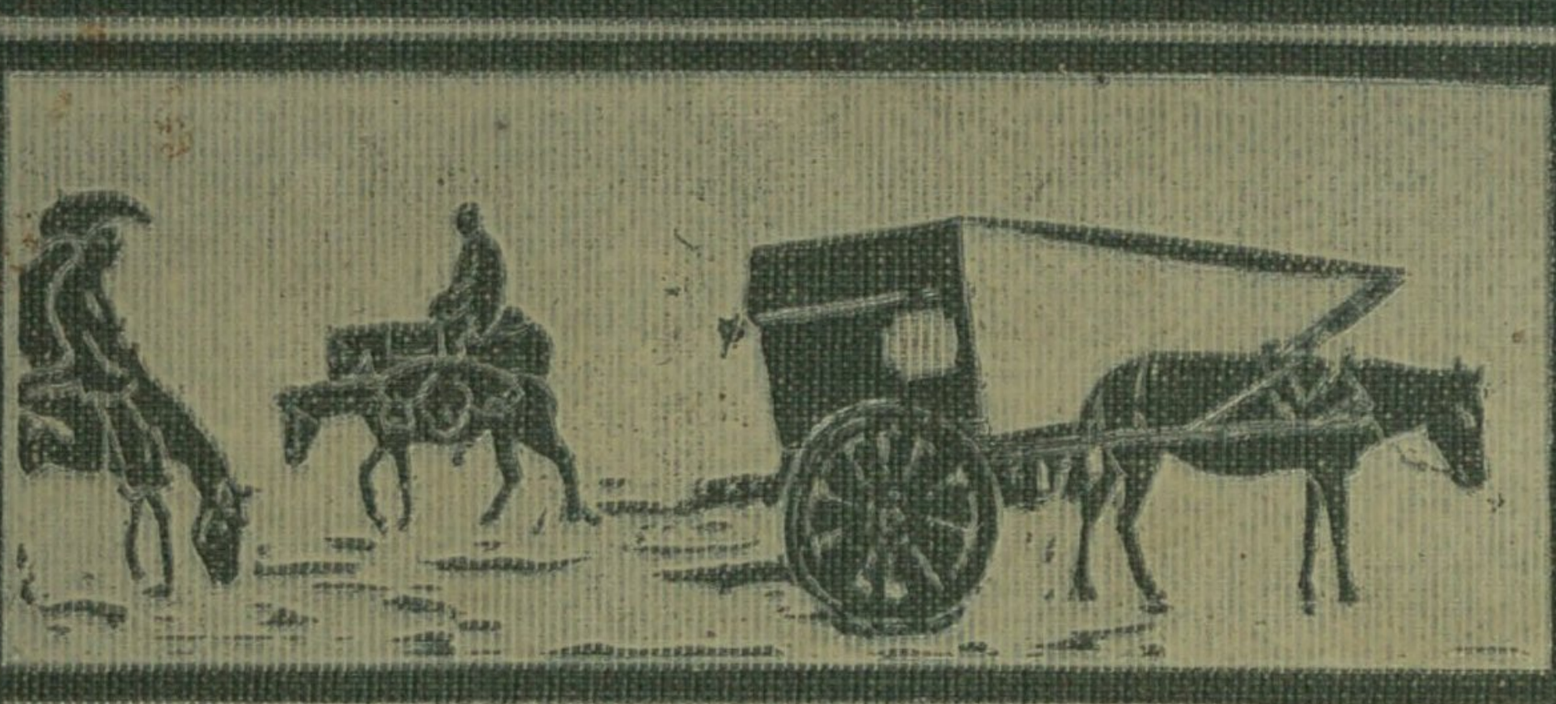
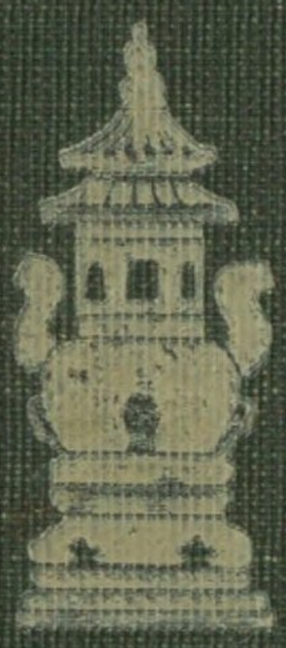
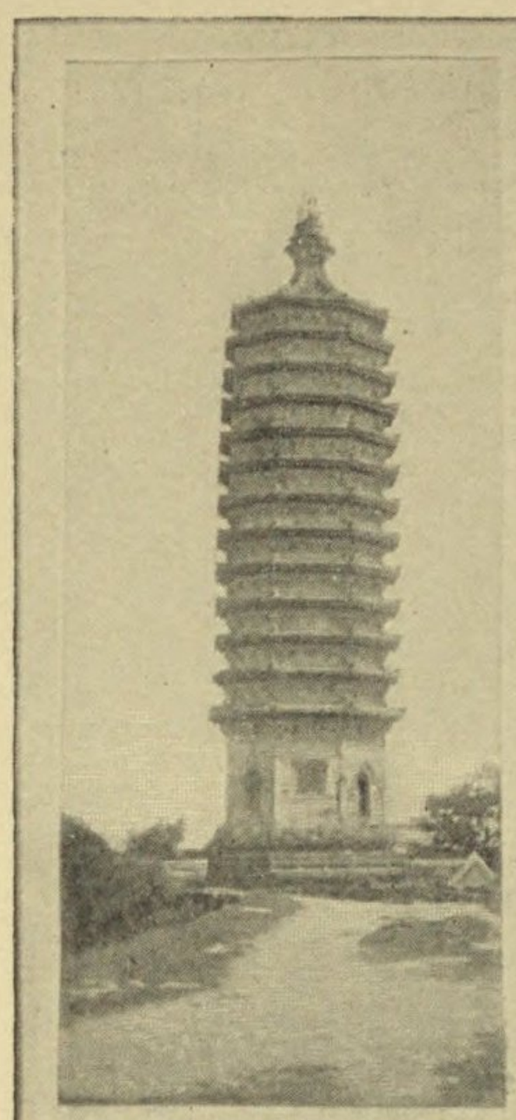


CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS



ARTHUR H. SMITH, D.D.





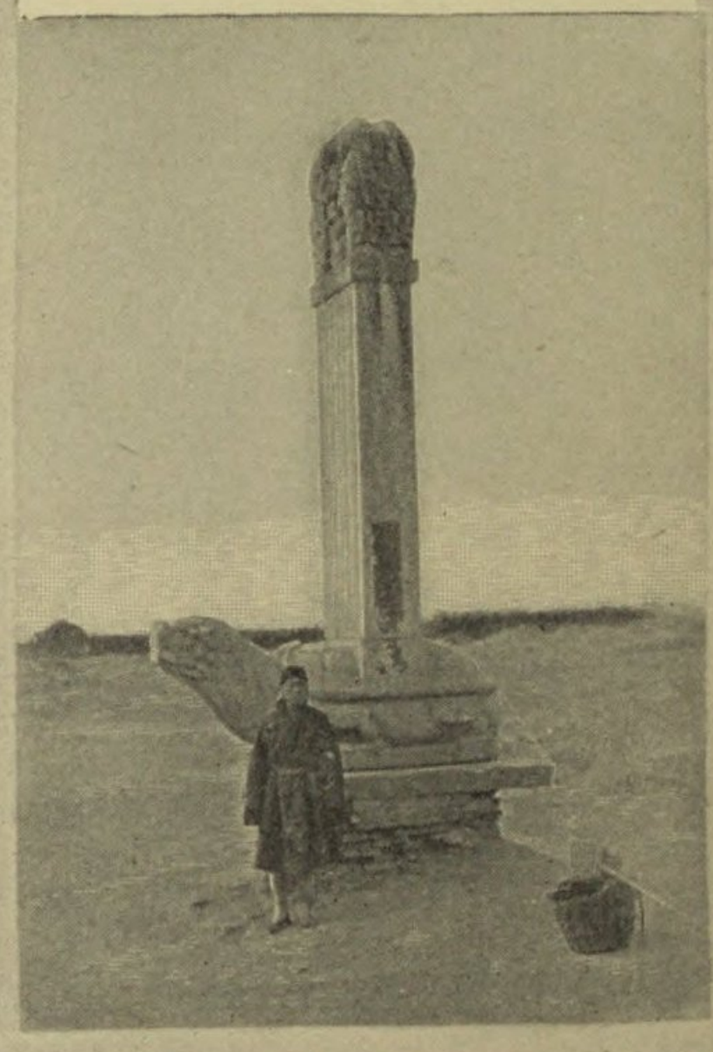
TUNG CHOU
PAGODA
NEAR PEKING.



A MEMORIAL ARCH.



NATIVE CHILDREN IN COURTYARD.



TURTLE MONUMENT.

