

## CHAPTER X

### PEKING—THE SEA PALACE

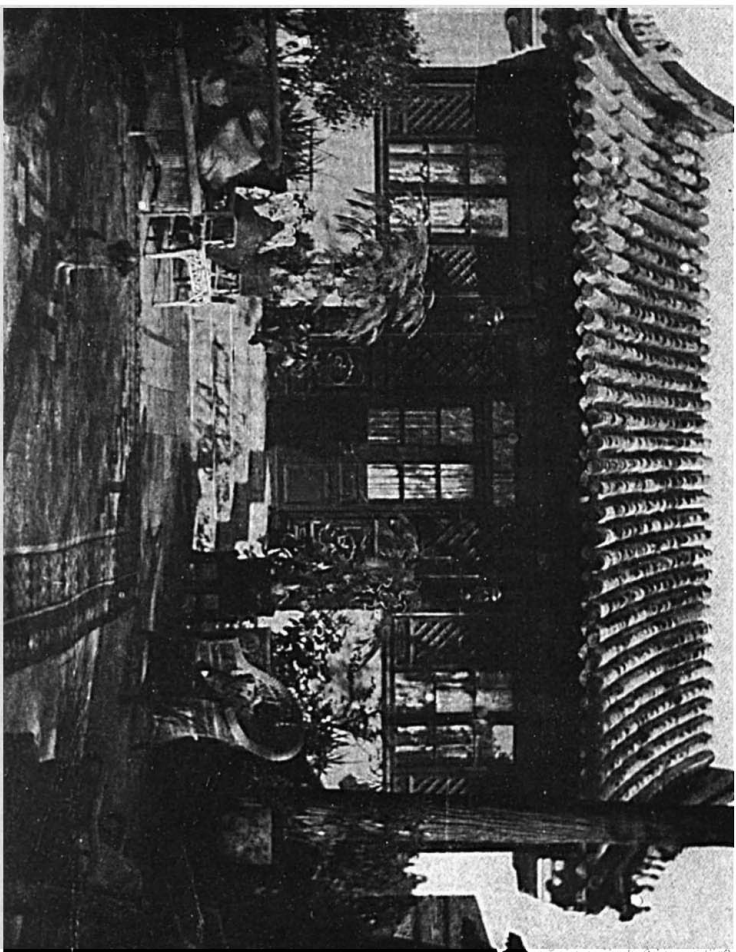
**T**HE Autumnal Sacrifices to his Ancestors and His Majesty's consequent three days' abstinence, to prepare for them, put a stop to further festivities after the Birthday, which would have otherwise continued for several days longer. The day after the Birthday was a quiet one at the Palace. Her Majesty was feeling tired and did not care to pose, after the Audience in the morning. The visiting Princesses and Ladies were preparing to leave the Palace; the eunuchs and Her Majesty's maids were bustling around, preparing for the moving of the Court to Peking, for Her Majesty and the Court, as well as the Emperor, were to go into one of the City Palaces the following day. Her Majesty ordered luncheon to be served in one of the beautiful summer-houses in the gardens, about a mile from the Palace, for she said a change would be good for all.

This summer-house, or rather Palace, situated on a hill overlooking the lake, was one of Her Majesty's favorite resorts. She often went to it, after a tiring Audience, and spent the rest of the day there, lunching and dining, and even taking her siesta there. Whenever she went to any of these Palaces inside the

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inclosure, she always invited all the Ladies of the Court to accompany her. It made a change in the monotony of their lives. This Palace was very luxuriously fitted up, and contained a splendid library, with thousands of volumes of the classics and Her Majesty's favorite authors. The view from its broad verandahs and fair marble terraces was one of the finest, even of the many beautiful ones, in the grounds. We lunched on the wide verandah and drank in the beauty of the scene. No wonder Her Majesty loved this spot! Beneath lay the beautiful grounds of the Summer Palace, with its calm lake and winding streams. On an eminence beyond, the graceful seven-storied pagoda that forms so characteristic a feature in all the views of the Summer Palace, proudly reared its stately height. On the right lay the temple-crowned hills, the upturned roofs of their buildings nestling on their slopes like a flight of gigantic gaily-hued birds, with wings outspread. In the distance, beyond a soft gray undulating landscape, with fields of brilliant green here and there, lay Peking, with its walls and towers, enveloped in a golden haze.

After luncheon and the siesta, Her Majesty called me up and said she was to go into Peking on the morrow, and asked whether I wished the portrait to be taken in for the three days the Court was to remain in the City. She said she would be much occupied with ceremonies and sacrifices, and there would be but little time for painting, but if I wished to work she might be able to give me a short sitting! I told her I did not care to have the portrait taken



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in the City, for I knew it would not be possible to get a room with the same light as that in which I had begun the picture. When she found I did not care to paint in Peking, she suggested that I go to the United States Legation and spend the time of the Court's sojourn at the Sea Palace. It had been more than two weeks since I had seen Mrs. Conger, or been in the Legation quarter, and I was delighted at Her Majesty's kind forethought in allowing me to spend these days at the Legation. She, however, suggested that, as I had not seen the Sea Palace, where the Court was to go, I might enjoy coming there for the day—and spending some of the time in seeing the Palace and grounds. She knew how I enjoyed seeing these beautiful Palaces, and this was another proof of her consideration. She said she would be much occupied with the ceremonies, but that she would map out a nice day for me, and would herself take me for a walk! She added, "This will give you a chance to study me, so your time will not be entirely spent in vain." She said we would resume the portrait on the Court's return to the Summer Palace.

After our return to her Throne-room, and when we had finished dinner, she told me I had better go into the room where the portrait and my materials were kept, when I was not working on it, and said I had better overlook its being put away myself. She followed me into the room, and herself aided and directed the arrangement of things. She ordered the "sacred picture" (for this is what the Chinese call a likeness of a reigning Emperor or Empress) to be attached to the wall with yellow cords and covered with a trans-

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parent yellow silk, box-like screen, which had been especially made to protect it from dust. The portrait was treated, from its very beginning, as an almost sacred object, with the respect a reverent officiant accords the Holy Vessels of the Church. Even my painting materials seemed to be invested with a sort of semi-sacred quality. When Her Majesty felt fatigued, and indicated that the sittings were finished, my brushes and palette were taken by the eunuch from my hands, the portrait removed from the easel and reverently consigned to the room that had been set aside for it.

The next morning early, I preceded the Court into Peking and went directly to the United States Legation, where I was warmly welcomed by my kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Conger. The United States Legation occupied, at this time, a Chinese temple near the "Water Gate." This building had been given to the United States Government by the Chinese after the Boxer rebellion, and was occupied temporarily by the Minister of the United States during the construction of the new Legation on Legation Street. The temple had been transformed into a comfortable American dwelling-place—its Chinese individuality having been preserved wherever possible, consistent with comfort. The shaded court, filled with beautiful, growing flowers (many of them gifts from the Empress Dowager to Mrs. Conger), was a charming spot. While distinctly American as to its artistic comfort and furniture, the interior construction and decoration of the drawing-room were purely Chinese, which gave a touch of Oriental

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“*à leur locale*” to this pleasant haven of American hospitality, where Mr. and Mrs. Conger dispensed their kindly favors.

