

CHINESE MASONRY.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CHEE KUNG TONG, A SECRET ORGANIZATION.

Revolutionary in its Original and Present Purpose—Thirty-three Cast Iron Oaths in the Ritual—Punishment of a Faithless Member—His Disgrace.

"What, may I ask, was the subject of your ponderings? Had that roll of papers anything to do with them?"

"Yes; they are notes gathered by an old partner of mine, who devoted himself to a study of the Chinese people and their customs. I've got a moment's case done there, and when I have nothing else to do I amuse myself by reading some of them. I have gained a great deal of information from them, which is frequently of considerable assistance to me in my practice."

"Tell me; what is the story contained in those papers in your lap?" said the reporter, instinctively producing his note book and pencil.

"It's a brief history of the Chinese order of Masons. Now, I suppose you think their's is like all other Masonry, and a branch of the great organization established by King Solomon. You must disabuse your mind on that score, if such is your opinion. To be sure, it is a society for mutual protection, but its original and present purpose, as well, is entirely revolutionary. The birth of the order occurred soon after the Mongolians invaded China and established the present Ming dynasty, which is nearly 400 years old. The society was composed of the old Chinese nobles and their followers, who were opposed to the new emperor. Their numbers were naturally small at first, but the years added to their strength. Each member educated his children to a belief in the doctrines of the order, until now their numbers include nearly one-third of the entire population of the empire. There are also about 30,000 in the United States. The influence of the society is naturally very great, and its members have much to do with the formation of Chinese affairs of state.

ORIGINATORS OF REBELLIONS. "From its inception, four centuries ago, the society has instigated innumerable rebellions, and all the members naturally imbued a strong martial spirit. As a consequence, the order has developed many famous soldiers, and among them the great Gen. Loy Yee, who, at the age of 80 years, was the commander-in-chief of all the forces of the empire. His appointment to this position was, of course, a measure adopted by the emperor to conciliate the society to which he belonged. Many of China's foreign ministers also owe their positions to this policy. Being statesmen of great ability, they naturally become a power to be feared by the government, and are accordingly appointed as ambassadors to some foreign court in order to get them out of the way. Chin Lin Pan, the first minister to the United States, was one of these, and, if the truth were known, I would not be surprised if every minister since was a Chinese Mason, or a member of the Chee Kung Tong, as the society is called.

"You will gain some idea of the strength of this organization when I inform you that the great Tai Ping rebellion of '57 was brought about by its leaders, and fought by its soldiers. The famous armies known as the 'Black Flags and Yellow Flags, which performed such bloody work in Tonquin during the recent war with France, were also composed entirely of the members of the Chee Kung Tong, and led by its officers. The headquarters of the order are in the district of Quing Ton, or Canton, as it is known to us. It is from there that the orders are so vitally affect the policy of the Chinese government, and which in time may overturn the throne and establish a new dynasty. The queue worn to-day by the Chinese people is a symbol of the society, and the emperor, and is a constant reminder to them of their subjection.

THIRTY-THREE CAST IRON OATHS. "The rites of the society? Yes, I know something of them, though there are so many, and in such infinite variety that my knowledge of them is necessarily limited. There are thirty-three oaths to be taken, and regular cast iron ones, too, before an applicant can become a fully constituted member of the society. He can, however, withdraw before taking the last oath, provided he promises eternal secrecy about what he had previously seen and heard of the ritual. If this agreement should be violated, or a member of the order should in any way disgrace himself in the eyes of his brothers, punishment swift and terrible is meted out to him. In China it is death, but in this country that is impossible, though they go through all the formulse of an execution without the final culmination. The accused is always allowed a trial, but is seldom acquitted. The wise men and patriarchs of the order assemble together upon that occasion in some one of their Joss houses, and there the accused and accusers are brought before them. The latter step forward first, and prostrating themselves upon the floor at the feet of the oldest of the wise men, they present their charges.

The accused then prostrates himself and places the foot of the wise man upon his neck as a sign of submission. After this he tells his version of the story, still flat upon his stomach on the floor. When this is over the head man announces his decision in a long and impressive speech, which is interrupted at the end of every sentence by the others prostrating themselves and uttering words of assent. The judge next claps his hands and in comes the executioner with a long sword and a wooden bowl, the latter being for the purpose of catching the blood that is 'met spilled. Going up to the condemned man, who is still lying face downward upon the floor, the executioner raises him to his knees and bares his neck for the fatal blow. Three times the sword is raised and brought down with terrific force until within half an inch of the kneeling man's neck, where it stops. This concludes the ceremony, but the victim's punishment is not yet over, if he happens to be so fortunate as to live in this country. Great placards announcing his disgrace are posted on all the dead walls throughout the Chinese quarter, and as soon as the news becomes known the guilty man is completely ostracized by his old associates, and in fact by all the society."—San Francisco Alta.

Russia's Infant Mortality. Ignorance, violation of all sanitary principles, miserable poverty, the extreme rigor of winter, and neglect by drunken parents are said to be some of the principal reasons why out of 1,000 children born in Russia scarcely 25 will reach their 20th birthday. Statistics show that 345 out of each 1,000 die in the first five years. The Russian government is seeking means to diminish this frightful infant mortality, but with little hope of speedy success, since the main cause can only be eradicated by the progressive education and reformation of successive generations of the people.—New York Sun.

