taught by his mother, who afterwards comes forward as a chief character in the play. He was married, and soon after was first in the

military examination for the highest degree and became Chwangyuan. Under General Chang-chao-t'ao he was made the victim of false charges, and would have been put to death but for the aid of Tsung-lien-shou, a general who took him into his service. His present prolonged absence from his family for two months must be on account of his placing public duty before that he owed to his family, as was right. At this point the 3rd, 5th and other masquers lead Yo-fei himself upon the stage. They sing as they do so a few lines about the difficulty of forgetting aged mothers when serving the Emperor. Yo-fei orders his attendants to leave. His wife appears, and he asks why his mother is not present. The reply is that she is upstairs, worshipping Buddha and watching his boy studying. The old lady appears and sings. The son kneels to pay his respects; she desires to know why he has come. He says he left the camp because he could not rest for thinking of his mother. She chants in answer that she only desired him to be loyal to his sovereign and have a name for fidelity. The wife chants words agreeing with those of her mother-in-law, who replies still chanting. Yo-fei appears to be overwhelmed with grief. Both wife and mother ask the cause. The chanting here changes to a long narrative. The two Emperors have been taken prisoners by the Golden Tartars, and the capital is in the hands of the enemy. He desires to do something effective to rescue them, but his duty to his mother stands in his way. On hearing this the mother is indignant, and chides her son in relentless terms. His commanding officer Liu-tzu is dead, and before (lying gave him his seal of authority. He must go with this seal and revenge his sovereign's dishonour. The wife brings a golden needle, ink and pencil. The mother bids him take off his coat and lay his back bare. Then she tattoos him on his back with the four characters *Ching-chung pao-kuo* 精忠報國: "By the purest loyalty return the favour shown by king and country." Again she chants and now soldiers appear begging Yo-fei to go quickly to give his view on matters of importance. His mother again sings and then tells him seriously that she will take her own life if he hesitates again to proceed promptly to the rescue of the sovereigns. Yo-fei, after exhorting her to live, bows to the ground in farewell, his mother being on the top of the steps leading to the hall and he below.

Then he requests his wife to ascend the steps that he may say farewell by bowing to her. She also bows to the ground before him. He goes away singing, as he spurs his horse, of the roar of cannon in the battle, of the return of the two Emperors and of disgrace wiped away. He concludes with the

words "I know well I shall never return." Then the mother says, "Daughter, I fear you are displeased with me for sending away your husband " She answers, "How should I dare " The mother says, "That is well, come into the house with me."

JOSEPH EDKINS.

"THE THREE SUSPICIONS" (*San-i* 三疑)

At the close of the Ming dynasty, a certain well-known general T'ang Ying 唐英 was occupied day and night in camp with preparations for resisting the advance of the rebel army, under Li Tzu-ch'êng 李自成 which ultimately captured Peking. While the general was thus temporarily absent from his official residence, the tutor engaged for his son fell ill with severe shivering fits; and the boy, anxious to do something to relieve the sufferer, went to his mother's room and borrowed a thick quilt. Late that night, T'ang Ying unexpectedly returned home, and heard from the slave-girl in attendance of the tutor's illness and of the loan of the quilt. Thereupon, he proceeded straight to the sick room to see how the tutor was getting on; but found him fast asleep. As he was about to retire, he espied on the ground a pair of women's slippers, which had been accidentally brought in with the quilt, and at once recognised to whom they belonged. Hastily quitting the still sleeping tutor, and arming himself with a sharp scimitar, he burst into his wife's apartment. He seized the terrified woman by the hair, and told her that she mast die; producing, in reply to her protestations, the fatal pair of slippers. He yielded, however, to the entreaties of the assembled slave-girls, and deferred his vengeance until he had put the following test. He sent a slave-girl to the tutor's room, himself following close behind with his naked weapon ready for use, bearing a message from her

mistress to say she was awaiting him in her own room; in response to which invitation, the voice of the tutor was heard from within, saying, " What! at this hour of night? Go away, you bad girl, or I will tell the master when he comes back!"