Mrs. Conger, by her own individual initiative, has done much to bring about a friendly social feeling between the Chinese and foreign ladies. It was she who first thought of entertaining the Princesses and Ladies of the Court in her own home; and the United States Legation was the first of the Legations in Peking to issue an invitation to the Ladies of the Court, or to entertain them. It is the first Legation to entertain other Chinese ladies, wives of officials or of the gentry. Several other Legations have since entertained the Ladies of the Court, but in doing so they were only following Mrs. Conger's initiative. While doing so much to bring about friendly social relations with the Chinese, Mr. and Mrs. Conger receive all Americans, regardless of their importance or social position, with a kind cordiality. I was delighted to be in their charming family circle once more. I found my room at the Legation, with its sweet touches of homeliness, a delightful haven, and my visits to the Legation seemed always like going home.

The next morning, at seven, a green official chair with its bearers came to take me to the Sea Palace. I was first carried to the Hsien-Liang-Hsu, the “Temple of the loyal and virtuous,” where Li-Hung-Chang formerly had his home in Peking, and a part of which the Yu-Kengs had arranged for their home after their return from their mission at Paris, their own semi-foreign house having been destroyed by the Boxers.

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At the Hsien-Liang-Hsu I was joined by the La lies Yu-Keng, and we continued on to the Sea Palace. Our chairs, with their bearers, were preceded and followed by mounted attendants.

The Sea Palace is a comparatively new Palace, most of it having been built within the last fifty years. Our chairs were met at the northern entrance by the same eunuchs who had been set aside for our service at the Summer Palace. They led us to the boats in waiting to carry us across the lake, to the buildings occupied by Her Majesty and the Court. These boats were of the houseboat variety, with an inclosed cabin forming the center, and a platform running all around, on which the rowers walked up and down propelling it. The interior was carpeted, with a cushioned lounge, tea-tables, and chairs. The eunuchs and attendants sat outside on the prow. It takes twenty minutes to row across the lake in one of these boats, but the movement is delightful. When we reached the other side, we landed and went through several courts to that of one of Her Majesty's private chapels. She, herself, had just been making an offering here, and was coming out, preceded by acolytes swinging incense-burners, the musicians playing the "Imperial Hymn." When she saw us, Her Majesty called us to her side, asked if I had had a good trip into Peking, and how Mrs. Conger was. She then ordered the eunuchs to show us our apartments. We were led through corridors and courts to a charming pavilion which was to be our resting-place while at the Sea Palace. It had exquisitely and elaborately carved woodwork arches with heavy satin curtains, which

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divided it into five rooms. After we had rested a few moments here, we returned to the Throne-room. Her Majesty told me she had arranged for me to go out in one of the boats, and that I was to be shown all that I cared to see, or at least as much as I could see in that day. A eunuch standing near her held a number of strips of embroidery in his hand. They were embroidered head-dresses, which are placed upon the heads of the Buddhas during the great ceremonies in the Palace temples. She explained their use to me and then dismissed us, and we went out to the landing-place on the lake.

A number of boats lay at the foot of the steps—among them a charming open barge with blue silken awnings. As I had not been in a boat of this kind before, and as I was told to choose, I selected it for our row; and we started out, followed by several other boats carrying eunuchs and refreshments, with the necessary utensils for serving them. Our head eunuch, one of the six highest in the Palace, who had been appointed to look after me and the “sacred picture,” was very intelligent, an enlightened lover of Chinese art, and a great collector of old Chinese paintings and curios. He had been, in his youth, one of Her Majesty’s favorite players, was said to have great dramatic talent, and, when he was younger, had a fine voice for singing. Memory is among the most esteemed of the intellectual faculties by the Chinese and reaches a high state of cultivation with them. Many of the eunuchs can repeat whole pages from the classics, and some are accomplished literati. This eunuch had a good speaking voice, and recited poems



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and told stories in a charming way. As we were rowed along, he stood at the prow and recited verse after verse of classic lore and told stories of the heroic times. He intoned them like a recitative—the rhythm so perfectly observed, the intoning so musical, it was a pleasure to listen to him, though I could not understand.

I lay back among the cushions, as we glided softly along, past beautiful pavilions, with splendid trees overhanging the lake and lovely flowers growing wherever there was a place to plant them. The tall figure of the splendidly attired eunuch, standing in the prow, repeating, with rhythmic cadence, poems and stories, gave one the illusion and charm of the "Arabian Nights," which I had fed upon in my childhood, and which I seemed to be living through to-day.

We soon came to a tiny islet in the lake, with a sort of open temple built over a black marble tablet which bore an incised inscription. I asked to land and examine it, and San-Gunia, the eldest of Lady Yu-Keng's daughters, a remarkably clever girl and well posted in Chinese literature, translated the characters. The inscription was a poem, a tribute to the Great Father who had graciously placed there this island, which "by night was bathed in the glory of the Moon and Sun-kissed by day, while the crystal waters of the lake formed a brilliant necklace on its breast."

Beyond the island I saw a temple. There was no landing-place, and the temple was under repair. The head eunuch, however, seeing how much I wished to go up, had the boat draw near and steps brought, up which we clambered, as best we could.

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This was one of the temples so ruthlessly destroyed and unnecessarily desecrated by the Allies during their occupation of Peking. We passed through the vegetable garden of the monks—all shorn of its glory, but where a few vegetables and flowers still grew—and we went on through a beautiful grove of arbor-vitæ, with centuries-old trees, planted in the form of a cross, and came into the court of the temple. Even in its dilapidated state, with the workmen still in it, it was beautiful, and before it was so injured it must have been a splendid example of Chinese temple architecture. The cells of the lama monks were now unoccupied, and there were no officiating priests. Workmen were repairing and regilding the Great Buddha, and most of the effigies of the saints and images of the personified attributes were standing in dejected rows in the corridors awaiting the completion of their niches and chapels. The interior, of splendid proportions, glowed in beautiful somber colors. The carved-wood ceilings were in pendative designs, recalling those I had seen in the Alhambra; but the painting, in primary colors, of this elaborately carved ceiling gave it a greater richness of coloring and lent to the interior a warmer, deeper harmony than the white Moorish designs. The chapels behind the high altar were separated from the main temple and from each other by beautifully carved wooden screens, with rich brocaded silk of brilliant green (the color of Buddha), stretched behind the open work and showing through the interstices of the carving. These chapels are for the Sacred writings and for the vestments of the priests, and are also used for robing-

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and retiring-rooms for the officiants. They correspond to the sacristies of the Catholic Churches in Europe.

The space behind the altar was of apse-like form, and opened upon a semi-circular marble terrace, thirty feet high, with a balustrade of the conventionalized lotus design so dear to the Chinese architects. From this terrace we had a beautiful view of the Coal Hill, surmounted by the curious Dagoba, so well known in all views of the Imperial City, as well as of the belvedere that marks the spot where the last Emperor of the Mings committed suicide when he was conquered. At the two extremities of the terrace were charming octagonal summer-houses, where the priests could go for rest and contemplation, and, while murmuring their prayers, could feast their eyes upon a charming view. After a few moments on the terrace, enjoying the beautiful view, we passed through the cells of the monks, which were large and comfortable, and, finally, out again into the sun-flecked shade of the marble-paved court, where we sat under low-hanging boughs of a splendid elm, and the eunuchs brought out tables and served us with tea and refreshments.