A WONDERFUL SALT WELL.

One Well That Has Produced 203,184,400 Gallons of Salt Water.

One of the greatest wonders of the world and yet comparatively unknown, is the well which for the last sixteen years has been flowing almost pure salt at the rate of over 20,000 gallons per day. It is located in Etina borough, along Pine creek, just opposite the city. The history of the well was related to a reporter by Mr. J. L. Robertson. He said that in the spring of 1872 the firm decided to sink a well to secure natural gas to run their works, and the contract was given to Chaffant & Graff. At a depth of 1,300 feet a salt water vein was struck. Shortly after the tools were lost, and after "fishing" for them for several months they were caught. The well was then drilled to a depth of 2,200 feet, when the tools got lost again, and after spending five months in unsuccessful attempts to recover them it was decided to abandon the well.

A strong vein of gas was found at a depth of 1,000 feet, but there was so much salt water that it could not find its way out. Its pressure was so great, however, that the salt water was forced up nearly ninety feet in the air.

For seven years this salt water continued to flow at the rate of sixty barrels per hour, sometimes more and sometimes less, but never falling short of fifty barrels. It swelled the little brook at its side to a good sized creek and thence poured into the Allegheny river. It was so strong in chloride of sodium as to kill all the fish that came within certain limits of the place where it entered the river. The idea of utilizing the water seems not to have entered any one's mind until about five years after the well began to flow. Several capitalists then conceived the plan of extracting the chloride of sodium from the water and manufacturing salt. For some reason the scheme fell through then, but two years later a company was formed which established the second largest saltworks in the United States, making about 150 barrels of salt daily. After all the salt has been taken from the water it goes through a process which extracts the brine, leaving the water with a proportion of the character of the water from the well. This is a very valuable medicinal product.

When the water leaves the latter works it is perfectly pure and tasteless, except it not for the acids, etc., used in extracting the salt and bromide.

The amount of water coming from the well to-day is as great as when it was struck sixteen years ago. A peculiar feature is that on some days, for a period of about an hour, the well becomes unusually agitated and the pressure simply terrific, requiring the strongest kind of joints and casing to hold the water.

It is almost impossible to comprehend the amount of water this well draws from the bowels of the earth. In sixteen years, at the rate of 20,000 gallons per day, it would have thrown off 203,184,400 gallons of water.—Pittsburg Commercial-Gazette.

Sampling Literary Wares. The late James T. Fields, while he was an active partner in the publishing firm of Ticknor & Fields, was waited upon one morning by a young gentleman—a sugar merchant, who had just returned from a visit to the young man complained that his manuscript poems had been rejected by the firm, and he desired to know the reason why, inasmuch as all of his friends had heard the verses read and declared them to be an invaluable acquisition to American literature.

"Our reader decided that," said Mr. Fields in his blindest tones. "Then I would like to see the reader." Always the personification of amiability himself, the publisher conducted the young sugar merchant upstairs to the reader. That gentleman sat at a desk heaped high with manuscripts. He carefully read a few pages of each manuscript and then dropped them into a basket at his feet. Occasionally he became more than ordinarily interested, and in that case placed the package inside his desk.

"Why, he goes through them just as I sample sugar," explained the would-be poet in great amazement. "That is because he is as familiar with literary wares as you are with sugar," rejoined Mr. Fields.

"I am satisfied," said the merchant. "Let us go." The young bard gave up the writing of verses, but he acquired a large fortune in sugar.—Will M. Clemens, in Detroit Free Press.

Fashions in Tombstones. There are fashions in tombstones, but they change slowly. The styles of the present do not differ much from those of twenty years ago, but a difference is noted in those now fifty or more years ago. There were never columns in those days. As now, the cheaper stones were plain slabs. One of the expensive shapes, which always marked a distinguished grave, was a marble slab laid horizontally on four marble columns, making a sort of a table. The inscription was carved on the top, which allowed plenty of space for verses, which no well regulated gravestone of the last part of the century could have had.

These verses, which read so quaintly now, were always written by the pastor. It was his duty when one of his parishioners died to compose a suitable stanza, and the ministers were always paid for them—a thing that few people would have dreamed of in those days. In olden times nothing but brownstone and sandstone was used. The carving was crude, and one of the requirements of fashion was that every slab should have a human face carved over the inscription. The stylish gravestone to have now is a monument.—New York Mail and Express.

Manuscripts for the Magazine. Magazine Editor—How many new manuscripts came in to-day's mail? Office Boy—Twenty-two, sir. "Well, pick out all that you are able to read and send them back." "I can read all of 'em, sir, except one." "Ah! let me have that—evidently by some noted author."—Omaha World.

Telephones for Divers. Divers in thirty feet of water at Holyoke dam, near Hartford, have kept up communication with the men at the pump by means of telephones. The wire runs down and through the helmet to a small telephone, so that the diver can direct the work of the hoisting engines more directly than by the old system of signals by jerking a life line.—New York Sun.

"Sarcasitic Old Thing!" Husband—I have been making my will, dear. Leaving you everything, with—ah—full power to convey. "Oh, darling, never!" "I—ah—Yes, love. And (with a sardonic chuckle) in that case I shall feel assured there will be at least one who will daily deplore my death."—London Punch.

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