Chinese Characteristics

BY

Arthur H. Smith

Twenty-two Years a Missionary of the American Board in China

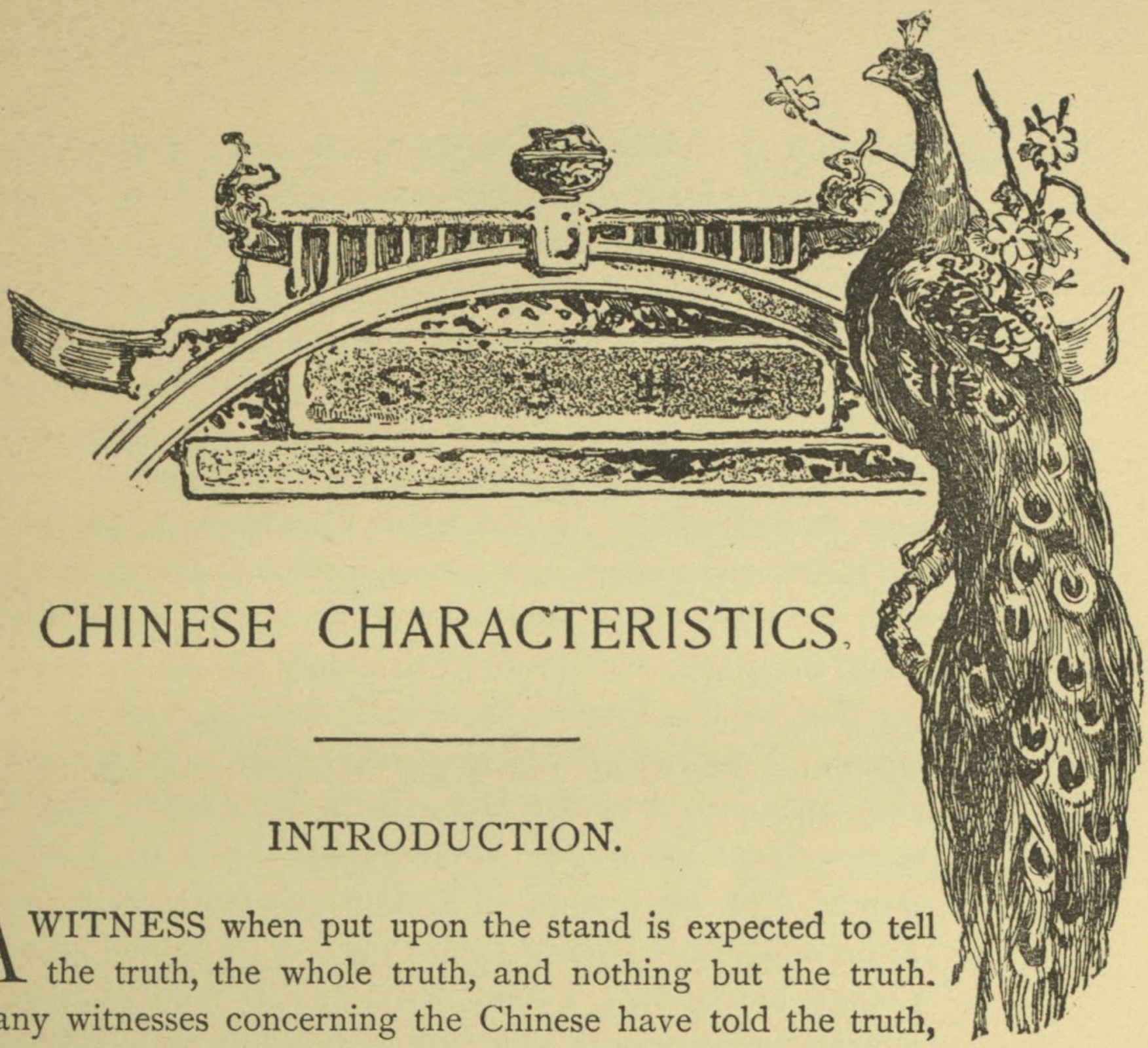
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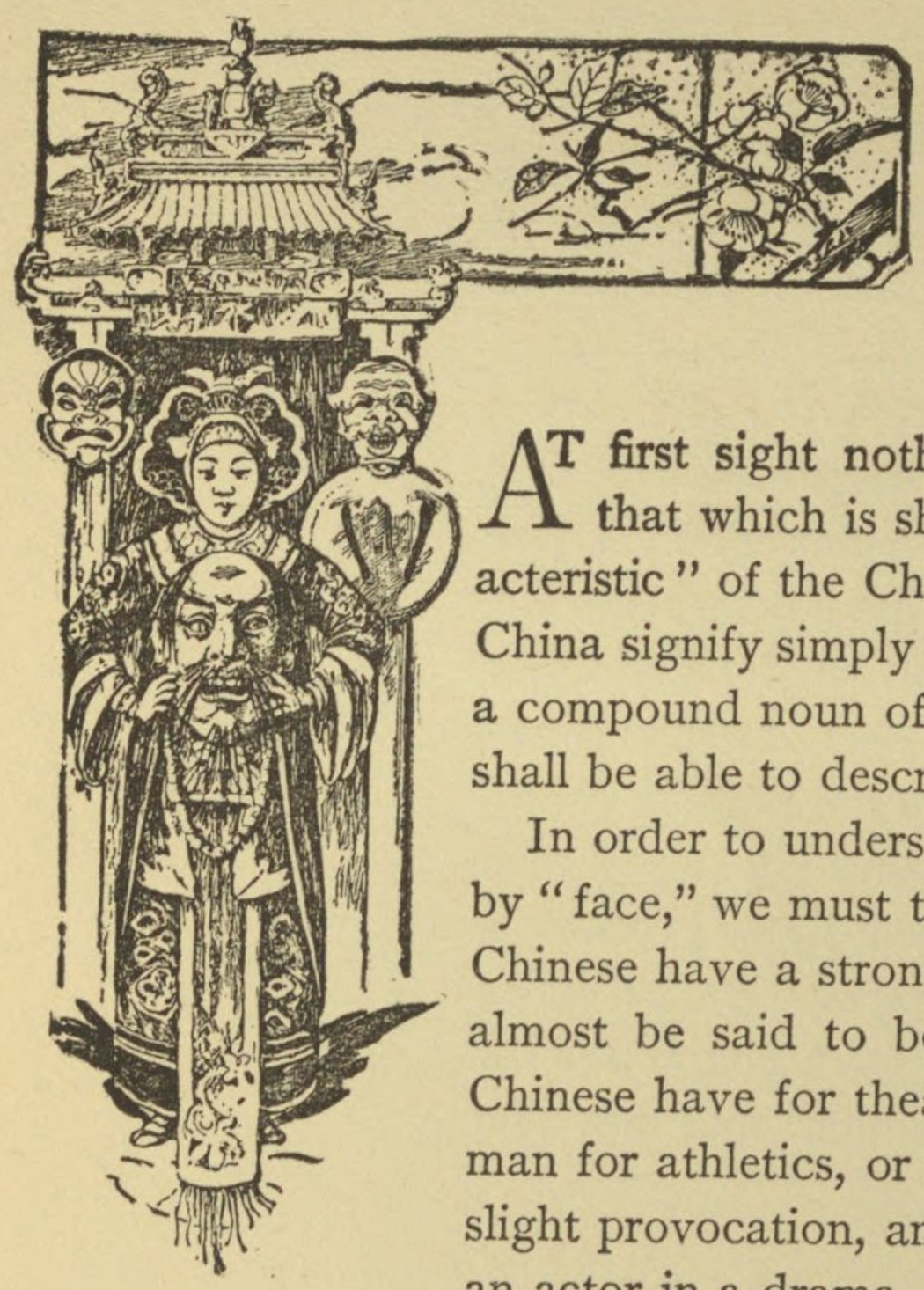


CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS.

INTRODUCTION.

A WITNESS when put upon the stand is expected to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Many witnesses concerning the Chinese have told the truth, but perhaps few of them have succeeded in telling nothing but the truth, and no one of them has ever told the whole truth. No single individual, whatever the extent of his knowledge, could by any possibility know the whole truth about the Chinese. The present volume of essays is therefore open to objection from three different points of view.

First, it may be said that the attempt to convey to others an idea of the real characteristics of the Chinese is vain. Mr. George Wingrove Cooke, the China correspondent of the London *Times* in 1857–58, enjoyed as good an opportunity of seeing the Chinese under varied circumstances, and through the eyes of those well qualified to help him to a just understanding of the people, as any writer on China up to that time. In the preface to his published letters, Mr. Cooke



CHAPTER I.

FACE.

AT first sight nothing can be more irrational than to call that which is shared with the whole human race a "characteristic" of the Chinese. But the word "face" does not in China signify simply the front part of the head, but is literally a compound noun of multitude, with more meanings than we shall be able to describe, or perhaps to comprehend.

In order to understand, however imperfectly, what is meant by "face," we must take account of the fact that as a race the Chinese have a strongly dramatic instinct. The theatre may almost be said to be the only national amusement, and the Chinese have for theatricals a passion like that of the Englishman for athletics, or the Spaniard for bull-fights. Upon very slight provocation, any Chinese regards himself in the light of an actor in a drama. He throws himself into theatrical attitudes, performs the salaam, falls upon his knees, prostrates himself and strikes his head upon the earth, under circumstances which to an Occidental seem to make such actions superfluous, not to say ridiculous. A Chinese thinks in theatrical terms. When roused in self-defence he addresses two or three persons as if they were a multitude. He exclaims: "I say this in the presence of You, and You, and You, who are all here present." If his troubles are adjusted he speaks of himself as having "got off the stage" with credit, and if they are not adjusted he finds no way to "retire from the stage." All this, be it clearly understood, has nothing to do with realities.



A Chinese Kitchen, Showing Method of Preparing Food.



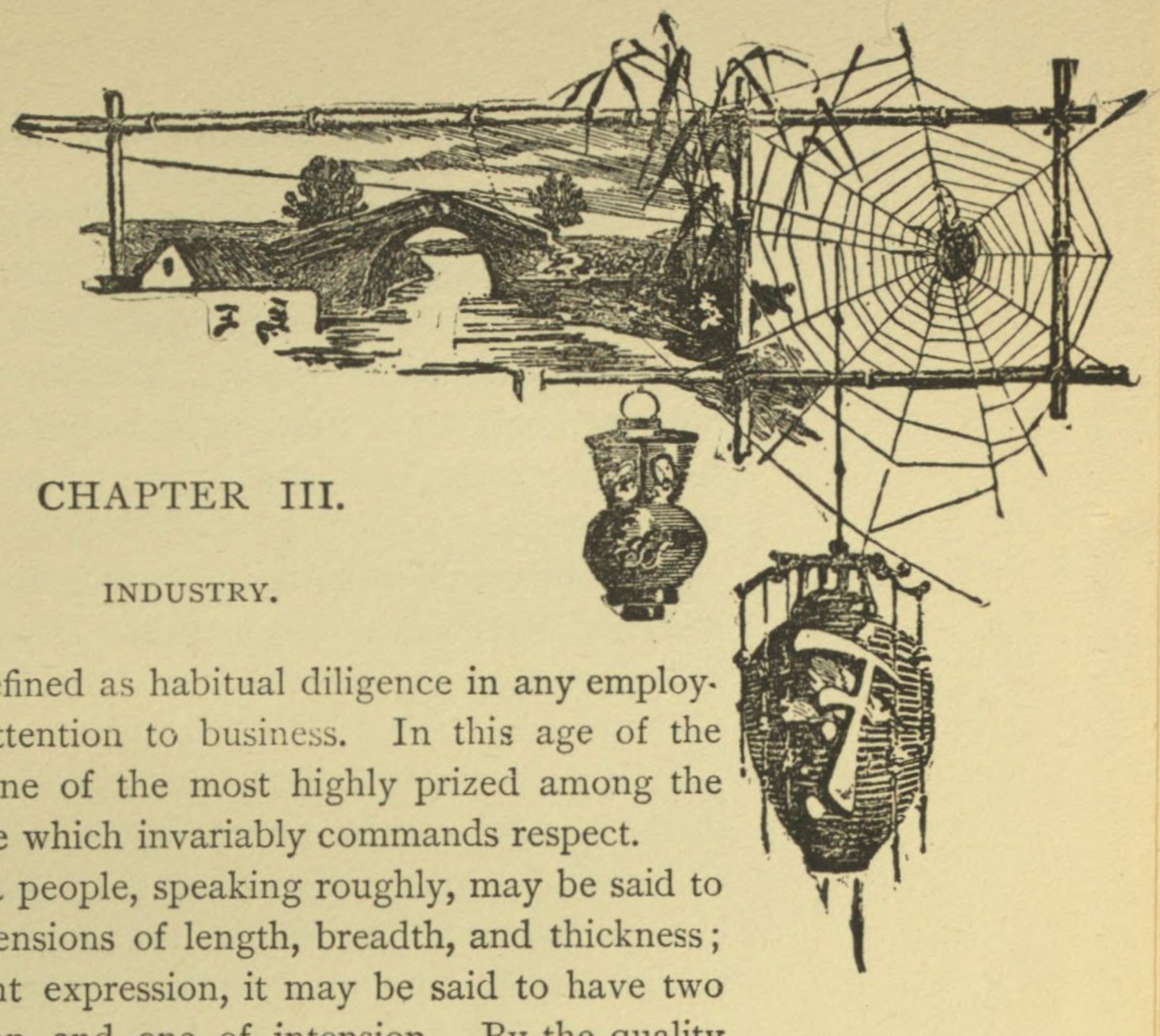
CHAPTER II.