Still unconvinced, the jealous general bade his trembling wife go herself and summon her paramour; resolving that if the latter but put foot over the threshold, his life should pay the penalty. But, there was no occasion for murderous violence. The tutor again answered from within the bolted door, " Madam, I may not be a saint, but, I would at least seek to emulate the virtuous Chao Wên-hua [趙文華, the Joseph of China]. Go, and leave me in peace."

The general now changes his tone; and the injured wife, she too changes hers. She attempts to commit

suicide, and is only dissuaded by an abject apology on the part of her husband; in the middle of which, as the latter is on his knees, a slave-girl creates roars of laughter by bringing her master, in mistake for wine, a brimming goblet of vinegar, the Chinese emblem of connubial jealousy.

HERBERT A. GILES.

"THE SHEEPFOLD" (*Mu-yang-ch'üan* 牧羊圈)

Chu Ch'un-têng going to fight for his country against the rebel Huang Ling is pursued by his aunt's relative Sung Ch`êng, who cunningly steals his horse and his money. He is about to hang himself in a wood, when a spirit saves him, and gives him a bow and three arrows with which he defeats the rebel Huang Lung ; and for his bravery he is rewarded by the Tang Emperor (Su Tsung, A.D. 756-762) with the rank of general and a marquisate. Meanwhile his aunt, pretending that he has been killed, and concealing the letters he sent home, joins with Sung Ch'êng in trying to induce his young wife to marry the latter. On her refusing to do so she is beaten, forced to grind corn and tend sheep, and eventually driven out of her home with her mother-in-law, an old lady of eighty. Chu returning to

his home, with his decorations, after an absence of several years, is told that his wife and mother are dead. He goes to the ancestral tomb to mourn their loss, accompanied by a cousin, son of the wicked aunt, who has been with him in the campaign, and is ignorant of his mother's doings. The decorations are handed to the aunt as the eldest representative of the family, and she after a slight demur takes them. Chu says he has no heart to appear in public, and will spend the rest of his days as an ascetic repenting of his sins, but before he goes he orders a masthead to be erected, under which the poor are to be fed at his expense for seven days. He exits with his cousin, and his mother and wife, falsely reported dead, enter and beg the sergeant and soldiers, who are superintending the dispensing of the charity, for food. They are given half-a-bowl of rice, and warned to be careful of the crockery. While the old lady cats, the younger woman recognises the family tomb. They both read the inscriptions on the tablet, and sad memories cause the old lady to drop the bowl, which is smashed to pieces. They begin to cry, and a commotion ensues. The marquis, hearing the hubbub, believes that the poor people are being defrauded of their meals; and orders the sergeant to be tied up for punishment. He protests his innocence, and the women are sent for to explain matters. The younger one enters, but husband and wife do not at first recognize each other. She tells her story and, on being asked, shows a strawberry mark on her left hand. They embrace, and go at to bring in the old lady, who is astonished at seeing the marquis kneel to her. The cousin is told of his mother's cruelty, and taken to task. The latter is then sent for, but, even when brought face to face with her victims, maintains her innocence. "I swear before Heaven I have not injured them; if I have may the old dragon carry me off," she says. A dragon suddenly seized her, and her son in his grief would have killed himself, but is pacified at being told

that Buddhist and Taoist priests shall be engaged to pray for his mother's safe conduct across the `Styx.' The play here ends, but it is understood that the party go home and live happily ever after.

HERBERT J. ALLEN.

"A DUTIFUL AND UNSELFISH HEART" (*Hsiao-lien-hsin* 孝廉心).