Then we took the boats and were rowed on further, till we came beneath a steep battlemented wall, surmounted by the rich green of arbor-vitæ trees. I was surprised to learn that this was another temple, for it looked more like an old feudal castle than a peaceful temple to the mild Buddha. We landed at the foot of the beautiful white Marble Bridge that spans the narrow northern portion of the lake, just under the

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stone wall on which the temple was built. We were carried up the steep, winding incline in our chairs. It was a most picturesque approach, and when we reached the top, with the beautiful temple lying peacefully on these martial heights, we found it well worth the climb.

There was a grove of arbor-vitæ trees leading to this temple. These trees seem to be sacred to the temples and burial-places in China, for all I ever visited in China were either built in a grove of arbor-vitæ, or had some of these evergreens growing near. Did the Greeks get their idea and name of the ever-living tree from the Chinese, who regard the arbor-vitæ as the tree of life and emblem of Immortality? This temple has a great Buddha of white jade, with jeweled stole and cuffs. Its expression of placid contemplation and kindly thought is typically Chinese. When Buddhism was first brought into China from India, the Buddhas had an Indian type; and not until the religion had taken firm hold of the people, was its divinity clothed in a Chinese personality, and a national individuality assumed. The day of our visit, the great jade Buddha was decked in a mantle of Imperial yellow satin, with a richly embroidered Manchu hood, such as I had seen that morning in Her Majesty's Throne-room, on its head. Tall, lighted candles, fresh offerings of fruit and flowers, and the smoking censer standing on the altar, showed there had been services that morning, and added to the religious atmosphere of the interior. The service had been a continuation of the commemorative celebrations in honor of the Emperor's Birthday and his sacrifice to his Ancestors.

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The principal court of this temple is one of the most picturesque in the Sea Palace, shaded by magnificent cedars and stately elms. In the center, there was a magnificent cistern of verd-antique, splendidly carved in dragons. Over this cistern was a marble portico, its columns supporting a curious concave, copper roof. This roof had been a Palace "cooking utensil," that had been used in former times to prepare food for the poor; hence its extraordinary size. When it was worn out in this capacity it was used as the interior of the dome over the temple well, where the poor and weary could come to rest under its shadow and drink of the water of the well it protected. There were cells and outhouses for the monks in this temple also. But as we sat in the shady court, looking across the sunlit lake, the sky became suddenly overcast, and we took our chairs and hurried down the steep, paved road that led from the temple to the lake. We did not take the boats again on reaching the lake, but were carried, in our chairs, across the beautiful Marble Bridge. Just beyond us, we saw the towers of the first Catholic Cathedral ever built in Peking. It was built on land given to the Catholics by the Emperor; but, when finished, its towers were found to overlook the Palace grounds; so the Cathedral was bought by the Emperor, and land was given the Mission further on, and another Cathedral was built. The first Cathedral is now within the Walls of the Sea Palace, and is visible from every part of the grounds of the two Peking Palaces. It seems a strange anomaly to see this Christian Church within the Precincts of the Palace of

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an Oriental potentate, who is one of the representatives on earth of the "Great Buddha."

It began to rain, and the chair-bearers ran along to the Palace without stopping again, and we were soon called to dinner in the Throne-room, overlooking the small Theater, for there are two Theaters in the Sea Palace, one for winter use and one for summer. The latter is built on piles over the waters of a canal. Building the stage over water is supposed to give a peculiar musical resonance to the voices of the actors, softening the sounds and making them more pleasant to the ear.

After dinner in the beautiful summer Throne-room, with the rippling waters just beneath the windows, we made our adieus, first to Her Majesty and then to the young Empress and Ladies, and went out to be again rowed over the beautiful lake to the outside gates. The sun was setting! The arches of the Marble Bridge had become a beautiful, deep violet hue, and spanned the waters of the lake, now a gleaming mass of liquid gold. The sky beyond shone through the masses of foliage with a golden glow, and the towers of the old Cathedral were strongly silhouetted against this brilliant background. The scene was an ideal one. A beautiful silence pervaded everything, made the more rhythmic and intense by the regular movement of the oars in the water. When we reached the other side of the lake we were conducted to our green chairs, which were waiting without the gate, and were swiftly carried back to the Legation.

## CHAPTER XI

### SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF HER MAJESTY—SECOND VISIT TO THE SEA PALACE

I SPENT the next day at the Legation, and thoroughly enjoyed it, but I was glad to think that I was to spend the following day at the Palace again. The study of Her Majesty had now become to me like a thrilling novel. I could not bear to lay it down; and when I was forced to do so, I was longing to be able to resume it. She was such a delightful surprise to me. I had heard and read so much of her, before I went to the Palace, and nothing that I had heard or read had at all prepared me for the reality, so charming, so unusual was her personality. Not charming and interesting by fits and starts, but always so! She was so considerate and tactful, and seemed so really kind in her relations with those who surrounded her. I had been now nearly a month in daily contact with her. I saw her, not only when she sat for the portrait; I was with her the greater part of the day, and I began to let myself go in my admiration of her. The days seemed flat and stale when I could not see her—so full of interest and charm I found her. She was a woman of such infinite variety! There was always something new and fresh to study

## Some Characteristics of Her Majesty

in her. She was the very embodiment of the Eternal Feminine. She was at once a child and a woman with strong, virile qualities. She would go into the Audience Hall, transact weighty affairs of State for three hours, and then go for her walk or excursions, and take a childish interest in the simplest pleasures. She would be seated in one of her Throne-rooms in trivial conversation with her Ladies, when an Official Despatch, in its yellow silk case, would be brought in, and presented by the eunuch on bended knees. Her face would immediately become full of serious interest; she would bend her brows and become the statesman; a few moments later, when she had duly considered, and given orders relative to the despatch, she became again the woman, full of interest in her flowers, dresses, and jewels.

A distinguished Frenchman once said of Her Majesty the Empress Dowager, "C'est le seul homme de la Chine," and she deserves the appellation of "man," if it goes to mean superior intelligence and executive ability; but it was not the "statesman" that I had the best opportunity of studying. It was the woman in her private life; and I had unusual advantages for this study, and the more I saw of her, the more remarkable I found her! Her favors to the Ladies of the Court were very impartially distributed. She had her favorites, but she did not allow them to gain any supremacy over her, nor to warp her judgment. Although her "entourage" never expressed an opinion contrary to hers, in her presence, and though she always accepted their *expressed* views in the most courteous manner, one could see she was not imposed



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upon, and that she knew, perfectly well, their real opinions, so great was her natural penetration.

I was astonished to find in what veneration the Empress Dowager was really held by the Ladies of the Court and her "entourage." Her favorite title, and that by which she has been longest known to the courtiers, is, "Lao-Fo-yeh," the "Old Buddha," which shows that they invest her with sacred qualities. After her return from Hsi-An Fu, where the Court went when the allied troops occupied Peking, and where the sacred Persons of Her Majesty and the Emperor suffered so many hardships and endured them so bravely, the courtiers gave her another, a closer and more affectionate appellation, "Lao-Tzu-Tzung" (The Old Ancestress). This was the title by which she was called in the Palace, by the Emperor, Empress, and Princesses, and by which she allowed me to address her.