ECONOMY.

THE word "economy" signifies the rule by which the house should be ordered, especially with reference to the relation between expenditure and income. Economy, as we understand the term, may be displayed in three several ways: by limiting the number of wants, by preventing waste, and by the adjustment of forces in such a manner as to make a little represent a great deal. In each of these ways the Chinese are pre-eminently economical.

One of the first things which impress the traveller in China is the extremely simple diet of the people. The vast bulk of the population seems to depend upon a few articles, such as rice, beans in various preparations, millet, garden vegetables, and fish. These, with a few other things, form the staple of countless millions, supplemented it may be on the feast-days, or other special occasions, with a bit of meat.

Now that so much attention is given in Western lands to the contrivance of ways in which to furnish nourishing food to the very poor, at a minimum cost, it is not without interest to learn the undoubted fact that, in ordinary years, it is in China quite possible to furnish wholesome food in abundant quantity at a cost for each adult of not more than two cents a day. Even in famine times, thousands of persons have been kept alive for months on an allowance of not more than a cent and a half a day. This implies the general existence in



CHAPTER III.

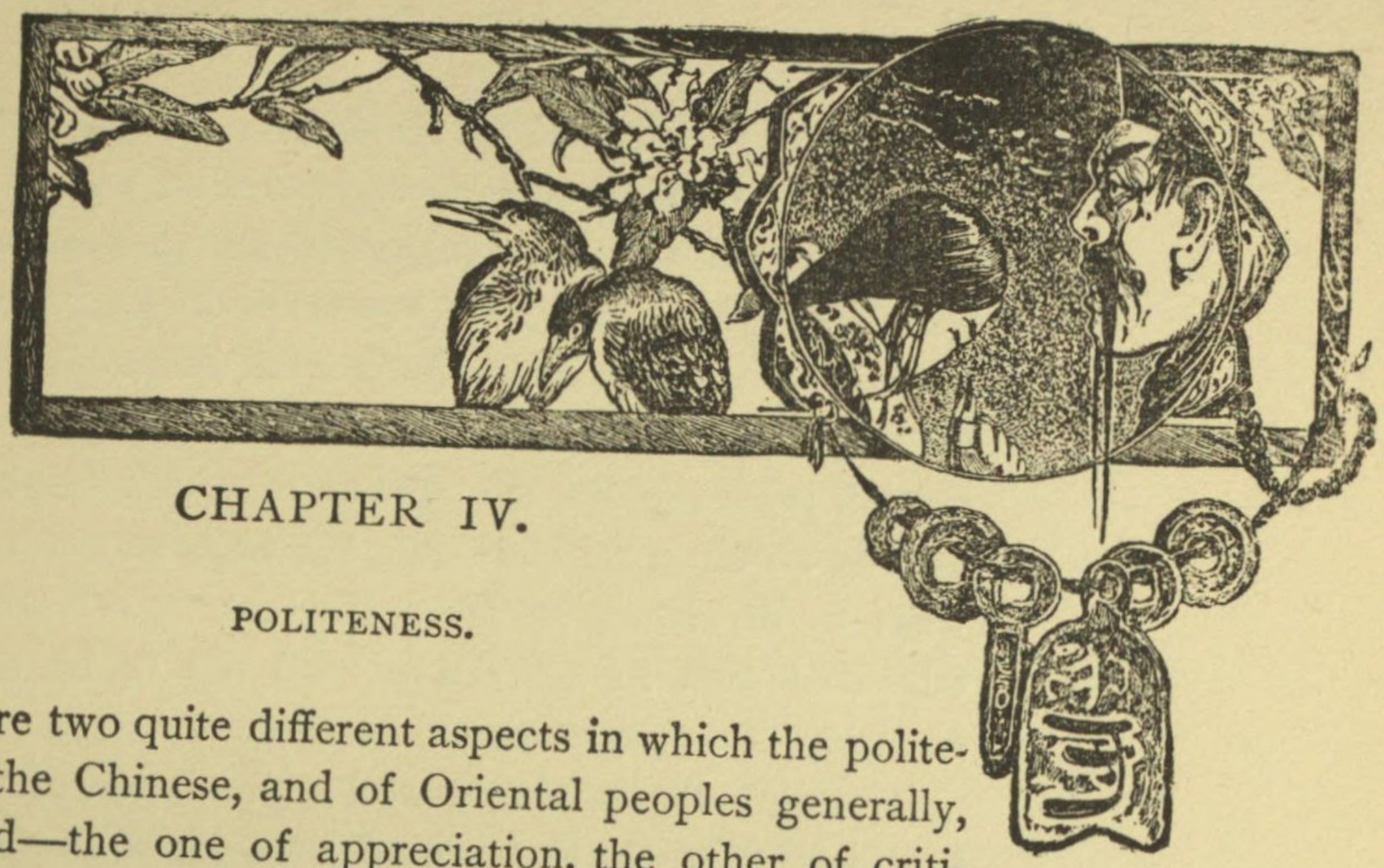
INDUSTRY.

INDUSTRY is defined as habitual diligence in any employment—steady attention to business. In this age of the world industry is one of the most highly prized among the virtues, and it is one which invariably commands respect.

The industry of a people, speaking roughly, may be said to unite the three dimensions of length, breadth, and thickness; or, to use a different expression, it may be said to have two qualities of extension, and one of intension. By the quality of length, we mean the amount of time during which the industry is exercised. By the quality of breadth, we mean the number of persons to whom the predicate of industrious may be fairly applied. By intension, we mean the amount of energy which is displayed in the "habitual diligence," and in "steady attention to business." The aggregate result will be the product of these three factors. It is by no means always the case that the impressions of the casual traveller and those of the old residents are the same, but there can be little doubt that casual travellers, and residents of the longest standing, will agree in a profound conviction of the diligence of the Chinese people. The very first glance which a new-comer gets of the Chinese, induces him to think that this people is carrying out in social affairs the maxim which John Wesley named as the rule for a successful church—"All at it, and always at it." Idleness in China is not conspicuous. Every one *seems* to be doing something. There are of course plenty



Passenger Boat on the Pei Ho. North China.



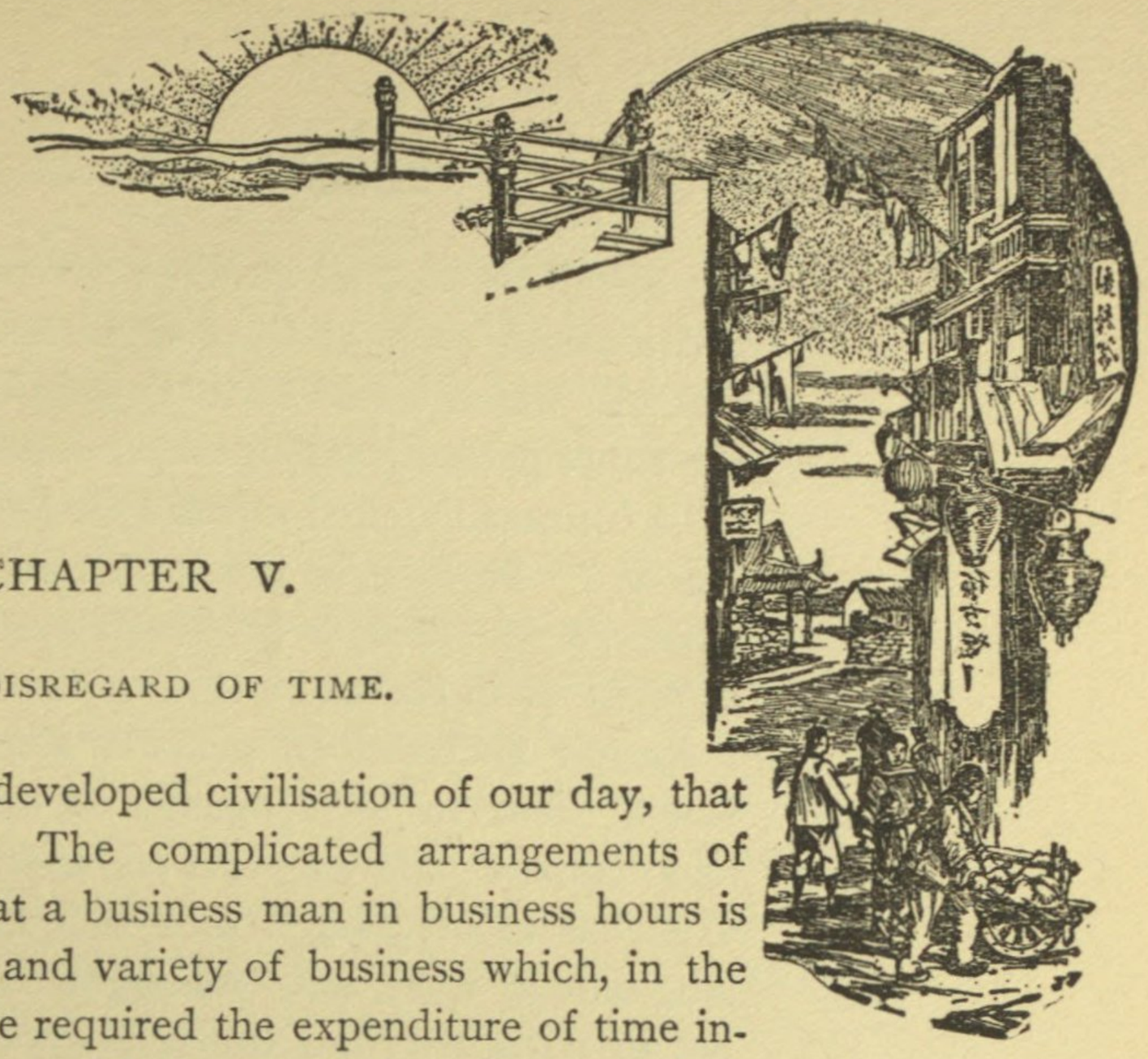
CHAPTER IV.

POLITENESS.

THERE are two quite different aspects in which the politeness of the Chinese, and of Oriental peoples generally, may be viewed—the one of appreciation, the other of criticism. The Anglo-Saxon, as we are fond of reminding ourselves, has, no doubt, many virtues, and among them is to be found a very large percentage of *fortiter in re*, but a very small percentage of *suaviter in modo*. When, therefore, we come to the Orient, and find the vast populations of the immense Asiatic continent so greatly our superiors in the art of lubricating the friction which is sure to arise in the intercourse of man with man, we are filled with that admiration which is the tribute of those who cannot do a thing to those who can do it easily and well. The most bigoted critic of the Chinese is forced to admit that they have brought the practice of politeness to a pitch of perfection which is not only unknown in Western lands, but, previous to experience, is unthought of and almost unimaginable.

The rules of ceremony, we are reminded in the Classics, are three hundred, and the rules of behaviour three thousand. Under such a load as this, it would seem unreasonable to hope for the continuance of a race of human beings, but we very soon discover that the Chinese have contrived to make their ceremonies, as they have made their education, an instinct rather than an acquirement. The genius of this people has made the punctilio, which in Occidental lands is relegated to

made an instinct



CHAPTER V.

