NEW FRENCH DRAMA OF PRESENT LIFE IN CHINA

For the First Time on Any Stage It Is to Be Produced Next Season at the Century Theatre

The Century Theatre, which during the tenancy of George Tyler has produced only one play, will next year make a second experiment, which will be quite as elaborate as "The Garden of Allah" proved to be. This is the drama of Pierre Loti and Judith Gautier, which has never been performed even in France, although it has been in existence for several years. The scene of this unusual play is laid altogether in China. Its characters are Chinese and Manchus, and there is no suggestion of Occidental influence anywhere in the four acts of "The Daughter of Heaven," as the English translator has called the French original "La Fille de Ciel." Four acts compose the play and the first and fourth are divided into two scenes. The period of the play is presumably an epoch only a few years older than our own, although the stage directions require that the costumes of the crowd in the last act shall be of the present day in Pekin. The historical circumstances which suggested the play, however, happened many years ago.

The preface to the play explains that some twenty years ago one of the revolutions which are constantly in course in China succeeded so well that a Ming descendant was proclaimed Emperor at Nankin. He was of pure Chinese blood and reigned for seventeen years concurrently with the Tatar Emperor at Pekin. His reign was known as the period of heavenly peace. It was not until after his death that every written word concerning his reign was suppressed by the powers in China. Histories were destroyed, manuscripts burned and pictures confiscated in order that there should remain no written record of this successful rebellion. The body of the Emperor was later disinterred and after being burned was thrown to the winds.

Thus was the last government of the Mings wiped out of existence and since that day Tatar supremacy has never been disturbed. It is in the province of Nankin that the first three acts of "The Daughter of Heaven" are laid. The last act plays in Pekin. Some idea of the vastness of a country which makes possible such a rebellion may be gathered from the existence of this rebellion during seventeen years before the imperial authorities at Pekin learned enough about it to march on the happy people who were in their lives carrying on the best traditions of the real Ming dynasty. It was their horror at learning of this happy corner of the empire which led to the brutalities that marked the conquest of these people. The imperial army which swept down on them from Pekin left alive scarcely one of the citizens of this happy province. Blood flowed through the streets of the capital of Nankin, thousands were slaughtered in their fields and many were carried up to Pekin to die there in the public place of execution. Complete annihilation of this province which had dared to rebel and gain its old freedom and then exist for seventeen years according to the laws of its old blood was the object of the authorities at Pekin.

The vast size of China may be understood from the fact that this province with its capital at Nankin consisted of sixteen smaller provinces and 600 towns. It took in reality three years for the imperial forces to subdue the rebel army, which then numbered more than 100,000 men, of whom not one would surrender. Many of the women hanged themselves, some threw themselves into the lakes in the gardens of the palace, which had been fired by the invaders. The Emperor of the rebellious province took poison after he knew that the province had again been lost, but that did not prevent the soldiers of the Emperor at Pekin from disinterring the body of this distinguished and learned man in order to burn his body and scatter the ashes to the winds. For three days and three nights Nankin was pillaged and the citizens murdered by the armies from Pekin. In the drama this action is confined to two weeks.

It is on this historical but modern episode in the existence of China that the play of Pierre Loti and Judith Gautier is founded. Its interest is of course much more timely than George Tyler thought when the drama was selected to open the regular season of the Century Theatre next autumn. There have been few dramas of contemporary life in China which show that country free from the influence of the Occident. In this play Chinese character is not contrasted with the types of other nations. It is the old China of the earliest period of the race with the conquering Manchus opposed to them that gives its interest to this novel drama. Then it must be borne in mind that the two authors of this work are literary lights of international reputation. Pierre Loti is famous the world over. Judith Gautier, a daughter-in-law of the more famous Theophile, is not unknown here as a playwright and indeed as author of a play of Japanese life. "Heart of Ruby" is one of the dramas by her which Augustin Daly gave some years ago at his theatre.