On our arrival at the Sea Palace, the day of my second visit there, after making our bows to Her Majesty, we started, in our chairs, to the Hall of the Mongolian Princes. This is a magnificent hall in the northeastern part of the park, some distance away from Her Majesty's and the Emperor's Palaces. It is of one story, as usual, but this nearly forty feet high. The interior is spacious, with only a few dragon tables and chairs and no ornaments or other furniture. There is a raised dais at the back, with several steps leading up to it. Upon the dais stood a splendid Throne of archaic design, and over the Throne there are two huge tablets of black marble, with inscriptions in Chinese and Manchu characters. This

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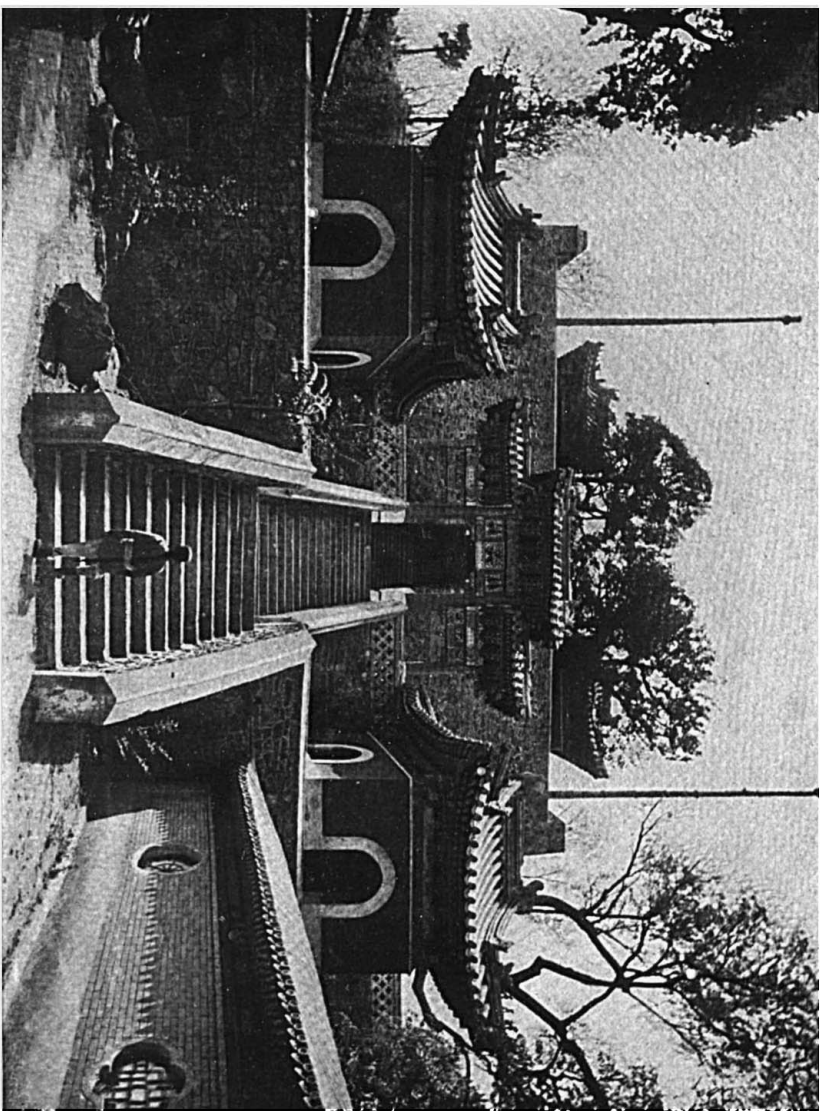
great hall is used only for receiving the Mongolian Princes on their annual visit to Peking, when they come in state, with hundreds of followers and retainers, to pay homage and tribute to the Emperor of China. The rear of the hall opens on a court surrounded by smaller buildings, which are used as waiting-rooms for the retainers and followers of the Princes.

From this hall we were carried in our chairs along the banks of the lake, beyond the Marble Bridge to a distant part of the grounds, where stands the famous Dragon Wall. Most of the Chinese houses have a sort of stone screen opposite the principal gate of entrance. This screen, called "A Wall of Respect," often has some sort of painted or carved representation of a dragon, which is supposed to chase away evil spirits. This superstition does not seem to obtain as regards the residences of the Son of Heaven, for I never saw a dragon wall built in front of any of the entrances to the buildings in the Palace inclosures. Perhaps the Son of Heaven is immune from the visit of demons, or is it that the rampant Double Dragon on everything Imperial serves as sufficient protection to the Palace? The Dragon Wall, in the Sea Palace, must have formed a part of some of the outside palaces or temples which were brought into the sacred inclosure when the Emperor Hsien-Feng decided to make it a place of residence and enlarge its domain. Many foreigners in Peking can remember when the beautiful Marble Bridge, of such noble proportions, of such exquisite design, now within the Precincts, was used by the public. However it got there, the

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Dragon Wall is at present within the Palace inclosure, though in an unused part of the grounds—lot in front of any “residence,” and hence not filling its mission as a “Wall of Respect,” to keep the wicked spirits from crossing the threshold. This Dragon Wall of beautiful white marble is of great beauty, exquisitely carved in its minutest details, and fine in general conception and line.

Her Majesty had returned from the Audience when we got back to the Palace from our morning promenade. She was now attending to household affairs. The eunuchs were bringing up, for her inspection, the baskets of splendid fruits, which are daily sent into the Palace. Among others, there was a basket of magnificent grapes. She was delighted with their beauty, and held up one splendid bunch against the light, before she tasted them, remarking that “the beautiful color lent an added zest to the delicious fruit.” Her Majesty then lunched, while we joined the Empress and Princesses on the verandah, after which we lunched again in this beautiful Throne-room. The meals taken with the young Empress and Ladies of the Court had now come to be gay reunions. Her Majesty would ask us every day to lunch or dine at her table, and I rarely took a meal in my own quarters. I had discarded the knife and fork and was learning to use the chop-sticks. I thought them such graceful implements when wielded by the beautiful hands of the Chinese Ladies, that I determined to learn their use. Though I never became an adept with them, I found these dainty implements perfectly adapted for eating the Chinese food. They are used



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both in the same hand like twin fairy wands, and seemed to me much more delicate and graceful than a knife and fork. My efforts at using them, and my desire to try all the new dishes, amused and pleased the Ladies. Each would give me special tidbits from her favorite dishes; they tried to teach me the Chinese names of the viands. My efforts at pronouncing these names, or my giving them to the wrong dishes, sometimes raised peals of laughter from the whole table. Her Majesty often heard the merriment, and would ask us, when we went into her private apartments after the meal, what had been the cause; and sometimes she would say, "What has 'Kergunia' said?"

We had scarcely finished luncheon, on this my second day at the Sea Palace, before the chairs were ordered for a promenade. It had begun to rain, and the air was chilly; but Her Majesty had made up her mind to have a walk at that hour, and nothing ever interfered with her plans, in so far as she was able to carry them out. No weather, however disagreeable or severe, ever kept her from an outdoor promenade that she had planned. The open chairs were brought, as if the day were fine. Her Majesty and the Empress took their seats in their yellow chairs. Their attendant eunuchs unfurled the huge yellow umbrellas, used only for Their Imperial Majesties and the young Empress; the second Empress took her orange-colored chair; the Princesses and the rest of us seated ourselves in our red chairs, and our eunuchs raised the red umbrellas over us. Her Majesty the Empress and Princesses, clothed in the brilliant colors daily

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worn, the eunuchs still wearing their richly embroidered gala costumes, the chair-bearers still clad in the festive red, the yellow and red chairs with the big yellow, orange, and red umbrellas made a quaint procession, bright with color, that started off through the courts into the gardens.