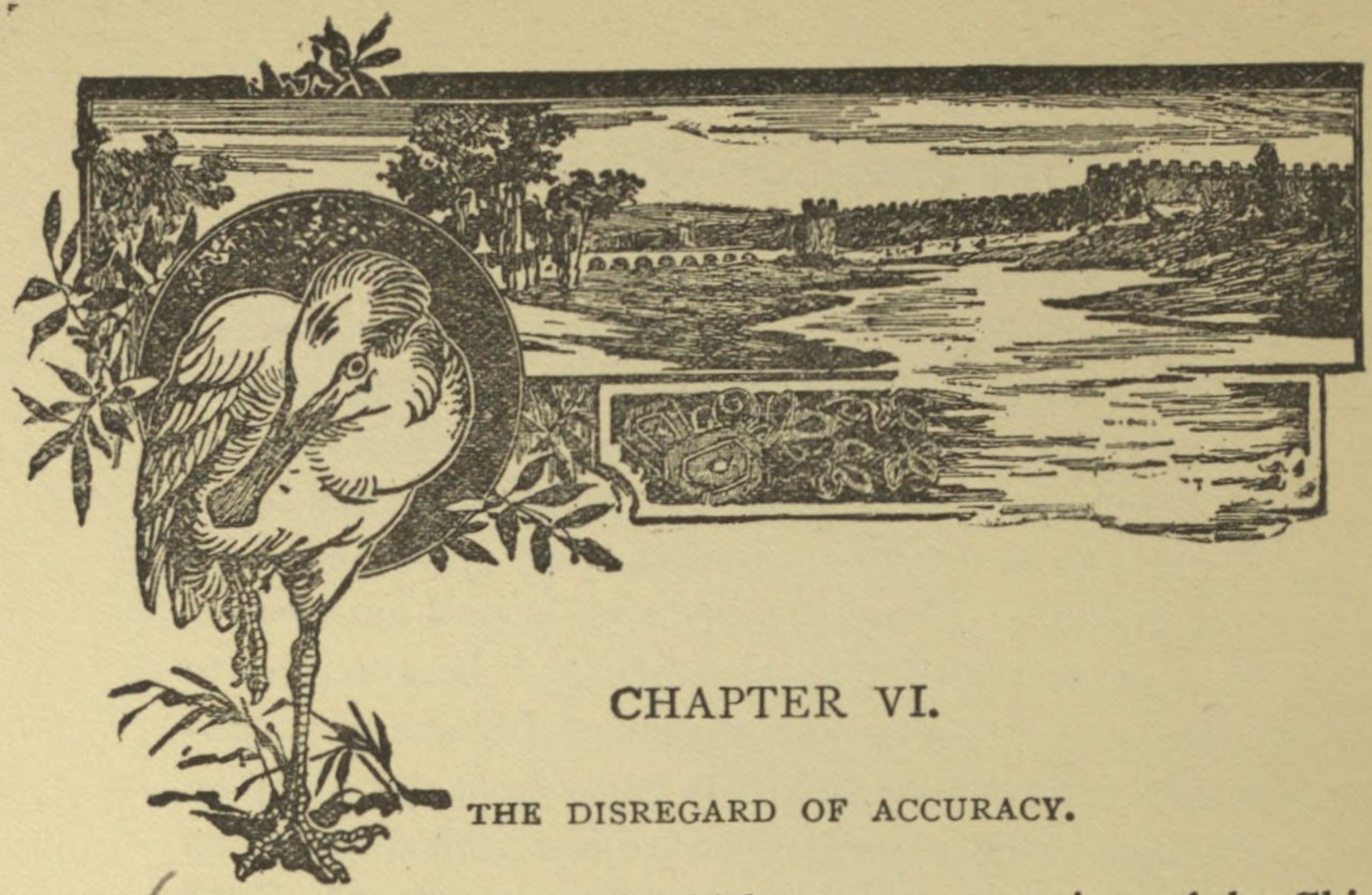
THE DISREGARD OF TIME.

IT is a maxim of the developed civilisation of our day, that "time is money." The complicated arrangements of modern life are such that a business man in business hours is able to do an amount and variety of business which, in the past century, would have required the expenditure of time indefinitely greater. Steam and electricity have accomplished this change, and it is a change for which the Anglo-Saxon race was prepared beforehand by its constitutional tendencies. Whatever may have been the habits of our ancestors when they had little or nothing to do but to eat, drink, and fight, we find it difficult to imagine a period when our race was not characterised by that impetuous energy which ever drives the individuals of it onward to do something else, as soon as another something is finished.

There is a significant difference in the salutations of the Chinese and of the Anglo-Saxon. The former says to his comrade whom he casually meets, "Have you eaten rice?" The latter asks, "How do you *do?*" Doing is the normal condition of the one, as eating is the normal condition of the other. From that feeling which to us has become a second nature, that time is money, and under ordinary circumstances is to be improved to its final second, the Chinese, like most Orientals, are singularly free. There are only twelve hours in the Chinese day, and the names of these hours do not designate simply the point where one of them gives place to another,



Carpenters Sawing Large Timber.



CHAPTER VI.

THE DISREGARD OF ACCURACY.

THE first impression which a stranger receives of the Chinese is that of uniformity. Their physiognomy appears to be all of one type, they all seem to be clad in one perpetual blue, the "hinges" of the national eye do not look as if they were "put on straight," and the resemblance between one Chinese cue and another is the likeness between a pair of peas from the same pod. But in a very brief experience the most unobservant traveller learns that, whatever else may be predicated of the Chinese, a dead level of uniformity cannot be safely assumed. The speech of any two districts, no matter how contiguous, varies in some interesting and perhaps unaccountable ways. Divergences of this sort accumulate until they are held to be tantamount to a new "dialect," and there are not wanting those who will gravely assure us that in China there are a great number of different "languages" spoken, albeit the written character is the same. The same variations, as we are often reminded, obtain in regard to customs, which, according to a saying current among the Chinese, do not run uniform for ten *li* together, a fact of which it is impossible not to witness singular instances at every turn. A like diversity is found to prevail in those standards of quantity upon the absolute invariability of which so much of the comfort of life in Western lands is found to depend.

The existence of a double standard of any kind, which is



Chinese Performers in Stage Dress.



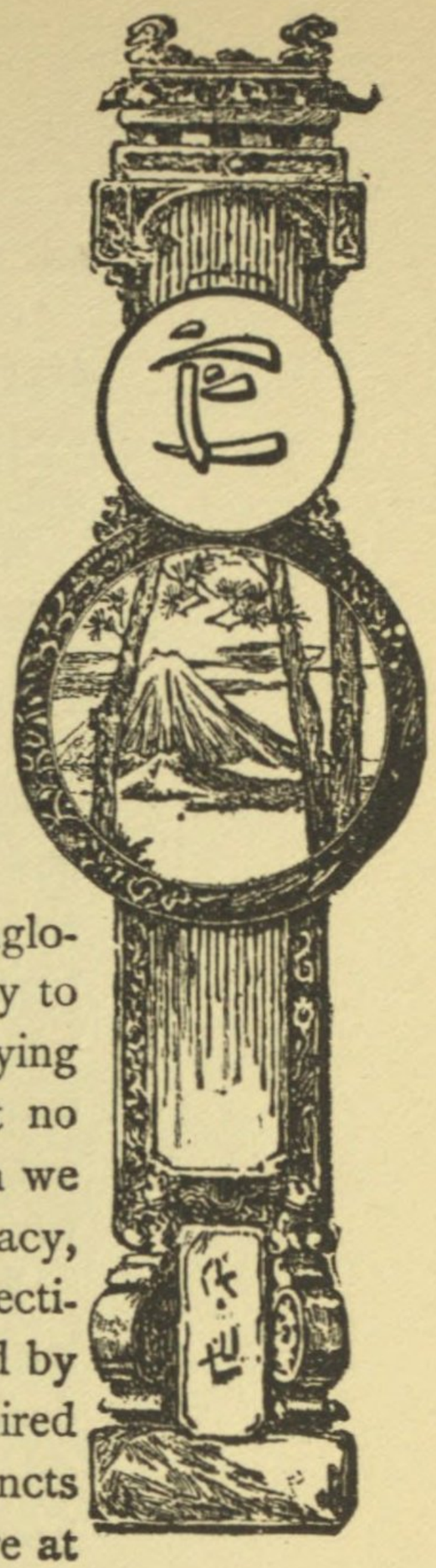
CHAPTER VII.

THE TALENT FOR MISUNDERSTANDING.

THIS remarkable gift of the Chinese people is first observed when the foreigner knows enough of the language to employ it as a vehicle of thought. To his pained surprise, he finds that he is not understood. He therefore returns to his studies with augmented diligence, and at the end of a series of years is able to venture with confidence to accost the general public, or any individual thereof, on miscellaneous topics. If the person addressed is a total stranger, especially if he has never before met a foreigner, the speaker will have opportunity for the same pained surprise as when he made his maiden speech in this tongue. The auditor evidently does not understand. He as evidently does not expect to understand. He visibly pays no attention to what is said, makes no effort whatever to follow it, but simply interrupts you to observe, "When you speak, we do not understand." He has a smile of superiority, as of one contemplating the struggles of a deaf-mute to utter articulate speech, and as if he would say, "Who supposed that you could be understood? It may be your misfortune and not your fault that you were not born with a Chinese tongue, but you should bear your disabilities, and not worry us with them, for when you speak we do not understand you." It is impossible to retain at all times an unruffled serenity in situations like this, and it is natural to turn fiercely on your adversary, and inquire, "Do you understand what I



A Peking Cart.