Once there lived a poor family of four persons, grandmother, *née* Yen 嚴, her son Kuo Feng-hsien 郭奉先, his wife, *née* Yu 游, and their son Lien Hsin 廉心. On one occasion the old lady expressed a strong desire for animal food; but without money what could her son do? He made up a handle of clothing and raised two hundred cash at the pawn broker's. On his way home the money was stolen. When he discovered the loss he was in despair and would have made away with himself had it not been for his wife. Little Lien Hsin seeing his father's grief went into the cook-house and committed suicide. The father discovered the dead body and an idea struck him; he cut off slices and cooked them for his mother. The old lady sent for her grandson to share this treat, and all came out. The grand-mother charged her son with impiety, but the magistrate could not decide to convict, when Lien Hsin's spirit appeared, explained the whole, and left a sum of money for his father, who was then honourably acquitted. And the thief was struck by lightning.

C. H. BREWITT-TAYLOR.

"THE MISER" (*K'an-ts'ai-nu* 看財奴).

In olden times there lived an old man, named Wang, who was of a very niggardly disposition. From his earliest youth he was accustomed to bury secretly all the money ho could scrape together, and kept all his doings strictly secret.

His wife and sons, although knowing that the old man had hoarded up a considerable sum of money, were unacquainted with the place of concealment. In order to continually increase his treasure, the old miser daily fed himself on rice-husks and dressed in ragged clothes. His face looked wan like that of a pauper.

When his relatives and friends alluded to his riches, he would get into a rage and abuse them, asserting that he was extremely poor.

The two sons often asked to be told the place where his wealth was concealed, lest, they said, some strangers might find out the spot and steal the money. The father always replied: "I cannot tell you now, you mast wait till I am about to die."

After some years the old man became ill, and his sons asked him whether he would now reveal to them his secret. "Do not be too hasty, my sons," the father said; "my illness is not yet so severe that death will result. Have but patience and you shall know in time."

Through want of proper nourishment and medical care, the old miser got worse from day to day, till at last his speech forsook him entirely. His mind, however, was still very active. One night the old man in a state of great excitement held up two of his fingers. The young men naturally thinking that the old man was feeling his end approaching and that he would at last reveal to them his secret, approached his coach and asked him, whether he had on his mind to tell them the place where the money was concealed. A vigorous shake of the head, indicating his non-compliance, was the only reply.

His wife being called in discovered at once what the old man wanted. "Your father means," said she, " that there are two wicks burning in the lamp; go quickly and extinguish one, so that unnecessary waste of oil may be avoided."

As soon as his wish had been complied with, his mind was at rest, he lay down his head and peacefully expired.

As the family was very poor, and the hidden treasure could not be found, his sons lacked the means to give their father a decent burial: They simply took a piece of old matting and buried him like a pauper.

Such was the end of the rich miser. Having money and not wishing to spend it, he was called "The slavish guardian of his wealth."

J. RHEIN.

"The Two SOLES, OR BECOMING AN ACTOR FROM LOVE" (*Pi-mu-yu* 比目魚).

In 4 acts, and 32 scenes, by Li Li-wêng (李笠翁), of the 17th Century, in his collection of plays,

entitled *Li Wêng Shih-chung-ch'ü* (笠翁十種曲), Tan Ch`u-yü, a very promising young *lettré,* having been to a dramatic representation, falls in love with the beautiful daughter of a celebrated actress Liu Chiang-hsien, whose husband

is the manager of a strolling company. Young Miao Ku has not yet trodden the boards, she is only fourteen, but is so charming! The impresario, Liu Wên-Ch`ing, resolves to start another company so that she may make her début. Placards are posted everywhere: Actors Wanted! T'an seizes the opportunity and engages himself, hoping to see and speak to his lady-love. At first, he is given an unavailable role, that of a harlequin, but, on the advice of the young girl who has long suspected his love and has discovered the proof of it in a letter which falls by chance into her hands, he succeeds in getting a *jeune premier's* part by stratagem. They now sing and play together. The two lovers fall more deeply in love with each other.

In the meantime, the company stroll into the country and give many performances. At last they arrive at a market town in Cheh-kiang ; a representation is to take place there in honour of a, mandarin canonised as *P'ing-lang-hou* 平浪侯 for having of yore saved the country from the floods. There, Chiang-hsien, the mother, meets an old lover who is attracted by her daughter's charms, and who demands her hand in marriage; to which the mother gives her consent against the girl's wishes. Poor Miao Ku is in despair between love and duty. To escape her fate, she determines to commit suicide.