Her Majesty loves every phase of nature and every kind of weather; but it seemed to me as if she particularly loved rain. She once said it lent such a poetic charm to the landscape, bathing it in a soft mystery and washing away all defects. Peking is a dry place, and rain is a rarity, which probably accounts for this predilection. Her Majesty was in great good humor, but her partiality for rain was not shared by the other Ladies of the Palace, and these rainy promenades were never indulged in by them with any great show of delight. Her Majesty likes moving swiftly, and the chair-bearers always run when she leads the procession. We sped along for about fifteen minutes, when the chairs suddenly stopped. I looked to see for what reason, as we were in the open, with no shelter anywhere near, and the rain still falling. I was surprised to see Her Majesty was already out of her chair and walking off toward a "gourd-arbor" at the side of the paved walk.

The gourd is much esteemed by the Chinese. It is emblematic of Fruitfulness and Prosperity, and is a special favorite of Her Majesty's. Those cultivated at the Palace, and known all over China as the "Imperial Gourd," have long been famous; but have reached a greater state of perfection than ever before, under the special care and training given them during

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Her Majesty the Empress Dowager's reign. They are of one shape only, with a contracted neck and two equal parts above and below; but they are of all sizes, from one to twelve inches, the one-inch size being as perfect as the larger ones. They are grown on trellises, about seven feet high, and the vines are very carefully trained, so that each of the much-prized fruit may attain its best development and have its proper quota of light and sun.

Her Majesty walked through the mud to the arbor. The white kid six-inch-high soles of her shoes sank deep into the soft, rain-soaked soil. The eunuchs made vain attempts to protect her from the rain, but she went imperturbably on and was soon under the gourd-arbor. Here she leisurely tried several of the gourds, to see if they were properly ripe; for they must be pulled at a certain time or they do not dry well. After looking at and trying a number, she had several gathered and went back to her chair. The young Empress and the other Ladies had, of course, got out of the chairs when Her Majesty stopped. Luckily, she did not ask us to go into the arbor with her; but etiquette obliged us to stand on the marble walk, which though not muddy and not so disagreeable as the walk to the gourd-arbor, was, however, running with water. When Her Majesty took her chair again, we resumed ours, with a sigh of relief; for, though we were unprotected even in the chairs, we felt the truth of the Oriental saying, "It is better to be sitting than standing," etc.

After another quarter of an hour, the chair-bearers stopped again. We had come to another gourd-

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arbor! Her Majesty got out of her chair and examined the gourds in this arbor with the same deliberation and interest as she had looked at those where we first stopped. The rain was now falling in torrents, but Her Majesty's spirits seemed to go up in proportion to its coming down. The Ladies were again obliged to get out of their chairs! They stood in two dejected lines, with the eunuchs holding, as best they might, the red umbrellas over each, and they vainly tried to keep up an appearance of interest and enjoyment. The brave finery of the eunuchs, who may not carry umbrellas when on service, was now hanging in limp folds about them, and their fine feathers were much bedraggled. The Chinese Ladies had their two-inch-high, kid-covered cork-soles to protect their feet from the water; but mine, in thin kid slippers, were soaking. The picture of the dejected Ladies, the rain-soaked eunuchs, was, however, so amusing, that I quite forgot my own discomfort and thoroughly enjoyed the situation. After another twenty minutes' run, with the rain still falling, Her Majesty gave the word and the procession turned toward the Hall of the Mongolian Princes. The great doors were thrown open, and we were, at last, under shelter.

A yellow chair was placed for Her Majesty in front of the dais, and she had some of the gourds she had gathered brought to her. She selected one for herself, gave one to her principal Lady-in-waiting, Sih-Gerga, and handed one to the Chief Eunuch Li—the Princess and the Chief Eunuch both being proficient in the art of scraping them. A sharpened piece of



## Second Visit to the Sea Palace

bamboo was brought to Her Majesty and she began to work on the gourd she had taken, scraping off the outer skin. She told me to stand near and watch her scrape it, as it was a very difficult thing to do well! She certainly did it well, and it was most interesting to watch her beautiful little hands, as they gracefully moved the piece of bamboo back and forth, quickly removing the outer skin, in the most approved way. Though apparently thoroughly interested in scraping her gourd, she asked me how I had enjoyed my promenade of the day before, and what I thought of the Sea Palace. She called my attention to the inscriptions on the tablets behind the Throne, saying they were in Manchu and Chinese characters, pointing out their difference of form and also speaking of the differences in the two languages. She said she thought Manchu would be easier for a foreigner to learn than Chinese, as Manchu has an alphabet and is constructed more on the lines of a European language. Presently Her Majesty turned to speak to some one else, and I immediately withdrew, as is the custom at the Palace. We went out and joined the Empress and Princesses, who had already retired from the Throne-room and were having tea and cigarettes reclining on the couches in one of the rooms in the rear. After an hour's rest in the Mongolian Hall, the rain having ceased, we continued our promenade through the grounds much more pleasantly than we had begun it, and Her Majesty took me for a walk in the Gardens of the Sea Palace, as she had promised.

After dinner, we were rowed over the lake to the Gates.

## With the Empress Dowager

Just beyond them a company of archers was practising with their bows and arrows; for archery is still in vogue in China, and fine marksmanship among the archers is rewarded by substantial advancement in the army. Archery is also practised as a sport by the young Manchu nobles. It is said to educate the eye and materially develop the chest and arms. The Chinese pay great attention to position in archery. They stand stiffly erect, the chest thrown well forward, the head held high; the bow and arrow at rigidly prescribed angles; and if this position be not observed, however true the flight of the arrow, it goes for naught. From the shelter of my chair, I watched the company's practice until I heard the "Sunset call" resounding through the Palace grounds; echoed and reëchoed until it reached the outer gates, which began to move upon their huge hinges until they clanged together for the night.

<sup>1</sup> My Chinese name.