The personality of the hero, who in the play is called Emperor of Pekin, deserves some further description. It is impossible not to confound him with Kuang Hsu, although no name is mentioned in the play. This is the shadow Emperor who was so long under the domination of the Dowager Empress and was never during his term of government more than a figurehead, rarely seen in public and even more rarely accessible to his courtiers. There was, however, a noted Chinese reformer who believed that there existed in this person some qualities that might be developed. This was a man called Kan You Wey. He hoped that between all the enemies in China there might be some sort of a reconciliation and believed that the Emperor might be brought to sympathize with this plan of relief for his country, since he had reason to think that he might not be quite so indifferent to the good of his country as he was painted by his enemies.

So Kan You Wey moved to Pekin. There he opened a school to teach his views. This happened in 1889. He knew the varied stories concerning the Emperor living immured in the deepest recesses of the imperial palace in the Forbidden City. He was benevolent, cultured, curious as to all modern progress, said one, while according to the testimony of another he was feeble minded, weak in body and addicted to every physical excess. The reformer did not wish to believe any but the pleasant and encouraging accounts of the ruler from whom he hoped to gain so much for the relief of his country. Atfer nine years of struggle he finally, through the influence of one of his students, obtained access to this mysterious ruler. He laid his plan, already prepared in the form of a memorial, before the young ruler. At once his thoughts were alive to its possibilities. He was eager to know more. He made of the man who had awakened his mind to the actualities of life his Prime Minister and his intimate friend and through his wise advice he was able to assert some of the power to which his lofty post entitled him.

This is the hero of "The Daughter of Heaven." The counsellor is the character called in French *Puits des Bois*. It is in him that one recognizes the reformer who after so many struggles succeeded in putting the plans for saving his country before the Emperor. Not many years have passed since these two characters were on earth. But in spite of their confusion with the two leading masculine figures in the play it must not be thought that they are purely historical. They are but the foundations on which the writers have based their ideas.

The first act of "The Daughter of Heaven" opens in the gardens of the Palace of Nankin. Everything is in readiness for the crowning of the young Queen as regent for the youthful Emperor, who is only eight years old. The servants are hanging out banners and wreaths, blooming shrubs add to the beauty of the vista, which is further ornamented by the little ponds, lakes and brooks with their curved marble bridges which are so important a part of the usual Oriental landscape. The roofs of yellow porcelain turned up at the ends and ornamented with dragons and other monsters are seen in the distance, while in the foreground is the pavilion of the maids of honor with a latticed balcony.

The servants tell of the great preparations for the fête and one has been fortunate enough to witness the arrival of a guest. This was no less a person than the viceroy from the provinces of the South, the most important guest at the celebration. His appearance made a profound impression on the gardener, who describes him to the others. After a scene between the maids of honor of the Empress Dowager which is not unlike an episode from "The Mikado" with the three little maids as its protagonists, the *Emperor of Pekin* accompanied by his Minister, *Puits des Bois*, enters the garden from the pavilion provided for such a high dignitary as the viceroy by the authorities at Nankin. It is from the conversation between the Emperor and his companion that one learns the real identity of the so-called viceroy from the provinces of the south. He is in reality the Tatar Emperor of China, the traditional enemy of the woman whose son is to be emperor of this rebellious section of his country when he is old enough to assume the rights of a ruler. In the meantime his mother is to serve as regent.

It is to lay eyes on this woman of whose beauty he has already heard so much that the Emperor has taken such risks as to present himself among his enemies. He is of course thought to be the viceroy, whom he has had kidnapped by his people in order that he may impersonate him. Nobody has ever seen the viceroy, who has been in his remote province, and it is quite possible for another to impersonate him, since the real man has been kidnapped and put on a ship, his credentials and his belongings seized.

The Emperor is quite fearless as to the outcome of his escapade, but the counsellor *Puits des Bois* is not so comfortable and is constantly apprehensive lest the young man should betray himself. But the Emperor, who shows himself in the light of a poet and dreamer who has undertaken this sally into the enemy's country because he is in love with the Empress without ever having seen her, does not even dread the ordeal of having to appear at the consecration of the regent and deliver the welcome from her subjects in the provinces of the south. There is an indication of the tragedy which is so soon to enter the play when the counsellor tells the Emperor that he thinks he saw in the corridors of the palace two Tatars from the palace at Pekin, who can only be spies, if in reality they are the men he takes them for. The eunuchs arrive to take the maids of honor in their palanquins to the ceremonies in the palace. Then a child accompanied by its guardians crosses through the royal gardens. It is the little Emperor and he makes friends with the disguised rival from Pekin, so that when they part, in spite of the protestations of his nurses, who warn the stranger that nobody is allowed to remain in the presence of the youthful ruler, there is a touching scene between the two in which the boy gives his pinwheel to the stranger, who in turn presents to him a priceless jewel.