The performance is given in P`ing-lang-hou's temple, on the bank of the river. The piece is entitled "Drowned in the Chiang" (a young girl crossed in love throws herself into the Chiang and is drowned.) Miao Ku plays her part beautifully and, at the end of the piece, amidst the cheers of the crowd, throws herself like a heroine into the river. Young T'an, love-sick and desperate, follows her, and immediately both are transformed by Ping-lang-hou into two large soles, which are caught some time afterwards by the servants of a certain Meng Jung, who has retired from a Taotaiship to spend his days in angling; and they offer the fish to their master. There, the soles take their primitive form, and the marriage of our two lovers is celebrated avec éclat at Meng Jung's house; after many adventures, T'an goes to the capital where he acquires great fame and is appointed Prefect, triumphs over the rebels, and at last returns to Meng Jung's to live quietly far away from honours.

C. IMBAULT- HUART.

"IMPERIAL TROUBLES SETTLED" (Ting-wang-nan 定王難)[2]

by Chu Mêng-i (任蒙伊) of Ningpo.

I select this drama because it is the work of a modern playwright (deceased about ten years ago) and probably therefore new to students of Chinese. It belongs to the K'unwan-Suchau school (there being four other schools : Peking, Anhui, Shaohsing and Hupeh) and is, like about half the plays, historical. It opens with a grand chase under the 18th Chou Emperor Hsiang, 651 to 618 B.C., who is attended by ministers, generals, courtiers, the Empress and other lights of the seraglio; all are thrown into consternation encountering a bear-like monster of prodigious size and strength, which dexterously seizes in its huge paws every arrow that is directed against it; the Empress, a daughter of the Khan of the Huns, a natural born huntress, volunteers alone to attack the beast, but her skill and heroism are of no avail; she retires discomfited. The Emperor now orders his brother to join the Empress in another attack; the two are successful; the chase is over; the imperial party returns to the capital. On the journey, the Empress makes love to her young and handsome brother-in-law; the dowager's palace is the place of assignation, but a slave girl discovers and makes known the intrigue. His majesty thereupon incarcerates his beautiful Empress; and the brother, who once expected through his mother's machinations to supplant the son and heir, flies to the Hun Khan, the lady's father, accompanied by her adherents; a force is furnished them; it captures the capital; the Emperor escapes to Chêng; the Empress is liberated; the lovers are reunited and usurp the throne. The Emperor now moves Duke Wên of Tsin, president of the confederacy, to espouse his cause; Wên defeats the rebels, beheads the guilty pair, and the Emperor is reinstated. It will be seen by the historical student that the dramatist closely follows traditional history.

D. J. MACGOWAN.

At the conclusion of the reading of contributed papers the Chairman, Mr. Drew, read a leading article on "Theatrical Art in China," which had appeared in the *North-China Daily News*

of the 15th December,[3] and then proceeded to remark that a number of reflections and inquiries had been suggested to his mind by the reading of these papers, and that he would venture to express a few of them,—in the hope that the so doing might lead to the contribution of further light on the subject of the Chinese Drama. It appeared to him that there was plainly an absence of involved plot in Chinese plays as a rule—in great contrast with the intricate situations and puzzling relationships between the characters, which pervade the generality of modern European pieces, until the dénouement clears up all these mysteries. And, again, when one reflects upon the influence upon civilization and manners and language which the stage has exercised and still exerts in Western lands, it seems not unjust to assert the feeble influence of the stage in China as compared with what it might be, and perhaps may yet some day become. The speaker added that while for his own part he knew little or nothing about the training of actors, the salaries they earn, the portions of China from which the profession is chiefly recruited, the language or dialect in which the actors speak and sing, and the main characteristics of the leading theatres in Shanghai, he would allude to these topics in the hope that it might elicit some information on these and kindred matters. It is to be presumed that the wonderful command of

prolonged falsetto, so distressing to the ear and taste of the European, which the best Chinese singers display, can only have been acquired by great perseverance and long practice. And, finally, what influence, if any, does the Chinese theatre have over the spoken language?