## CHAPTER XII

### RETURN TO THE SUMMER PALACE

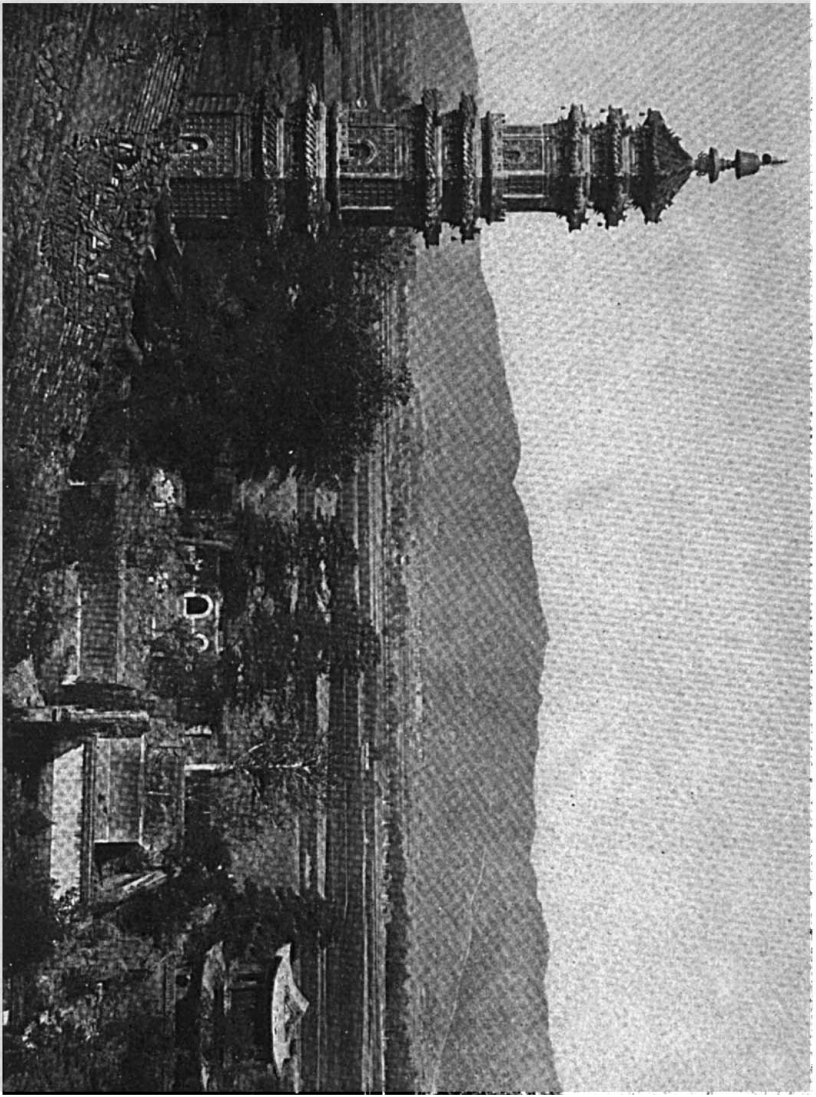
**T**HE next day the Court returned to the Summer Palace. The festivities and sacrifices in connection with the Emperor's Birthday being now over and the Court settled down to its usual routine, I hoped I might be allowed to go regularly to work on the portrait, and that Her Majesty would allow me to paint when she was not posing. There was much I could do between times, and she could pose but for a short time each day. Up to that time, Her Majesty had treated me as a guest at Court, whose amusement was the most important thing to be looked after. She seemed much interested in the work, but my painting was an incident and even the "Sacred Picture" a secondary consideration. All these walks, these delightful excursions, were perfectly charming, and, had I gone to the Palace to enjoy myself, or to study Her Majesty and Chinese manners and customs, I would have been perfectly satisfied. I had, in the Empress Dowager, a psychological study full of ever-varying and constant interest. I was living through a unique experience, seeing what I could never hope to see again, but I was not allowed to paint on the portrait as much as I should have liked. Could I but have had permis-

## With the Empress Dowager

sion to work more, I should have been very happy. Had I been able to speak Chinese well enough, I felt I would obtain what I desired; she had shown herself so uniformly kind. She probably felt I was enjoying myself more in this way than working at my painting.

While I thoroughly enjoyed the promenades with Her Majesty, I loved the daily sittings. Every portrait-painter knows the sort of intimacy that establishes itself between him and his sitter, however unsympathetic the latter may be at first sight, which was certainly not the case in this instance. The effort of the painter to get under the exterior and discover the real person of his sitter; the desire to see the best side and make the most of it, meets generally with a sympathetic response. If the "rapport" is properly established, they get to know each other better by the time the portrait is finished than they could otherwise have done, perhaps in years. Though I saw Her Majesty so intimately at other times, I felt I was not seeing her "face to face" (figuratively speaking), except at the sittings.

The morning after our return to the Summer Palace, my easel was again placed in the Throne-room. The portrait was taken down from its resting-place and work resumed. Her Majesty gave me a long sitting, and the portrait made a step ahead. If I had only had a place to work alone, where I might study the picture, when she was not posing, I could have made so many improvements! But I was obliged to possess my soul in patience, and work along, for the short space of an hour or so a day and stop the mo-



ON THE ROAD FROM PEKING TO THE SUMMER PALACE

## Return to the Summer Palace

ment Her Majesty felt fatigued, when my brushes and palette were whisked away, as if by magic. There was no chance to study the portrait or to do anything, except when the Empress Dowager and the crowd of attendants were present.

I had taken to the Palace only a small folding easel, which was not at all suitable for regular work on so large a portrait, but it was impossible to get a better one in Peking. Her Majesty, who observed everything, noticed that it was not convenient, and suggested that I draw a design for a large easel and give it to the Palace carpenters to copy. She thought they would be able to make me one. I did so, and they made me a very satisfactory working easel. When the eunuchs found that this Palace easel suited me, five others of different sizes were made. I asked for what reason, and was told that everything for Her Majesty was made in sixes. It would have been establishing a precedent, making an innovation, to have fewer than six easels for her portrait.

Her Majesty also ordered some large flat boxes, with lock and key, to be made for my materials. These boxes were covered in yellow, for they were to be used for the Sacred Picture, and must be in the Imperial color. I forgot to say the six easels had all been stained a bright yellow! A table, surmounted by one of these yellow boxes, occupied a prominent place in the Throne-room during the whole time this portrait was being painted. When I finished painting each day, the Chief Eunuch, himself, removed the picture from the easel, and a number of others came and took my brushes and palette, put away the easel and

## With the Empress Dowager

closed the yellow box and locked it. Our head eunuch carried the key to the box.

When the afternoon sitting was finished, we went out for another of those delightful promenades around the grounds. The days were now growing visibly shorter, and the evenings were beginning to be cool. As we went through the gardens, Her Majesty stopped at all her favorite points and looked for a few moments at the view, as if to greet it again, after her absence. She loved the Summer Palace and it always seemed a pleasure to her to return to it. We had tea in one of the tea-houses where there were tables and seats. She ordered the eunuchs to make a sort of blanc-mange of lotus-root flour, which was delicious, and, as she said, most wholesome. When the Empress Dowager goes for a walk, portable stoves and all the paraphernalia necessary for cooking a light repast are taken along. It seemed wonderful to me to see the way the Chinese could cook, with apparently so few conveniences. After this we had tea. The finest tea in China is sent to the Palace. The first leaves of the plantations all over the Great Empire are reserved for Their Majesties. Her Majesty, who is a great epicure, has her choice of these chosen leaves. She adds to the delicacy of its already fine flavor by putting into her tea-cup the blooms of dried honeysuckle, the flowers of jasmine, or other fragrant blooms. The honey from these flowers slightly sweetens the tea, besides giving it a delicate, subtle flavor, quite unique. These dried blooms are brought in a jade bowl, with two long cherry sticks, with which Her Majesty takes the flowers and places them in her cup, stirring them

## Return to the Summer Palace

into the tea with these graceful wands. The Chinese never use a teaspoon. Her Majesty drinks her tea from a jade cup, which is placed in a curiously fashioned, cunningly wrought, open-work silver saucer. The Chinese take their tea boiling hot, and the jade does not get so hot as a porcelain cup.

We continued our walk through the gardens after leaving the tea-house, and when we were passing a bed of flowers Her Majesty spied some curious grass, which she ordered the eunuchs to gather. When it was brought to her she deftly wove several blades of it into a perfectly recognizable representation of a rabbit. She did it so quickly I did not realize she was trying to make anything until she tossed the finished result over to me and asked me what I thought it was. It was unmistakable.