"You may give this on my behalf," says the boy as he gives the pinwheel to the Emperor, "to your son."

"I have no son," is the answer of the other, who is as royal as the child, who has no suspicion that he is talking to the man whose subjects are soon to play such an important part in his life.

"How sad," the boy answers. "Then keep it yourself to remember a child that has no father."

"Thank you," says the Emperor as he draws a jewel from his belt. "Take in exchange this jewel in memory of a man whose great desire would be to have you for a son."

Amid the noise of commands and the cries of soldiers and drivers bringing the guests to the solemn consecration of the Queen as regent for her son, the first scene of the play ends.

The second scene of the first act shows the throne room of the palace of Nankin. The Empress is on the throne with her son seated by her. Back of her stand the maids of honor holding the feather canopies in their hands. The bodyguards bear censers which send their fragrant smoke to the roof. The mandarins, the officers of the court and the dignitaries of the empire are seated within the room on platforms of varying levels. The smoke from the censers, containing incense from Tibet, softens the glaring brilliancy of the scene, which represents the greatest possible luxury in China's decorative art. Outside the throne room the palanquin of the Empress is seen with its dragon of gold and in the background are banked the singers of the chorus and the musicians with their weird national instruments. Further still in the background is to be distinguished the movement of the crowd which cannot find places in the throne room. In front of the throne on a nestrade are dancers dressed as warriors who stand immovable during the ceremony. All are seated except the Empress and her little son.

The high priest presents to the Empress the seals of the empire and amid the plaudits of her subjects and to the singing of the national hymn of the Ming dynasty she is declared the regent for her son. She thanks the court. It is then the turn for the viceroy of the southern provinces to make his address. The Emperor is guided toward the throne by the master of ceremonies. The little Prince standing by his mother recognizes his friend in the garden, and shows him the jewel about his neck which the Tatar Emperor gave to him in the garden. Then the Emperor shows the boy the corner of the pinwheel concealed in his dress. The Empress in surprise questions her son with a look, but the boy only smiles mysteriously and presses himself against her gown.

Slowly the Emperor of Pekin, supposed by all the court and everybody but the councillor who stands silently by him, to be the viceroy of the southern provinces prostrates himself before the Empress. Then in a very impassioned speech she suggests his great ambition to see her sitting on the throne of the Ting Emperors of Pekin. The audience, of course, aware that he is the Emperor of Pekin, can of course read in his words an offer of marriage to the principal figure in the rebellious empire.

"O divine Majesty," he begins, "why should I, your slave, and at this moment one of the first dignitaries of your court, why should I, in truth, be such a little thing? Why is my will, so fervently desirous of creating for you a united and triumphant progress, so powerless? In view of my inability to conquer any fate that threatens you what a tumult of desires and emotions perplexes my soul!

"See, however, to what extent the celestial brilliancy of your presence enlightens and inspires me. A dazzling light that emanates from your Majesty seems to drive the fogs from the horizon and to pierce the shadows, and I see you down there in the great city of the Tings. I see you seated and all powerful on the throne, indeed, of the Tatar Emperor. The immense empire, united and pacified, stretches under your feet as a carpet of glory.

"No, destiny will never be able to be cruel to you. Before your sacred person war will never avail. Do not for certain persons superior to the common level the laws of heaven and the laws of the world seem to yield? Remember that favorite, once so beautiful, who formerly conquered the sovereigns among your ancestors. When the day came which robbed of imperial favor, she was handed over to the executioners, quietly she looked at them and when they waved their swords she smiled as her only defense. Then they threw their arms at her feet, because nobody could feel the courage to resist this radiant smile."

This speech ends the act with great excitement among the subjects of the regent, who are unable to understand the enthusiasm which inspires the viceroy of the South to such a rhapsodical prophecy. The Empress answers him in these words before she slowly descends from the throne and surrounded by her followers enters her palanquin with the golden dragon:

"Thank you, my noble subject. Your during words have surprised us, but they have also charmed us. The tragic conditions of my investiture are an excuse for the ardent thoughts and this unusual discourse. Your prophetic vision has moved us profoundly. Thanks to you and thanks to all."