The Rev. A. J. BAMFORD remarked that since the Chair-man had thought the article in the *North-China Daily News* worthy of the consideration of the meeting, and since it was, as he supposed, written by a member of the society, it would be well (with the writer's consent) to incorporate it in the next fascicule with the collection of papers among which it was read.

Mr. BAMFORD then asked whether it was the case, as he had been told, that some four dozen plays occupied in Chinese Literature a special and honored place and class by themselves, pretty much as Shakespeare's do in English Literature? and, if

so, whether the plays now read belonged in part to this class,—one he knew did not, as it was read as a modern production.

The same speaker also pointed out the unqualified statement in the article above referred to that women are not allowed to appear upon the stage, and the statement of one of the plots that a man became an actor because in love with an actress, and asked when the law first came into existence which cut off the possibility of women earning their living as actresses?

Dr. WILLIAMSON called attention to the moral aim of the recognised plays of China, in harmony with their classics and proverbs, thus affording another element of hope in dealing with this people. He knew there were plays of a different order; but these were discountenanced by all respectable persons, and acted at out of the way places and generally at night. In reference to those wonderful accomplishments as to falsetto and gesticulation—to which our esteemed President had alluded—he might add that extraordinary dexterity of the men in acting female characters—the old and young alike —the tottering scolding old hag, and the haughty dame!

Dr. HIRTH, with regard to the Rev. Mr. BAMFORD'S allusion to the limited number of higher class standard plays, remarked that the plots communicated this evening could not be supposed to represent the cream of Chinese dramatic literature, but they certainly gave an average insight into the taste of the theatrical public of the present day. It must be admitted that these plots are mostly very simple, not to say silly. The "dens ex machina " is in most of them conspicuous amongst the *dramatis personæ,* in spite of. Dr. Edkins' assertion that "they do not make any use of supernatural elements." The working up of the plot can no more be compared to one built up in accordance with Aristotelian principles than a stone lion guarding the entrance to some Chinese public building may be compared to Canova's lion, or the best-praised native water-colour on silk or paper to any of the pieces of canvas preserved in Western art-museums. A certain poorness of ideas may be discovered in the fact that even in this small collection a repetition may be observed, the plot communicated under " The Widow no Widow" bearing a strange resemblance to Mr. Allen's "Sheepfold." However, it must be said that, a somewhat better impression will be received

if the student will go into the details of theatrical literature on record in printed books, of which a considerable part has been translated into European languages,-witness the industrious French versions communicated by M. Basin in his " Théâtre Chinois," the well-known translations of Stanislas Julien, Sir John F. Davis and others,[4] to which may be added some papers by our late member Mr. G. C. Stent.

SUPPLEMENT.

"THEATRICAL ART IN CHINA."

[*Reprinted from the "North-China Daily News" of 15th Dec., 1885.*]

Something of theatrical representation has been found to exist in many countries at an early history of their development. When facts can be discovered relative to primitive dramatic performances, they are generally found in connection with religion. The first Chinese customs of a dramatic nature of which we know are mentioned in the Chou-li, and they were intended by a formidable procession and music to drive away evil spirits. The fiercer the appearance of the masquers the more effective it was thought would be the performance. The Chinese think evils spirits are easily frightened. Every year at least three times certain officers were in the Chou dynasty appointed to put on bearskins, with four golden eyes, and their clothing was black above the waist and red below. At the head of a large troop of followers they searched houses, carrying a spear in one hand and a shield in the other. This ceremony was intended to aid in driving away diseases. Confucius paid respect to this custom, which was called *No,* by putting on his court robes and standing on the eastern steps. Musical exhibitions with performances on certain instruments and singing became very common in China during the Han dynasty. From that time forward music was welcomed from all the surrounding nations. But from the Chen dynasty there were popular amusements consisting of words, adapted to excite the feelings, sung to music. The drama began with poetry set to music, and men of poetic genius vied to produce pieces which should most deeply

touch the feelings. The basis of the Chinese drama consists of sketches of songs. Between these the story of a play is introduced. The idea of the song with its poetic taste and feeling is indigenous to China. The idea of a story interspersed, and the staff of performers more or less masqued who take parts in the dialogues which form the beginning, middle, and end of the plot, are in great part foreign.