When we reached our objective point, one of the highest eminences in the grounds, with the whole panorama of the Western Hills spread out beneath us, and the setting sun glowing over all in brilliant splendor, it was a glorious scene. She called me up to her side and made a graceful, sweeping gesture of the hand that said, "This is all mine, but you may share it with me." She had that sense of possession of nature's beauties which all artistic souls feel, for their appreciation makes what they view their own. She felt it was hers, because she loved it so, and she knew I would appreciate it, which few of her "entourage" did, as none of them were such passionate lovers of nature as the Empress Dowager, and custom had dulled their perception of the beauty of the scene. The exquisite pleasure the contemplation of this glorious view gave me, made me tremble



## With the Empress Dowager

with delight. As the day was fading and as I was thinly clad, Her Majesty thought I was cold, and, seeing I had no wrap, she called to the Chief Eunuch to bring me one of hers. He selected one from the number that were always brought along for these promenades, and gave it to Her Majesty, who threw it over my shoulders. She asked me to keep it and to try to remember to take better care of myself in the future.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STEAM-LAUNCH—SEMI-ANNUAL SACRIFICES TO CONFUCIUS

WE began now to go out on the lake in the steam-launches, instead of the picturesque Imperial barge. The Empress Dowager is artistic and conservative enough to like the old-fashioned barge; but she is also intelligent enough to appreciate the advantages of other modes of locomotion, and has no prejudices; in fact, she rather likes trying new things. When the days were long, the air soft, and the bosom of the lake engirdled with its chain of blooming lotus, she preferred the barge; but when the shorter and cooler days came, when the lotus were no longer in bloom, she ordered the steam-launch for our promenades. She seemed now to like its swift and noisy progress as much as she had before enjoyed the softly gliding motion of the barge. Her Throne on the launch was on the prow, just outside and above the cabin, where the Princesses and Ladies sat. Her Majesty always wanted the fresh air and the view, and never went inside. The young Empress and the Ladies sat within the luxuriously fitted-up cabin with its lounges and tables.

The first day we went out in the launch the en-

## With the Empress Dowager

gineer seemed not to have it quite under control, and we soon ran aground in a field of water-plants near the island. There was great consternation among the eunuchs when it was found the launch could not advance, even by putting on full steam. The engineer didn't seem to know what to do. Her Majesty ordered the engines reversed, and this was tried, but it was some time before the launch moved. The Princesses and eunuchs became quite excited, but Her Majesty was perfectly unconcerned, and laughed at their fears for her safety. She said it would be no great matter for her to walk over to the island. It would only mean one pair of shoes the less! When the launch finally moved, the Chief Eunuch, not wishing to run the risk of another mishap, wanted to give word to the engineer to return; but Her Majesty would not hear of this, and insisted upon completing the excursion as she had at first planned it. We had several other mishaps, and the launch finally ran aground; and no effort of the engineers, no putting on of extra steam, was able to get us off again. Her Majesty kept her good humor, ordered her barge brought alongside, and we were all "trans-shipped." We finished our tour on the lake as she had planned it, but in the barge instead of the launch. She is too intelligent not to use any means at hand to attain her ends, and she is intelligent enough to see, that these ends can be attained, by some means or other, before she fixes upon them.

The Emperor of China, with the usual Chinese tolerance,—and the Chinese are the most tolerant people in the world as to religious faith,—is not only

## The Steam-Launch

the head of one church, but of all the churches in China. He is, as Emperor, the Great High Priest of Heaven, the High Priest of Buddhism and Taoism, and is, of course, a Confucian; though this is a philosophy rather than a religion. But though a philosophy, there are certain rites and ceremonies observed by the Confucians. All the great ceremonies of the different cults are celebrated in the Palace temples with rigid impartiality and equal pomp. Whatever may be the individual leanings of the Emperor, and, of course, he must have his own preferences, he participates in each of these celebrations. But his official, public exercise of religion, is limited to the worship of Heaven and Earth, to which he makes annual public sacrifices in the Great Temple of Heaven at Peking.

The afternoon of our first steam-launch excursion, finished in Her Majesty's barge, there was a splendid ceremony in the chapel at the foot of the hill crowned with the Temple of the Ten Thousand Buddhas, to the memory of Confucius, the great Sage, whose philosophy has directed the lives and laws of the Chinese people for nearly twenty-five hundred years. Though a philosopher like Plato, he is appreciated and his teachings followed by the masses, as well as the classes, in China. He is not a religious leader but an ethical teacher, and though many temples have been erected to his memory, they are like Halls of Science and not temples to a divinity. There are no images either of Confucius or the Sages in these temples. They are classic halls, bare of all church-like ornamentation. Quotations from the "analects," painted on scrolls,

## With the Empress Dowager

cut into wood, and carved out of stone, adorn the walls, not only of the interiors of the temples, but of the courts and verandahs of the buildings. At the place where the altar would be in a temple, there is a plain niche, painted in red with a tablet bearing an inscription in gold, "The Seat of the Perfect One." On either side are similar niches, containing the tablets of four other great Sages, among whom was Mencius. These semi-annual sacrifices are in commemoration of Confucius as an ethical teacher, a wise philosopher, a Sage. At this service in the Palace, the participants and celebrants were all in full Court dress. There was an address to the memory of the great Sage, with music and hymns; the latter were rhythmic verses, containing some truth inculcated by the Sage. There was an altar with a dragon table in front for offerings. There were sacrifices, incense, and music. The altar was rich with splendid vases, rare old bronze bowls, and incense-burners, and sweet with flowers and fruit. On the dragon table, which stood in front, were offerings of millet, meat, and wine. Tall cressets of open iron-work containing huge, burning pine-knots were placed in front of the raised platform, on which stood the altar, which was beautifully illuminated with tall candles in square, silver candelabra. The court in front of this temple, as well as the surrounding buildings, were hung with charming painted lanterns.

Their Majesties, with the Empress and Ladies, preceded and surrounded by eunuchs and officials, in full Court dress, went in ceremonious procession through the verandahed corridors, from Her Majesty's Throne-

## Semi-Annual Sacrifices to Confucius

room to the temple. Their approach was accompanied by the slow beating of drums. When they reached the temple, three yellow cushions were placed on the paved floor for Their Majesties and the Empress, and red cushions for the Ladies. The music was played in rhythmic strains, while Their Majesties knelt and prostrated themselves three times; the Empress and Ladies doing likewise. The officials and other participants knelt outside in the court. When the prostrations were finished, a yellow chair was brought for the Empress Dowager. She sat during the rest of the service, but the Emperor, the Empress, and Ladies remained standing during the whole celebration. This consisted of a number of genuflexions and prostrations by the celebrants, and a moving about of the offerings on the dragon table in a ceremonious and reverent manner. The chief officiant read the address from a long scroll. After finishing it, he placed it on a casket on the altar. The first part of the ceremony took place inside the temple, then the celebrants went out into the court and intoned the six hymns and made renewed prostrations. I was not able to understand enough of the Hymns, or to get them sufficiently translated to make out their meaning. They were all of uniform length. They were in praise of Confucius and were called "Odes to Peace." When all the verses were intoned, the scroll with the address, some of each of the offerings, were placed in the huge iron incense-burner, that stood in the center of the outer court, and set on fire by the chief celebrant, while one of the several flagons of wine that had made part of the offerings was poured over the blaze.