With the translation of the Chinese national hymn sung by the chorus to the alternate sounding of the great bell and the drum, the curtain falls.

The second act passes outside the pavilion of the Empress, but in the grounds of the palace. The stage is empty when the curtain rises and the breeze sets tinkling the little bells suspended on the corners of the roofs. It is nearly morning but the Empress appears followed by her women. She has had a dream which was disquieting. She was about to become the prey of a serpent with shining scales. So soon as he had attacked her, he slowly began to suffocate her within his coils. Fascinated by his staring eyes, she had not the force to struggle. Languid and inert, she allowed herself to submit without believing that any fate but death was in store for her. To the terror and suffering that she had first felt, however, there succeeded a languor almost delightful. A supreme effort of will finally freed her from the serpent's grasp and awakening from her dream she almost regretted that she had not succumbed to the serpent's attack.

It is to find the meaning of this dream that she sends two of her women to search for the astrologer. He tells her that the serpent that she saw was the dragon of China, which was coming to her to rob the Phenix of her treasures and to carry her away. The Phenix, however, did not understand the purpose of the dragon, beat her wings and escaped. That signified that she would escape from the terrible storm which the dragon brought after him. It takes the subsequent events to explain to the audience what this prophecy meant. The Emperor in whose society she already found such pleasure, is not a serpent, since he has no idea of making war against her. But it turns out that the two Tartars seen in the first act and recognized by the Councillor to the Emperor of Pekin were in reality spies from that court. Already the Manchu army is moving toward Nang-King. An attempt to kidnap the little Emperor reveals their presence in the court and the fact that the life of the child Emperor is in danger. He is sent away to another part of the province for safety and the war of the two hostile tribes has commenced.

Of course there is no chance for salvation for the small forces in the palace of Nang-King, nor can the province hold out against the thousands of Tartar soldiers sent from Pekin to destroy it. The deception of the Tartar Emperor is in a measure discovered by the courtiers, although it is not known who he is. The real Viceroy of the southern provinces, however, has been discovered. The Empress, as she is called while acting as Regent for her son, refuses to believe that the stranger can be evil; since the instinct of children in such matters is always right.

When the disguised Emperor leaves the Regent it is with the vow always to watch over her and indeed with the hope of ultimately making her his wife.

"Ah, how I should love," says the Emperor in their final scene in the second act, "to be that Tartar Emperor who rules at Pekin."

"What a sad and strange idea," the regent answers. "You long to be my mortal enemy. Why, then?"

"In order to attempt," the disguised Emperor says, "to put all of China at your feet, to do whatever good I could for you and afterward to become your most faithful subject."

"What a dream," the regent answers. "From this Emperor I would be able to accept nothing but death. Don't desire to be anybody but yourself, for nobody has ever wakened in me such a sudden and deep sympathy. Do not leave the palace any more. Await my orders. Since you have not ambition I wish to have it for you and to keep you near me."

As she waves a farewell to him the stranger bows and says to her:

"Whether from near or far my thoughts rest always prostrated at the feet of your Majesty."

As he leaves her he turns to his faithful councillor, who is waiting to say to him:

"Dear friend, in my disguise I have triumphed. For the first time in 300 years a Chinese woman loves a Tartar."

The third act shows the war far advanced. The palace has been destroyed. All that remains is the citadel in which the Empress has taken refuge with some of the court. The Tartar invaders are marching to take this spot in which few of the necessities of life are any longer to be found. The Empress as well as her maids of honor are provided with poison with which to end their lives when the last hope of rescue is gone. Under a flag of truce the Tartar Emperor enters the citadel.

The regent recognizes him as the mysterious stranger at the consecration, whom she accuses of having visited Nang-King as a spy, but she does not know that he is the Emperor. He has come to save her. She reproaches him with the weakness of his Emperor who never appears among his troops to encourage them, but hides in his place in Pekin while she, the Daughter of Heaven, and Invisible, goes from one warrior to another to keep up his spirits for the struggle. The Emperor continues to speak only as the ambassador of his ruler in Pekin, without revealing his identity. She blames herself to him for having yielded to her feelings for him when they first met.