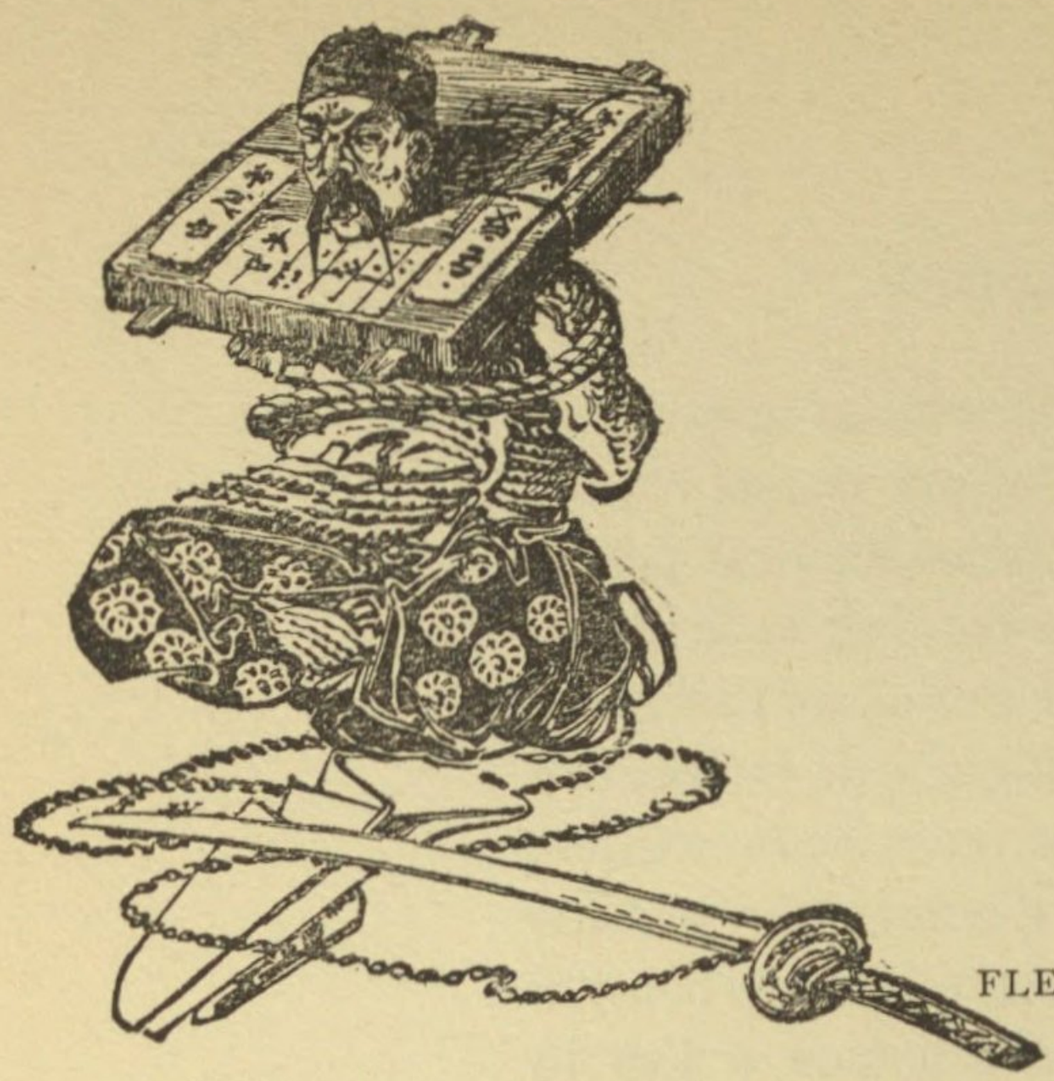
CHAPTER VIII.

THE TALENT FOR INDIRECTION.

ONE of the intellectual habits upon which we Anglo-Saxons pride ourselves most is that of going directly to the marrow of a subject, and when we have reached it saying exactly what we mean. Considerable abatements must no doubt be made in any claim set up for such a habit, when we consider the usages of polite society and those of diplomacy, yet it still remains substantially true that the instinct of rectilinearity is the governing one, albeit considerably modified by special circumstances. No very long acquaintance is required with any Asiatic race, however, to satisfy us that their instincts and ours are by no means the same—in fact, that they are at opposite poles. We shall lay no stress upon the redundancy of honorific terms in all Asiatic languages, some of which in this respect are indefinitely more elaborate than the Chinese. Neither do we emphasise the use of circumlocutions, periphrases, and what may be termed aliases, to express ideas which are perfectly simple, but which no one wishes to express with simplicity. Thus a great variety of terms may be used in Chinese to indicate that a person has died, and not one of the expressions is guilty of the brutality of saying so; nor does the periphrasis depend for its use upon the question whether the person to whom reference is made is an emperor or a coolie, however widely the terms employed may differ in the two cases. Nor are we at present concerned, except in a very general way, with the quality of veracity of language. When



Chinese Card Players.

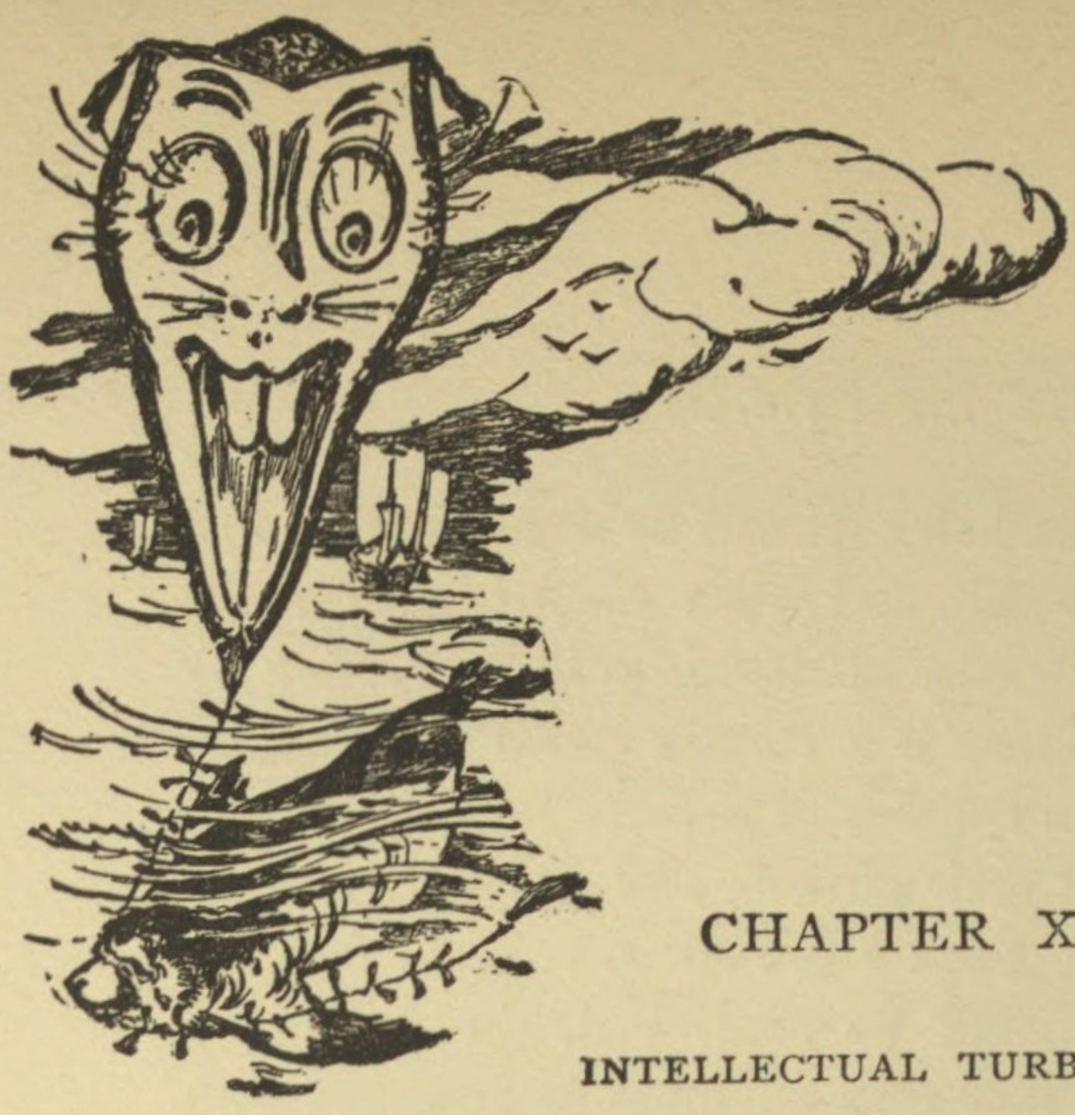


CHAPTER IX.

FLEXIBLE INFLEXIBILITY.

THE first knowledge which we acquire of the Chinese is derived from our servants. Unconsciously to themselves, and not always to our satisfaction, they are our earliest teachers in the native character, and the lessons thus learned we often find it hard to forget. But in proportion as our experience of the Chinese becomes broad, we discover that the conclusions to which we had been insensibly impelled by our dealings with a very narrow circle of servants are strikingly confirmed by our wider knowledge, for there is a sense in which every Chinese may be said to be an epitome of the whole race. The particular characteristic with which we have now to deal, although not satisfactorily described by the paradoxical title which seems to come nearest to an adequate expression, can easily be made intelligible by a very slight description.

Of all the servants employed in a foreign establishment in China, there is no one who so entirely holds the peace of the household in the hollow of his hands, as the cook. His aspect is the personification of deference as he is told by his new mistress what are the methods which she wishes him to employ, and what methods she most emphatically does *not* wish employed. To all that is laid down as the rule of the establishment he assents with a cordiality which is prepossessing, not to say winning. He is, for example, expressly warned that the late cook had a disagreeable habit of putting the

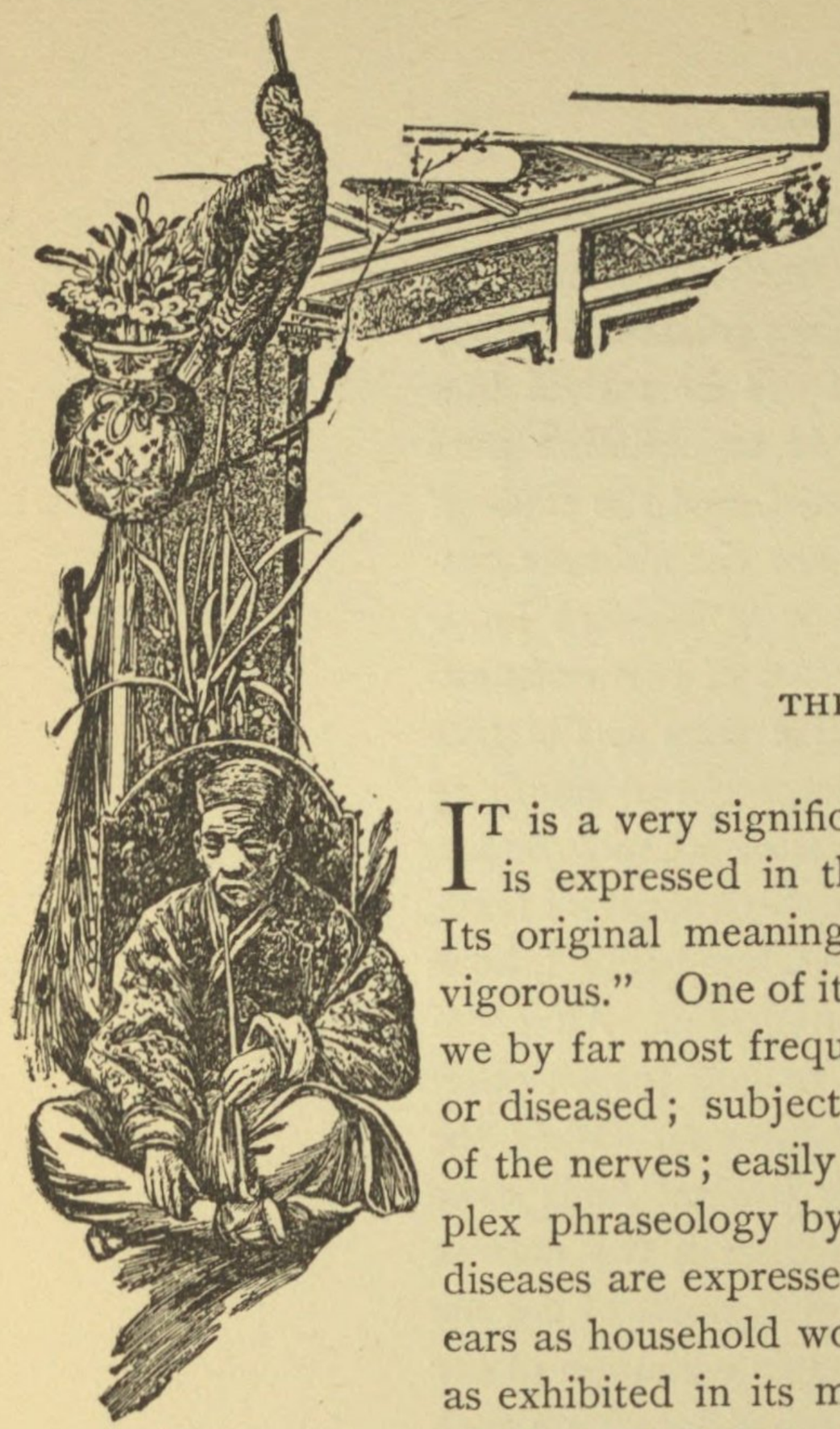


CHAPTER X.