## With the Empress Dowager

I had not expected to enter the temple with Their Majesties and the Ladies, but when we reached the door, the Empress drew me in with her. They seemed to realize that I enjoyed seeing these celebrations and to perfectly understand my not taking any active part in them. I always remained standing, but I listened reverently to the intoning of the hymns and the reading of the address. I conducted myself as I would at any religious ceremony, and they seemed to appreciate it.

When all was finished, Her Majesty told me to go up to the altar and examine the rare, old, bronze ornaments, the candelabra, etc. They explained to me that the address, which had been read, was burned, as it had filled its mission when it was read; that the ashes of a literary essay were a most fitting offering to the memory of Confucius, the great philosopher. When all was over, Their Majesties ordered the boats to come to the foot of the terrace, where the last part of the celebration had been made, and we returned to the Palace by way of the lake.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PALACE EUNUCHS

**T**HE internal affairs of the Palace are managed by eunuchs, among whom there are all grades, all sorts and conditions. Some are clever literati given to study; some have the polished, insinuating manners of the courtier; some have a Mandarin rank of high degree; some are menials. There are actors and singers, cooks and gardeners, teachers and pupils, writers and readers. They occupy all sorts of positions, from Their Majesties' body-guard to gate-keepers. In this hierarchy, Their Majesties' Chief Eunuchs held the first place. Under each of these there are six eunuchs of high rank, all exceptionally clever, who have raised themselves to the positions they occupy in the Palace by their own efforts or by some special qualification.

Each of the hundreds of pavilions and palaces in the Inclosures has a corps of eunuchs, presided over by a head eunuch. These act as guards to the premises, as well as servants, and keep things in readiness for a visit from Their Majesties. There is a head eunuch who directs the large corps of Palace gardeners; another who presides over the dozens of cooks in the Imperial kitchen; one is at the head of each of



## With the Empress Dowager

the departments, and each of these head eunuchs, chiefs of the different departments, is under the jurisdiction of the Chief Eunuch, for Her Majesty's Chief Eunuch may be called the real Chief Eunuch of the Palace. He is not only older than the Emperor's Chief Eunuch, but is more capable. The two Chief Eunuchs, from their position near the sacred persons of Their Majesties, have unusual power. They may make or mar the career of the eunuchs beneath them; and they not only have this power inside the Palace, but from their exceptionally fine opportunities to present petitions, to speak for or against certain people, they also have a great deal of power with people outside the Palace. Her Majesty's Chief Eunuch has almost the power in Peking, among officials and courtiers, that "Son Eminence Grise" had at the Court of Louis XIII of France. He is courted and fawned upon, receives magnificent presents, and nobles of high degree wait upon his pleasure; but while he occupies this high position with outsiders, in the Palace I saw no evidence of his having any unusual power with Her Majesty, beyond that of one who has been in the life-long service of his master and who has the privileges resulting therefrom.

The peculiar position of a Chinese Emperor, which shuts him in his Palace like a Buddha in a temple, makes some sort of confidential private messenger an absolute necessity. There is much business of an unofficial kind, which must be transacted in a private way. The Chief Eunuchs are naturally called upon in such cases. When the Ruler of the Celestial Empire

## The Palace Eunuchs

is a woman, the Palace becomes more of a gilded prison, a shut-in shrine, than even in the case of an Emperor. She cannot see officials, or even members of the Imperial clan, except in the Audience Halls. Thus a Chief Eunuch under an Empress would have even greater power than under an Emperor; and in this instance, Her Majesty's Chief Eunuch, Li Lien Ying, is really of exceptional ability!

In person he is tall and thin. His head is, in type, like Savonarola's. He has a Roman nose, a massive lean jaw, a protruding lower lip, and very shrewd eyes, full of intelligence, that shine out of sunken orbits. His face is much wrinkled and his skin like old parchment. Though only sixty years old, he looks seventy-five, and is the oldest eunuch in the Palace. He has been there since the age of ten. He has elegant, insinuating manners, speaks excellent Chinese—having a fine enunciation, a good choice of words, and a low, pleasant voice. If one may judge from appearances, he possesses ability in a marked degree. Of His Majesty's Chief Eunuch I can say nothing. I only saw him on the days of the Theater, or some festival, when His Majesty passed the day with the Empress Dowager and the Ladies, when he was always accompanied by his suite.

Her Majesty's second eunuch, Sui, who is of equal rank with Li Lien Ying, is as unlike him as two people could possibly be, both as to person, character, mental and moral nature. This one has none of the qualities of the intriguer—no Macchiavellian schemes would be forwarded by him. He is almost a giant in size, tall and heavy. He is forty-six years old, and

## With the Empress Dowager

has a round, full face, without a line—a typical Chinese face, as we know it from pictures, benevolent and kind. He, also, is a good Chinese scholar, and, of course, speaks it elegantly. Her Majesty will have no one around her person who does not speak it well. If it be true that Her Majesty, in choosing her ministers, tries to have them the opposites of each other, so that she may thus hear the different sides of a question and arrive at more just conclusions, her two Chief Eunuchs seem to have been chosen in the same way.

There is a eunuch appointed to administer the punishment, ordered by Their Majesties for the eunuchs around their persons. For the higher eunuchs, this is generally the deprivation of a certain amount of their annual wages, or the loss of their buttons, for the buttons on the hats of Chinese denote their rank, and to be deprived of a button, or to have one of lower rank given, is considered a disgrace. I once saw Her Majesty very angry over the failure to carry out one of her orders, by two of the high eunuchs, and she ordered them to be deprived of two months' pay. The head eunuchs of the different departments administer whatever punishment they see fit, to those over whom they are placed. This punishment is generally corporal. Sometimes they abuse their authority and are very cruel in administering this, but, as a rule, the eunuchs seem to be of a mild and peace-loving nature, rather than cruel and vindictive—inclined to condone the faults of their inferiors rather than punish them to the full extent of their authority. There seemed to be a feeling of "esprit

## The Palace Eunuchs

de corps" among them—a spirit of mutual helpfulness.

Each of the higher eunuchs has a number of pupils among the lower grades, who call him "Master," and whom he trains in manners and teaches his own specialties. The higher eunuchs seemed to take the liveliest interest in the good conduct, and literary, or other, advancement of these pupils, and they push their interests with Their Majesties in every way possible—each one, of course, trying to advance his pupils beyond those of some other eunuch.

Her Majesty has a great horror of opium smoking. If a eunuch, however high his position, indulged in it, the severest punishments she ever ordered were administered. They were not only deprived of so many months' pay and loss of their buttons, but were sometimes banished from the Palace for a certain length of time, and even severe corporal punishment would be ordered. These stringent measures did not prevent some of them, however, from indulging surreptitiously in the narcotic, but they took the most extreme precautions to prevent its being found out. Her Majesty has unusually acute olfactories, especially for opium. This, it seems, can be detected by its odor, which hangs around the clothes, and, like the odor of the rose, one "can break the vase, it lingers there still." But it seems the eunuchs have special linen clothes, which they put on for smoking, and these are given to be washed, immediately the fascinating pipe is finished. Unless one is an habitual smoker, the drug has very little outward effect and, except by the odor, it cannot be detected.