"In the perfume of incense," she says to him in the shattered citadel of the remains of her palace, "in the pomp and circumstance of that day I had the weakness of a woman, but not to-day. You will find me more remote and more inaccessible, exactly because I am conquered and am going to die."

"O sovereign!" he says, kneeling before her, "never before were you more sacred to me than to-day. Do not take offence at my language and for a little while longer let me retain my mask and my mystery. Only listen to this: After I had escaped from that very palace in which two weeks ago you appeared to me in your imperial splendor I rushed to Pekin to demand of this Emperor whom you so much hate to bring to an end this horrible war.

"On the way I learned that the Tartar troops were marching like the thunderbolt toward your city. I retraced my steps, and with all the possible haste of my horses and my ships, to give myself the orders for peace and a truce. I have the right to do that. Look at this seal which gives me in the name of the Tings the fullest powers. You have already said that I am one of those whom nobody would dare to disobey, at least before me when I am speaking. Consent only to give to your men the signal which will ask for clemency. Not a pavilion will fall and not one of their heads will be lost. I swear it to you."

"In order to offer me that, Prince," the Regent answered, "it would be necessary for you to be of royal blood. The Daughter of Heaven never accepts the mercy of a Tatar."

In vain the Emperor tries to persuade the Regent to allow her men to sue for peace. She finally orders them to surrender. But she is delighted when the captain reports to her that of the few who survive not one will consent to treat for peace. They would rather face certain death than accept mercy from a Tatar. So she dismisses the Emperor of Pekin and then with her women she goes into the tomb of her ancestors, which is closed and cemented by the men, who have decided to burn the citadel and meet their deaths in this way rather than surrender to the Tatars, who are already without the door of the citadel.

"I too am dead as you," the Empress says to her soldiers as she turns when the door of her tomb has been opened. "Know that well. It is only too late that I am taking my flight. Already I am a dead woman, dead to all which is not a part of vengeance to the fury of battle and hate without mercy. I close on myself the door of bronze forever. Seal tightly, my friends, on your Empress. Roll up the great rock. Wall well in her tomb the living dead."

As the Tatars demand entrance the soldiers wall up the door of the tomb. The smoke which rises from the pile of logs which they have lit in the centre of the stage gradually overcomes the martyrs who have sacrificed themselves to their pride of race. The two scenes of the last act pass in Pekin. The first shows the place of public execution. There many of the Ming captives are to be beheaded. The murders are stopped by the orders of the Emperor and thus is saved Prince Fidele, Minister to the Empress Regent. She is not seen until the second act reveals the throne room of the palace in the Forbidden City.

She is a captive there. The forces of the Tatar Emperor have found her in the tomb and brought her to Pekin. Her son has been killed and already a great funeral procession is accompanying his body to the tomb of the emperors. In vain the Emperor leads the Empress Regent to his throne and begs her to become his bride. She shall share his throne, they will in their happy union wipe out the old hatred between the two races. She refuses. Only death is to be her fate. She begs death from the hands of her captor, whom she loves as deeply as he now loves her. But she cannot remain even on the throne with her conqueror. She must die. She swallows the poison which he takes from his belt, and, wrapped in his arms, dies. He summons the crowd and as the Empress lies against the foot of the throne he bids them fall on their knees to salute the Empress, while the bells chime as if for the death of a god.

This is the new play which is to succeed "The Garden of Allah" at the Century Theatre. It is in book form, profoundly moving, and it seems to be a play. So it ought to act. The last act is especially fine in its tragedy, which is kept at the most exalted point always. The play will be acted simultaneously at Her Majesty's Theatre in London.

Pierre Loti in the uniform of an officer in the French Navy.

Pierre Loti and Judith Gautier Have Collaborated in Writing a Striking Play, Full of Interest

WAYS OF KEEPING COOL IN CUBA

"Are you a Cuban?" I asked of the sailor who was taking me about Havana harbor," writes a correspondent of the *Outlook*.

He answered my question with another: "Can a Cuban sail a boat?"