INTELLECTUAL TURBIDITY.

IN speaking of "intellectual turbidity" as a Chinese characteristic, we do not wish to be understood as affirming it to be a peculiarity of the Chinese, or that all Chinese possess it. Taken as a whole, the Chinese people seem abundantly able to hold their own with any race now extant, and they certainly exhibit no weakness of the intellectual powers, nor any tendency to such a weakness. At the same time it must be borne in mind that education in China is restricted to a very narrow circle, and that those who are but imperfectly educated, or who are not educated at all, enjoy in the structure of the Chinese language what is called by the lawyers an "accessory before the fact" to any most flagrant intellectual turbidity of which they may be disposed to be guilty.

Chinese nouns, as is by this time known to several, appear to be indeclinable. They are quite free from "gender" and "case." Chinese adjectives have no degrees of comparison. Chinese verbs are not hampered by any "voice," "mode," "tense," "number," or "person." There is no recognisable distinction between nouns, adjectives, and verbs, for any character may be used indiscriminately in either capacity (or incapacity), and no questions asked. We are not about to complain that the Chinese language cannot be made to convey human thought, nor that there are wide ranges of human thought which it is difficult or impossible to render intelligible in the Chinese language (though this appears to be a truth),

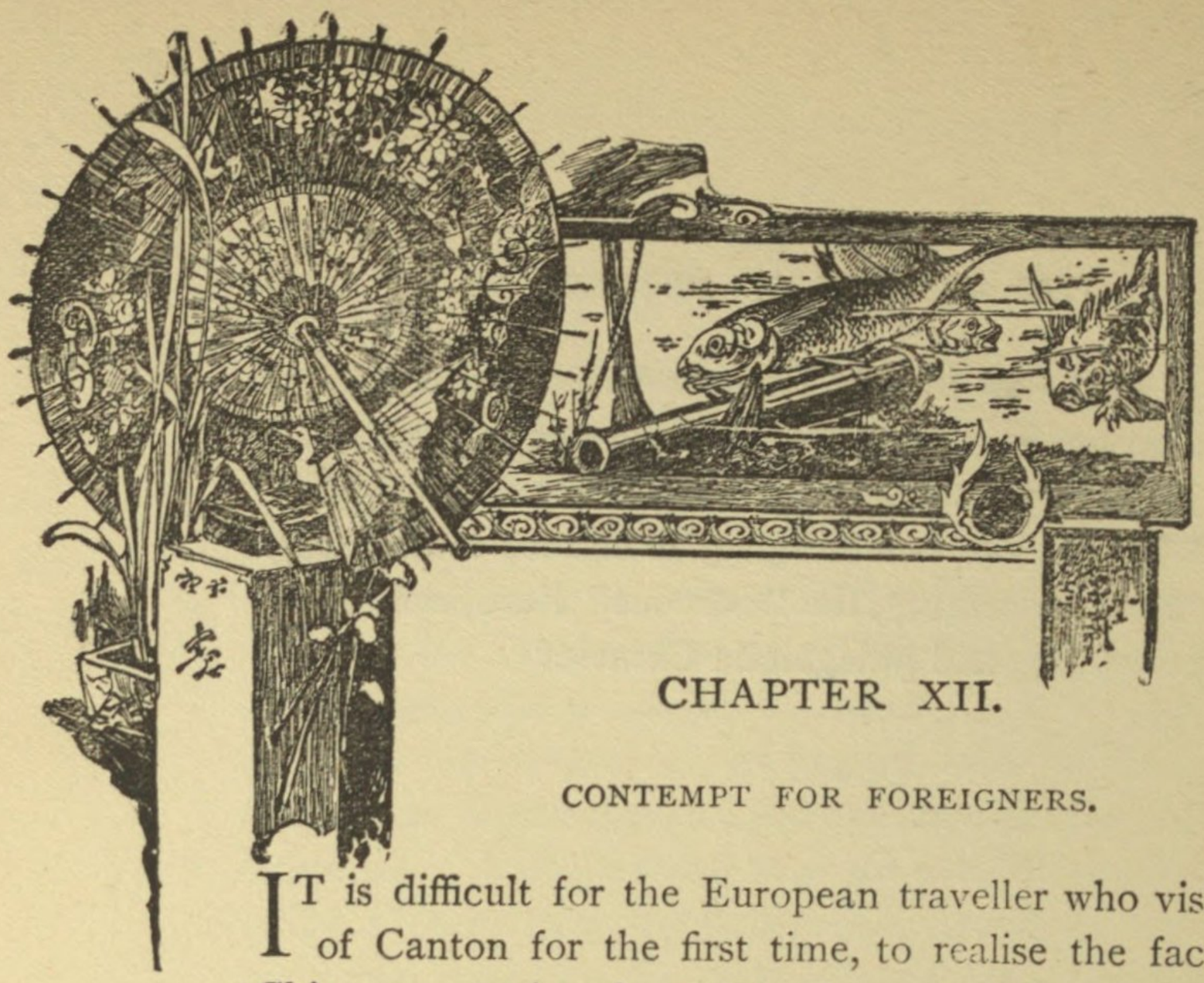


CHAPTER XI.

THE ABSENCE OF NERVES.

IT is a very significant aspect of modern civilisation which is expressed in the different uses of the word "nervous." Its original meaning is "possessing nerve; sinewy; strong; vigorous." One of its derivative meanings, and the one which we by far most frequently meet, is, "Having the nerves weak or diseased; subject to, or suffering from, undue excitement of the nerves; easily excited; weakly." The varied and complex phraseology by which the peculiar phases of nervous diseases are expressed has become by this time familiar in our ears as household words. There is no doubt that civilisation, as exhibited in its modern form, tends to undue nervous excitement, and that nervous diseases are relatively more common than they were a century ago.

But what we have now to say does not concern those who are specially subject to nervous diseases, but to the general mass of Occidentals, who, while not in any specific condition of ill health, are yet continually reminded in a great variety of ways that their nervous systems are a most conspicuous part of their organisation. We allude, in short, to people who are "nervous," and we understand this term to include *all* our readers. To the Anglo-Saxon race, at least, it seems a matter of course that those who live in an age of steam and of electricity must necessarily be in a different condition, as to their nerves, from those who lived in the old slow days of sailing-

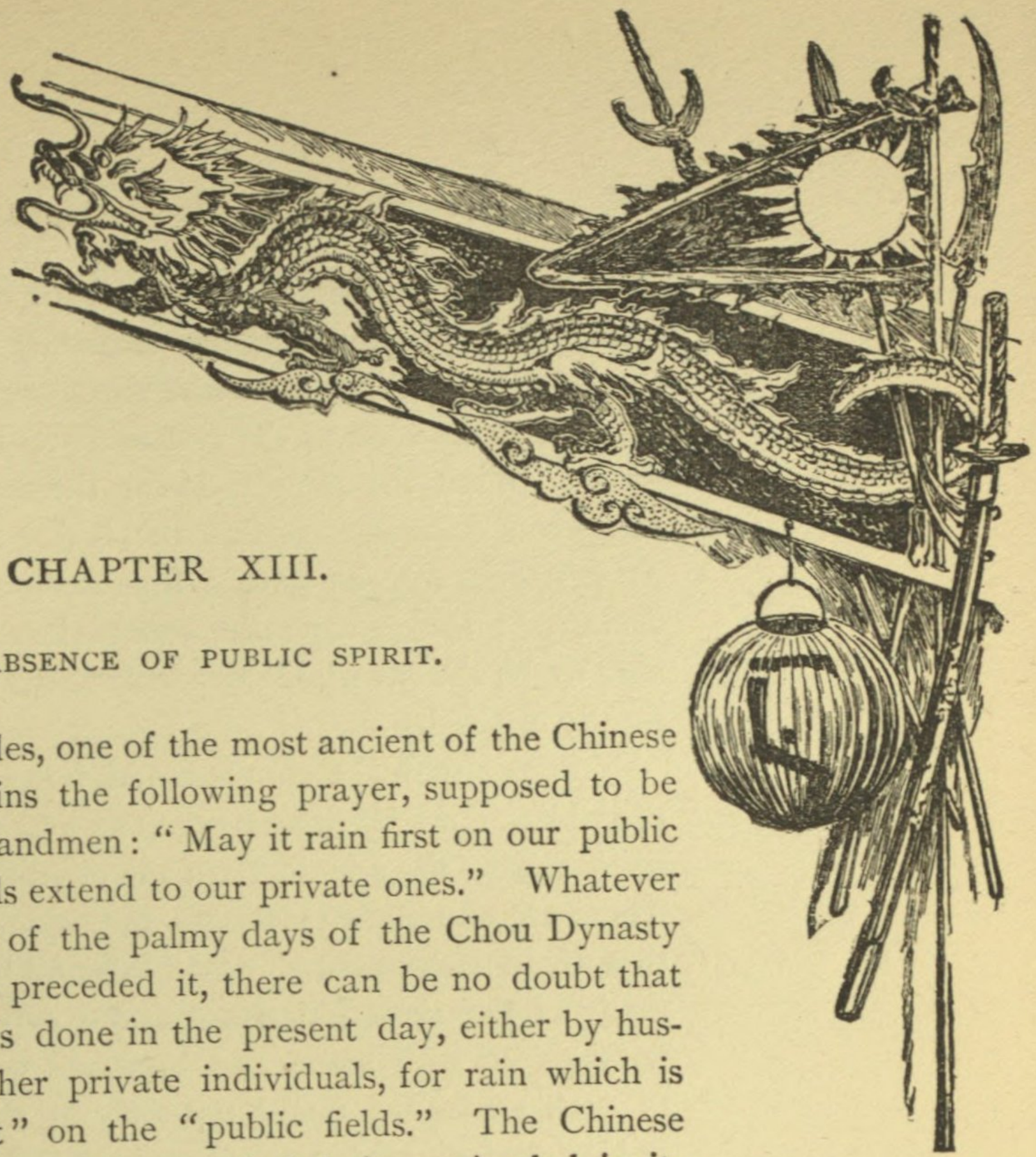


CHAPTER XII.