That the Chinese drama should have flourished only from the thirteenth century is remarkable. For it is the most popular of all their amusements, and seems to satisfy them, noisy and rough as it is felt to be by the foreigner. Modern China is a very different thing from ancient China. In shops the abacus has ousted the old slips of bamboo with which people formerly counted. The common people wear cotton instead of coarse silk and linen. The popular song has been expanded into the play. These changes and many more have taken place within six or seven hundred years. The Hindoo drama is much older. The beautiful works of Kalidasa, which Indianists so much admire, date, as some say, from the first century before Christ, or, as is more probable, from the third century after Christ. There is no doubt that the Greek drama must have very much influenced that of India, because of the extensive effects produced on that country by the Greeks after the conquests of Alexander. Here is found the reason why the development of the Hindoo dramatic literature was so much earlier than that of China. A thing like the drama spreads through the encouragement of the rich and of the courts of kings. The people adopt what is popular at court. The Greek drama would be favoured by the Greek kings in India, and play-writers would spring up in India to supply a demand for intelligible plays in Sanscrit and in the patois of the time. The great age for the growth of elegant amusements in China was that of T'ang Ming Huang.[5] The pear-garden in which that Emperor kept three hundred musicians in training has become famous. Play-actors have taken a common name from that institution, and are called *li-yuen-tzŭ-ti*. But what they learned at the time in the Emperor's school was more music than the drama. China had to wait still

for the romance age of her literature before the drama could arise. At last in the thirteenth century novels and plays grew up together with the new colloquial known as *kuan-hua*.

The characters in Chinese plays are arranged under five denominations, *viz., shêng* 生, *tan* 旦, *ching* 淨, *mo* 末 , and *ch'ou* 丑. The hero is *shêng*. He wears a black beard, but his face is not concealed. The style of dress varies according to the age, rank, and character of the hero. *Tan* is a female character, and varies also according to age and other circumstances. If young, kingfisher feathers are put in requisition as ornaments. Youths and boys always perform the female parts. It is forbidden by law for women to go on the stage. The ching is a less important character, and *mo* and *ch`ou* are quite subordinate. Whether these names of costumes are of Chinese or foreign origin is uncertain. In the printed text of the plays, each character has assigned to it that one of the five names which suits it. The play is altered, but the costumes remain. The hero of one appears like the hero of another. The name of the melody to be used in the choral passages is also printed. The music therefore is just that which pleased the ears of people in the Yuen dynasty or the early Ming. Neither a new melody nor a new play has been made for several centuries past. Probably all the plays were made within a period amounting to 200 years, and after that time had expired the dramatic genius of China went to sleep, to wake again at intervals down to this century, but never to sing again with such vigour as six hundred years ago. The two store-houses affording materials to the plays are Chinese history and biography, and the comedy of common life. The authors of the plays study brevity, and have one main object in each play. The aim of all good plays is moral, and some one noble characteristic of man in society is strikingly represented. No prompting is allowed, and the actors do not require it. They are permitted, however, to add to the text, or gag, as they sometimes do. Very good actors receive four or live taels for a day's acting. The plays are short, and eight per, day is the complement to be performed by a

large company of fifty or sixty actors. The acting begins at noon and stops at sunset, except in such dissolate places as Shanghai, where foreign customs have been introduced.

NOTES

[1]Read before the Society on Monday, 22nd December, 1885.

[2] Also called Ts'ui-yun•shan (翠雲山), name of the hills where the chase took place.

[3] See below, page 206.

[4] For literature *see* Cordier, *Bibl. Sin*., p. 819.

[5] From this time forward plays were composed, but none of them have come down to us.