

THE CHINA-MAN AND HIS "PHONE"

"HOLAR, MUT YEAR HO SO?"

SO SAYS THE CHINAMAN WHEN HE WANTS A TELEPHONE NUMBER.

CHINATOWN HAS A NEW CENTRAL.

JUST ESTABLISHED IN DUE FORM WITH THE JOSS ALL HANDY FOR CELESTIAL WORSHIP AND MOTTOES OF GOOD LUCK ALL AROUND.

THE MOST SOCIABLE EXCHANGE IN TOWN AND THE MOST INTERESTING.

THE QUEEREST COMBINATION OF ORIENTAL CUSTOM WITH OCCIDENTAL SCIENCE THAT CAN BE FOUND THE WORLD OVER.

THE most curious and interesting telephone office in the world, the Chinese Exchange of the Pacific States and Sunset Telephone Company, has moved into new and more gorgeously Oriental quarters. If you are in the heart of Chinatown watch for a big blue and gold sign and above it a hanging balcony bravely decked with palms and lanterns, and ablaze with color and gilding.

It is a bit of color that is not American, but above it all wave the Stars and Stripes. Go between the big brass signs of the entrance, climb into the dusky atmosphere of the newly painted stairway, pass through a doorway of glass and gilded scroll work, and you are as far away from the ordinary American telephone station as you can imagine.

No dull orthodox office interior greets the eye, no counter with a girl behind it, no glass panels with seemingly miles of girls and switchboards in the vista beyond. Instead there is a big roomful of color and gilding, of sandalwood chairs and embroideries.

In the midst of this prosaic switchboard along one side of the room with the great golden dragon emblazoned above it, makes but little impression. The American visitor looks for the "Hello girl," but he does not find her, for they are all "Hello boys" in this queer exchange. There is probably no other telephone exchange in the world where boys and men are used exclusively as operators.

This very fact explains why this branch office was made necessary in the midst of Chinatown. The list of Chinese subscribers to the telephone company has grown so rapidly that the telephone girls of the city found that the various tongues and dialects employed were more than they could handle understandingly. So the Chinese branch began at 754 Washington street with one wall telephone only, in November of 1887. About six years later it was removed to the southwest corner of Dupont and Washington streets. The quarters there was in a dingy second floor room, like a wedge shaped narrow slice cut off from the front of the dirty yellow building. There was not much more than room for the long switchboard, the two long distance booths, and the busy almond eyed operators. Yet the atmosphere there was a distinctly Oriental one also. In the past year or so business has increased to such a volume that the larger and much more convenient quarters now occupied at 745 Washington street became an absolute necessity. Here all the Chinese telephone business of the town is handled, there being 260 subscribers now on the list and 100 more expected at once as the result of the larger accommodations. These subscribers pay \$250 per month straight, all switches outside of Chinatown being 5 cents extra. It will probably not be long before there will be a list of 500 subscribers doing business through this exchange.

The manager of the telephone system is Loo Kum Shu, an exceedingly affable and intelligent Chinese gentleman, who looks very grand in his stiff silk robes of crimson and blue when taking tea with some swell visitor. He has six operators,



all Chinese men or boys. Little, thin, pleasant faced Ching Soy Sing is the chief operator, and then come the "hello boys." They are Albert Due, Bing Gay, Chin Li, Ching Sing and Wio Park. Three operators are on during the day and three during the evening, while one remains all night. Not the least important of the business of the establishment is done by little 11-year-old Yick Chun, the Celestial messenger boy. He knows Chinatown like a book, and many and varied are the messages he has to take and the places he has to visit. Often he, too, may be found at the switchboard, a coronet of steel on his head and a black receiver over one ear, for he can "operate" with the best of them.

One of the most interesting characters among the "hello boys" is Bing Gay, the dwarf of 20 years, very dexterous in his handling of the "jacks" or plugs of the B-boards, with their numbers ranging from "China 00" to "China 230." He is bright, having reached a grade of 88 per cent in his studies in the public schools. It is a treat to see Bing Gay manipulate the plugs and answer a call. In almost the same second that the indicator falls on the board in front of him his long, slim Oriental hand has reached the plug and placed it, and the Chinese damsel, it may be for the women make great use of the

telephone, has got the call she wants.

There are six local "trunk" lines from this exchange to the main telephone office now, and the number will soon be increased to ten. The principal stores in Chinatown, the restaurants, the families and the clubs all use the telephone, and it would be interesting to hear the varied and sometimes exciting messages that fly over these wires. It is the "good angel" of the gambling-house, for it often tells them of new customers or gives warning of those raiders who may be about to penetrate the inner doors. One can even imagine it a friendly agency, by strategy or stealth, to help the poor slave girl of the dens.

In conversation over the phone it is surprising how much English is used among the Chinese. All are individual lines, and if you want to talk with a Chinese merchant call for China 250, say, and you will almost always get an English "Hello! Who is this?" in return. But often at the switchboard after the "hello" of the operator you will see him shake his queue in a deprecatory way and then call in a mellow voice, "Holar! Mut year ho so?" This is Chinese for "Hello! What number do you want?" and you know that the rest of the conversation will probably be carried on in that language. The Chinese operator has to have a good

The Camera to Detect Crime.