CONTEMPT FOR FOREIGNERS.

IT is difficult for the European traveller who visits the city of Canton for the first time, to realise the fact that this Chinese emporium has enjoyed regular intercourse with Europeans for a period of more than three hundred and sixty years. During much the greater part of that time there was very little in the conduct of any Western nation in its dealings with the Chinese of which we have any reason to be proud. The normal attitude of the Chinese towards the people of other lands who chose to come to China for any purpose whatever, has been the attitude of the ancient Greeks to every nation not Grecian, considering and treating them as "barbarians." It is only since 1860, by a special clause in the treaties, that a character which signifies "barbarian," and which the Chinese had been in the habit of employing in official documents as synonymous with the word "foreign," was disallowed.

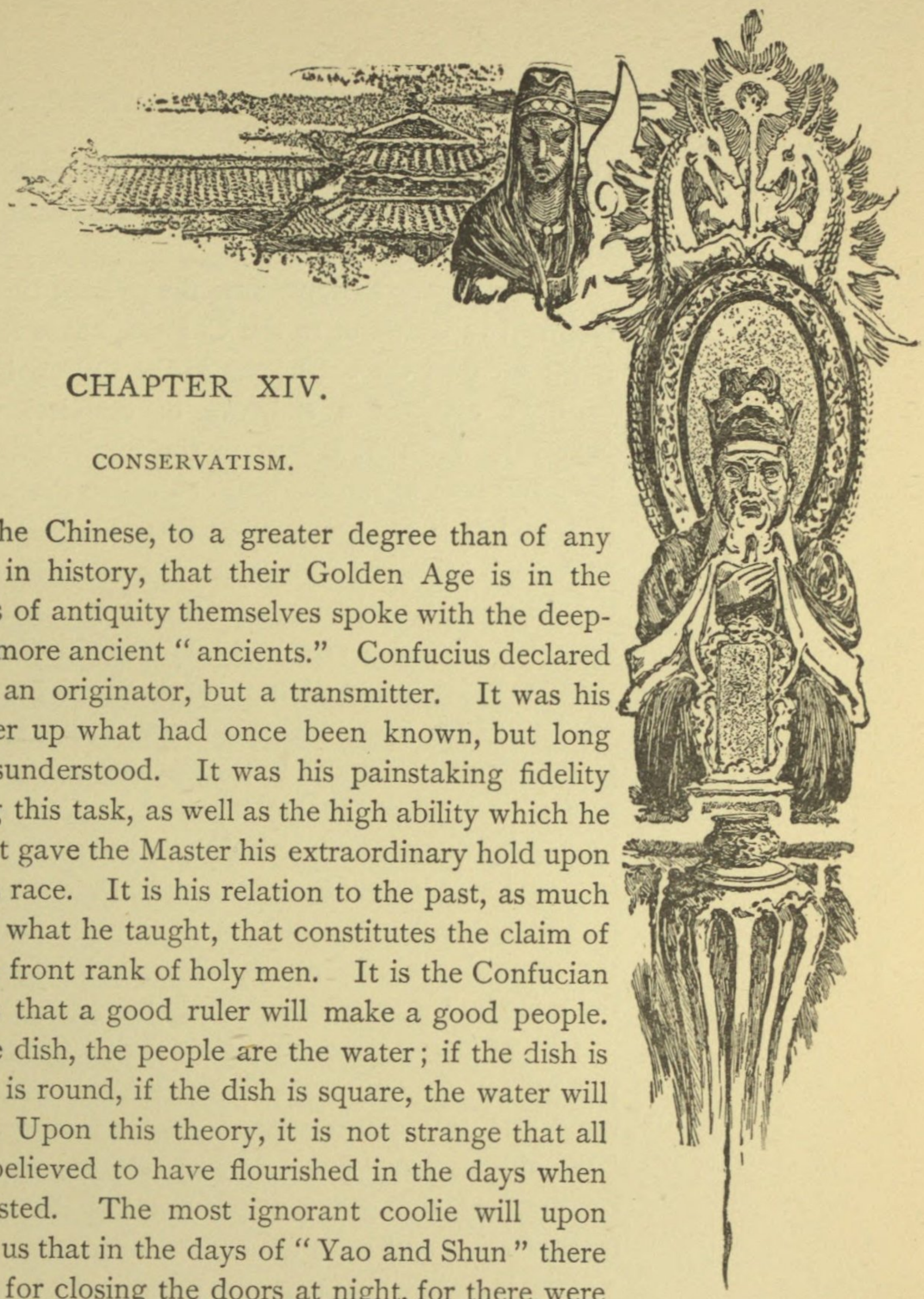
It must always be remembered in connection with the behaviour of the Chinese towards outside nations of the West, that the Chinese had for ages been surrounded only by the most conspicuous inferiority, and had thus been flattered in the most dangerous because the most plausible and therefore the most effective, way. Finding, as they did, that the foreigners with whom they came into contact could be alternately cajoled and bullied into conforming to the wishes of the Chinese, the latter were but confirmed in their conviction of their



CHAPTER XIII.

THE ABSENCE OF PUBLIC SPIRIT.

THE Book of Odes, one of the most ancient of the Chinese Classics, contains the following prayer, supposed to be uttered by the husbandmen: "May it rain first on our public fields, and afterwards extend to our private ones." Whatever may have been true of the palmy days of the Chou Dynasty and of those which preceded it, there can be no doubt that very little praying is done in the present day, either by husbandmen or any other private individuals, for rain which is to be applied "first" on the "public fields." The Chinese government, as we are often reminded, is patriarchal in its nature, and demands filial obedience from its subjects. A plantation negro who had heard the saying, "Every man for himself, and God for us all," failed to reproduce the precise shade of its thought in his own modified version, as follows, "Every man for himself, and *God for himself!*" This new form of an old adage contains in a nutshell the substance of the views of the average Chinese with regard to the powers that be. "I, for my part, am obliged to look out for myself," he seems to think, if indeed he bestows any thought whatever on the government, and "the government is old enough and strong enough to take care of itself without any help of mine." The government, on the other hand, although patriarchal, is much more occupied in looking after the Patriarch, than in caring for the Patriarch's family. Generally speaking, it will do very little to which it is not impelled by the danger, if it



CHAPTER XIV.

CONSERVATISM.

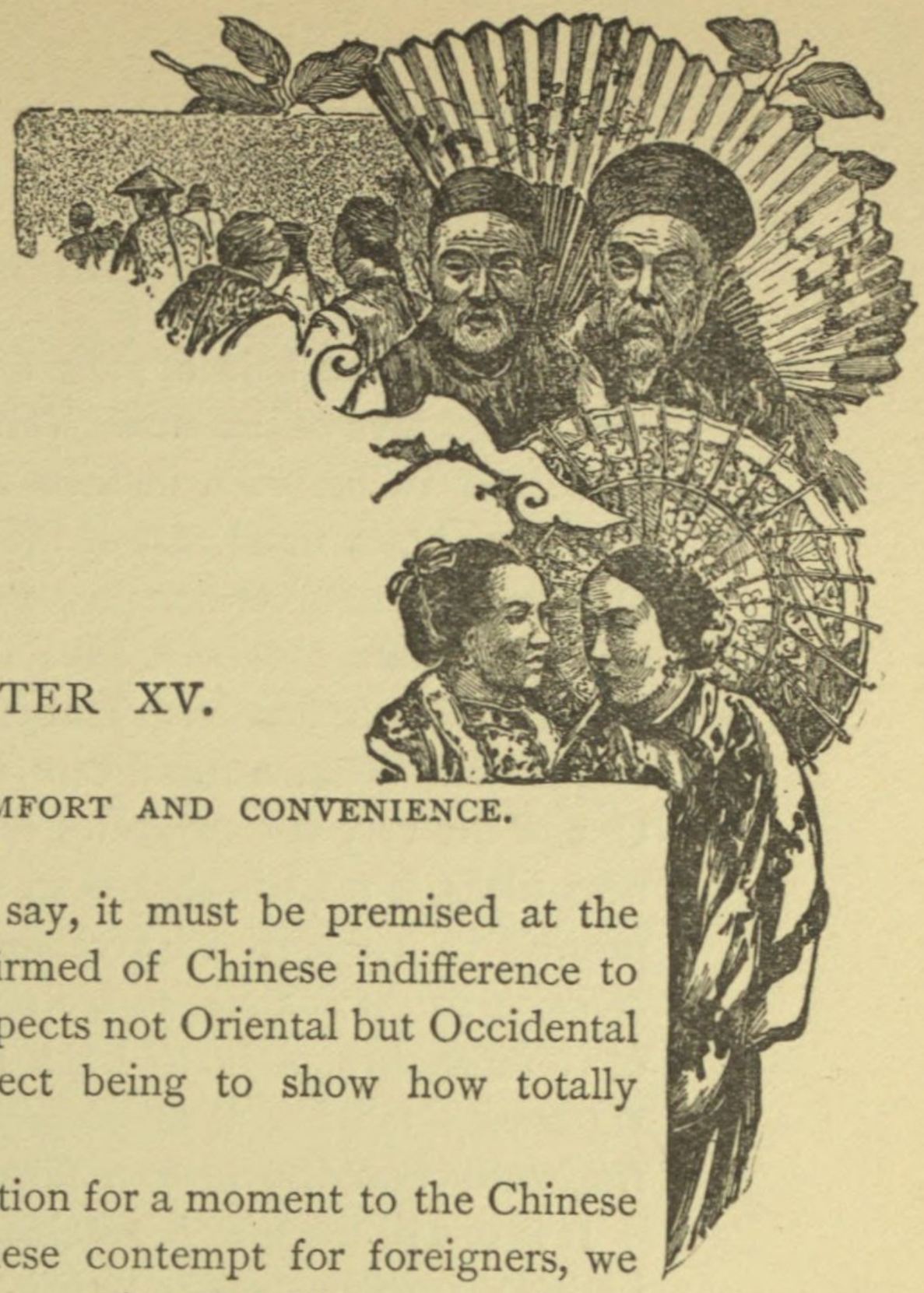
IT is true of the Chinese, to a greater degree than of any other nation in history, that their Golden Age is in the past. The sages of antiquity themselves spoke with the deepest reverence of more ancient "ancients." Confucius declared that he was not an originator, but a transmitter. It was his mission to gather up what had once been known, but long neglected or misunderstood. It was his painstaking fidelity in accomplishing this task, as well as the high ability which he brought to it, that gave the Master his extraordinary hold upon the people of his race. It is his relation to the past, as much as the quality of what he taught, that constitutes the claim of Confucius to the front rank of holy men. It is the Confucian theory of morals that a good ruler will make a good people. The prince is the dish, the people are the water; if the dish is round, the water is round, if the dish is square, the water will be square also. Upon this theory, it is not strange that all the virtues are believed to have flourished in the days when model rulers existed. The most ignorant coolie will upon occasion remind us that in the days of "Yao and Shun" there was no necessity for closing the doors at night, for there were no thieves; and that if an article was lost on the highway it was the duty of the first comer to stand as a nominal guard over it until the next one happened along, who took his turn until the owner arrived, who always found his property perfectly intact. It is a common saying that the present is infe-



A Chinese Barber.