Then he added, "No, Señor; we have to come over here from Spain to sail the Cubans' boats for them. And there are many of us in Cuba for that and for other labors more than a hundred thousand. Some come from Galicia, where I come from; some from the Canary Islands."

All this in Castilian Spanish. I had suspected as much. Looking more closely at the sailor I saw that his lean face resembled those of the north of Spain. There are, as he said, very many Spaniards still in Cuba and, for their benefit to boating hereabouts, it is not to be regretted.

Every day about noon a breeze springs up here. It cools you a bit after the great heat of the city much too hot for most Northerners and you sit for a long time in your sailboat, tacking about the two and a half mile wide inner harbor.

Then you sail back to Havana, and opposite the landing place enter a quaint restaurant. Mounting to the second story esplanade, you order your fish in a paper bag and other sea delicacies, and then, looking out from amid the potted shrubs, settle down to the enjoyment of a new view of the harbor.

In it are craft of all sorts from transatlantic steamers and the great Standard Oil boats to the coastal steamers and freighters, the harbor lighters, the motor boats and yachts, the sailboats and rowboats with that fascinating cover over the aft part, like the craft on the Italian lakes, to keep off the southern sun from the too sensitive voyager.

The harbor unites the strenuous with the serene. Unloading and loading means a lot of labor. And yet the labor seems to go on unnervously, perhaps because of the tropical climate, which discourages overexertion.

Alongside there is one of the good old buildings characteristic of Cuba or Spain, well adapted to a southern climate, with dignified proportions, with two high ceilinged floors, with balconies and broad windows. The building is painted a cool gray.

A little further along the new Havana jostles the old in the shape of a structure several times as large, with at least three times as many floors, not as high between joints, and with narrower windows, some arranged in groups of two or three and with hot looking mahogany colored shades, the building itself being painted a warm olive.

Furthermore, instead of the usual flat roof, appropriate to the tropics, this particular roof is surmounted by a red dome over which sways a gilt and doubtless disgusted Diana. Now there are reds and reds. And some may be a grateful color feature even in the South.

For instance, take the soft reds of the tiled roofs of the dock sheds, or the marvellous reds, as time has developed them, splashy and well nigh iridescent, over there on the long Cabaña wall, a fascinating old wall in any light, and, like the hills along the Nile, apparently preserving sunset colors at noonday.

While the newer Havana hotels seem Americanized the older are true to their Spanish origin. I think of one in particular. It is in the heart of the lower city away from the fashionable Prado. Instead of making every inch pay in small rooms and corridors it is built around a spacious patio, or central hall, running up two or three stories and buttressed with massive pillars. The corridors are merely balconies carried around the four sides of the patio on each floor. Instead of glaring white walls here are wainscots of Spanish tiles in delicately modulated yellows and blues.

Our American Legation has long been housed in an edifice with such a noble court; but now that the legation must be moved, there is difficulty in getting in a new building, as dignified and appropriate architecture, no matter how great the advantage of modern conveniences, and more appropriate location. Our consulate is well lodged on the top floor of the new Bank of Cuba building. But, though such a modern place is efficient in labor saving, as one looks at the homely stories superimposed on the really fine façade of the lower stories the effect is only one of an architectural aberration.

In this hot place much attention is necessarily given to cooling off. The tiled floor of your room helps to that end. The room itself, with a ceiling twenty feet high, helps. Of course a bath helps, and the best hotel I know advertises "every room with a bath." Even a cigar—albeit a hot and not a cold thing—helps, one reason being, I fancy, that it costs about half as much as in the United States. But, most of all, a piña fria helps—a pineappleade, to coin a word. There are other seductive drinks; for instance, orchata (milk of almonds) and naranjada (orangeade). But the piña fria caps the climax.

Another way to cool off is to drive, or even better to take one of the trams, go to the end of the line, and come back. As few lines are double through the same streets the journey presents the greater interest, going out through one set of streets and returning by another. The tram system offers surprisingly quick and cheap transit to most of Havana and its suburbs. For instance, you go from Jesus del Monte, the highest point south of Havana, through the city of Vedada, the fashionable resort of the sea, a distance of some ten miles, for 5 cents. And at Vedada there are suburban residences worth seeing. They are often embowered in gorgeously flowering vines, even better worth seeing.