PROBABLY no human invention has aided the course of justice to a greater extent than the snap-shot camera. It has been instrumental in condemning criminals, and has also been the means before now of saving innocent lives.

A case in point is that of Alfred Grayson, an Englishman who was living a few years ago at Rio de Janeiro. He was accused of the murder of a Brazilian named Linares, a clerk in the same office with himself. The two were known to have quarreled some days previous to the Sunday on which Linares met his death. Apparently, however, they had made up their differences, for they went out sailing that day on a small yacht which Grayson had hired.

In the evening Grayson brought the dead body of Linares home. His story was that the latter had fallen from the mast and fractured his skull. But medical evidence was of opinion the wound on the head had been made with a stick or oar. An oar was missing from the yacht's dingy. The mast-climbing story, too, sounded improbable, for the rigging was all worked from the deck. Taking the recent quarrel into consideration, and Gray-

son's well known violent temper, the case was black, indeed, against the Englishman. The coroner's jury had already found him guilty of murder, when a passenger on a Marseilles steamer, which had arrived in Rio on the Sunday afternoon, came forward with a new piece of evidence.

This was a snap-shot photograph taken as the vessel entered the harbor. Far away, under the cliffs, a tiny vessel was sailing, and against the white sail was a dark mark which a powerful magnifier proved to be a falling man. By an almost miraculous coincidence the camera had been snapped just as Linares fell. The photograph turned the scale in Grayson's favor.

Almost equally curious is the way in which a photograph aided justice in the Cooper murder case. Cooper was assisting a young blacksmith named McKenna in a Lanarkshire village. Both men were known to be fond of the same girl. One day Cooper was found dead on the floor of the smithy. He had been poisoned with carbolic acid. McKenna was suspected, but there was no proof whatever of his having ever bought or owned any carbolic acid, while Cooper



Photography an Aid to Justice.

provided with a kodak had passed through the village on the very morning of the murder. Attracted by the quaintness of the old forge, he had taken several snap-shots of it. The photographer went on to stay in an out-of-the-way part of the Highlands and did not hear of Cooper's death for some days. Then he hastened to develop his plates. Plain in one of the pictures were three bottles on a shelf. Two were beer bottles, the third was unmistakably one of those fluted blue glass bottles in which poisons are sold. It had also a label on it, and though the wording on this could not be read, yet on the strength of this evidence the police made a thorough search of McKenna's premises. They found the remains of the bottle in question in an old well and proved that it had contained carbolic acid. Then McKenna confessed his guilt.

The more recent developments of scientific photography must make the criminal feel less secure than he used to be. One of those thieves who make a living by van-robbing got an unpleasant shock one day in March last. He had safely got off with a tub of butter, which he had stolen from the tail of a wagon as it was crossing a

bridge in Rochester, N. Y. The deadly witness against him was a photograph taken by telephotography from the top of a neighboring high building.

Hindoo criminals succeed by long practice in forming a little bag in their throats, into which they can guide jewels when they steal them. Last September a native was arrested for stealing a diamond worth 10,000 rupees from a jeweler's window in Calcutta. But as the evidence was only circumstantial and possession unproved he would have been liberated had it not occurred to the police to have an X-ray photograph taken of his throat. That showed the gem safely hidden in the little sac. The thief was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, but he still refuses to give up the diamond.

The Roentgen ray photography has also been instrumental in adding several thousand pounds to the customs revenue of Buenos Ayres within the last year. Valuable jewelry and packages were being paid was known to be coming into the country in letters or stamped packages, so the law-breakers were unchecked. At last, in June, 1900, several registered letters and packages were examined under X-rays in the presence of the Argentine Postmaster General. Sixty-six suspected packages contained £4000 worth of jewelry, and were, of course, all confiscated.

This luxurious part of the office is used as a sort of waiting-room for those who are waiting for messages, long-distance calls, etc. Here a pleasant custom is introduced into business life that makes the American telephone offices seem thousands of miles away. No one is being treated hospitably while waiting, according to the Chinese idea, unless he is offered a cup of fragrant tea or a pipe of tobacco. So the richly chased little cups with their saucer-like lids are always about, and Ching Soy Sing is often very busy brewing a steaming golden beverage. Then, if you drop into the office at just the right time, you may see a picture. Here in one of the gorgeous chairs sits a Chinese merchant, waiting to send a message and beguiling the minutes with a cup of tea and a curious looking water pipe. The mother of one of the operators has dropped in for a chat, and she shuffles around smilingly, carrying in her arms a baby San Toy, swathed in brilliant embroidery and wearing a wonderful headdress. Through an open door you catch a glimpse of a group of Orientals busy with rice and chopsticks. You go lingeringly down the stairs, fearful lest the spell be broken, and the last thing that floats down to your ears is the strange call: "Holar, mut year ho so?"

PHOTOS BY WEIDNER.

WAITING ROOM FOR CUSTOMERS

THE TELEPHONE JOSS AND HIS SHRINE

THE MANAGERS CUP OF TEA

THE OPERATOR AND ASSISTANTS

THE FIRST CHINATOWN CENTRAL