Engine Works and Yard at Hanyang.



CHAPTER XV.

INDIFFERENCE TO COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE.

IN what we have now to say, it must be premised at the outset that all that is affirmed of Chinese indifference to comfort and convenience respects not Oriental but Occidental standards, the principal object being to show how totally different those standards are.

Let us first direct our attention for a moment to the Chinese dress. In speaking of Chinese contempt for foreigners, we have already had occasion to mention that Western modes of apparel have very little which is attractive to the Chinese; we are now forced to admit that the converse is equally true. To us it certainly appears singular that a great nation should become reconciled to such an unnatural custom as shaving off the entire front part of the head, leaving that exposed which nature evidently intended should be protected. But since the Chinese were driven to adopt this custom at the point of the sword, and since, as already remarked, it has become a sign and a test of loyalty, it need be no further noticed in this connection than to call attention to the undoubted fact that the Chinese themselves do not recognise any discomfort from the practice, and would probably be exceedingly unwilling to revert to the Ming Dynasty tonsure.

The same considerations do not apply to the Chinese habit of going bareheaded at almost all seasons of the year, and especially in summer. The whole nation moves about in the blistering heats of the summer months holding one arm aloft,



A Middle Class Family in Winter Dress.

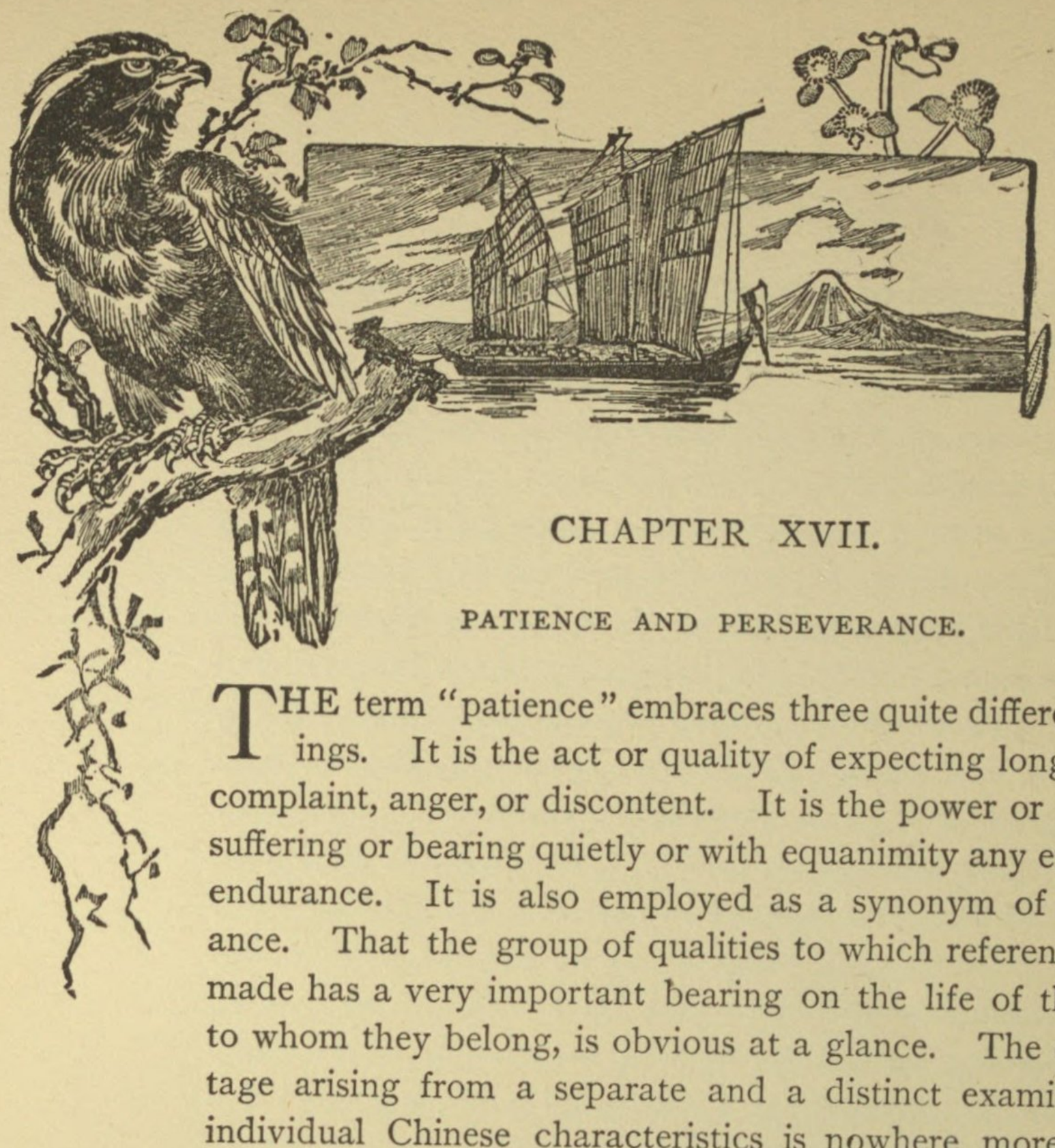


CHAPTER XVI.

PHYSICAL VITALITY.

THAT physical vitality which forms so important a background for other Chinese characteristics, deserves consideration by itself. It may be regarded in four aspects: the reproductive power of the Chinese race, its adaptation to different circumstances, its longevity, and its recuperative power.

The first impression which the traveller derives from the phenomena of Chinese life is that of redundance. China seems to be full of people. It seems to be so because it is so. Japan, too, appears to have a large population, but it does not take a very discriminating eye to perceive that the dense population of Japan bears no proportion to the dense population of China. In respect of relative and absolute density of population, China more nearly resembles India than any other country. But the people and the languages of India are many and various, while the people of China, with some exceptions not materially affecting the issue, are one and the same. This first impression of a redundant population is everywhere confirmed, no matter in what portion of this broad Empire we set our foot. Where the population is in reality sparse, this is generally found to be due to causes which are susceptible of easy explanation. The terrible inroads of the great T'aip'ing rebellion, followed by the only less destructive Mohammedan rebellion, and by the almost unparalleled famine of 1877–78, extending over five provinces, reduced the total population of China, perhaps by many scores of millions. The

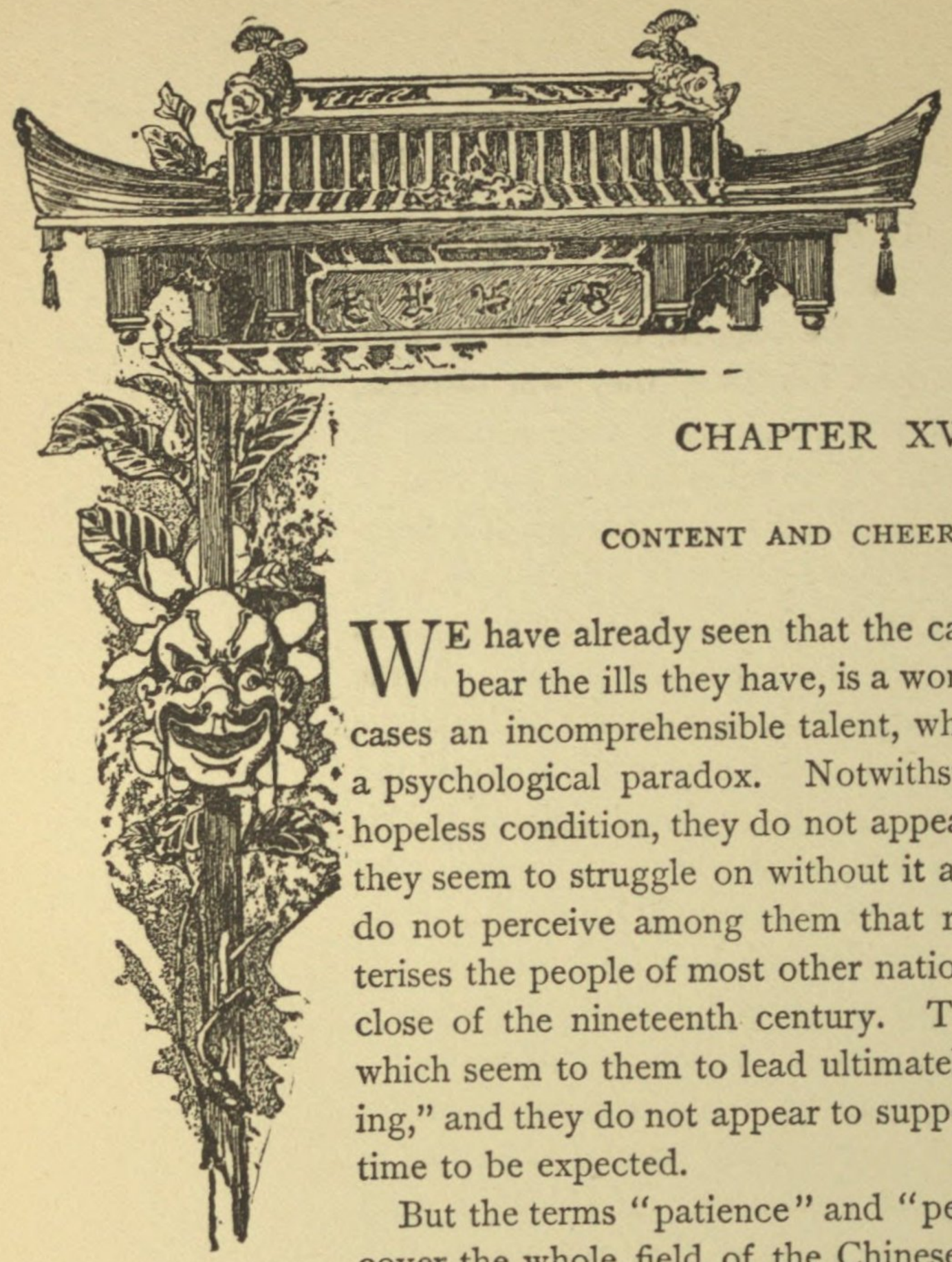


CHAPTER XVII.

PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE.

THE term "patience" embraces three quite different meanings. It is the act or quality of expecting long, without complaint, anger, or discontent. It is the power or the act of suffering or bearing quietly or with equanimity any evil—calm endurance. It is also employed as a synonym of perseverance. That the group of qualities to which reference is here made has a very important bearing on the life of the people to whom they belong, is obvious at a glance. The disadvantage arising from a separate and a distinct examination of individual Chinese characteristics is nowhere more obvious than in the consideration of the qualities of patience and perseverance. These characteristics of the Chinese are inseparably connected with their comparative "absence of nerves," with their "disregard of time," and especially with that quality of "industry" by which the national patience and perseverance are most conspicuously and most effectively illustrated. What has been already said upon these topics will have served to suggest one of the chief virtues in the Chinese character, but the necessarily desultory treatment involved in such incidental mention deserves to be supplemented by a more comprehensive presentation.

Among a dense population like that of the Chinese Empire, life is often reduced to its very lowest terms, and those terms are literally a "struggle for existence." In order to live, it is necessary to have the means of living, and those means each



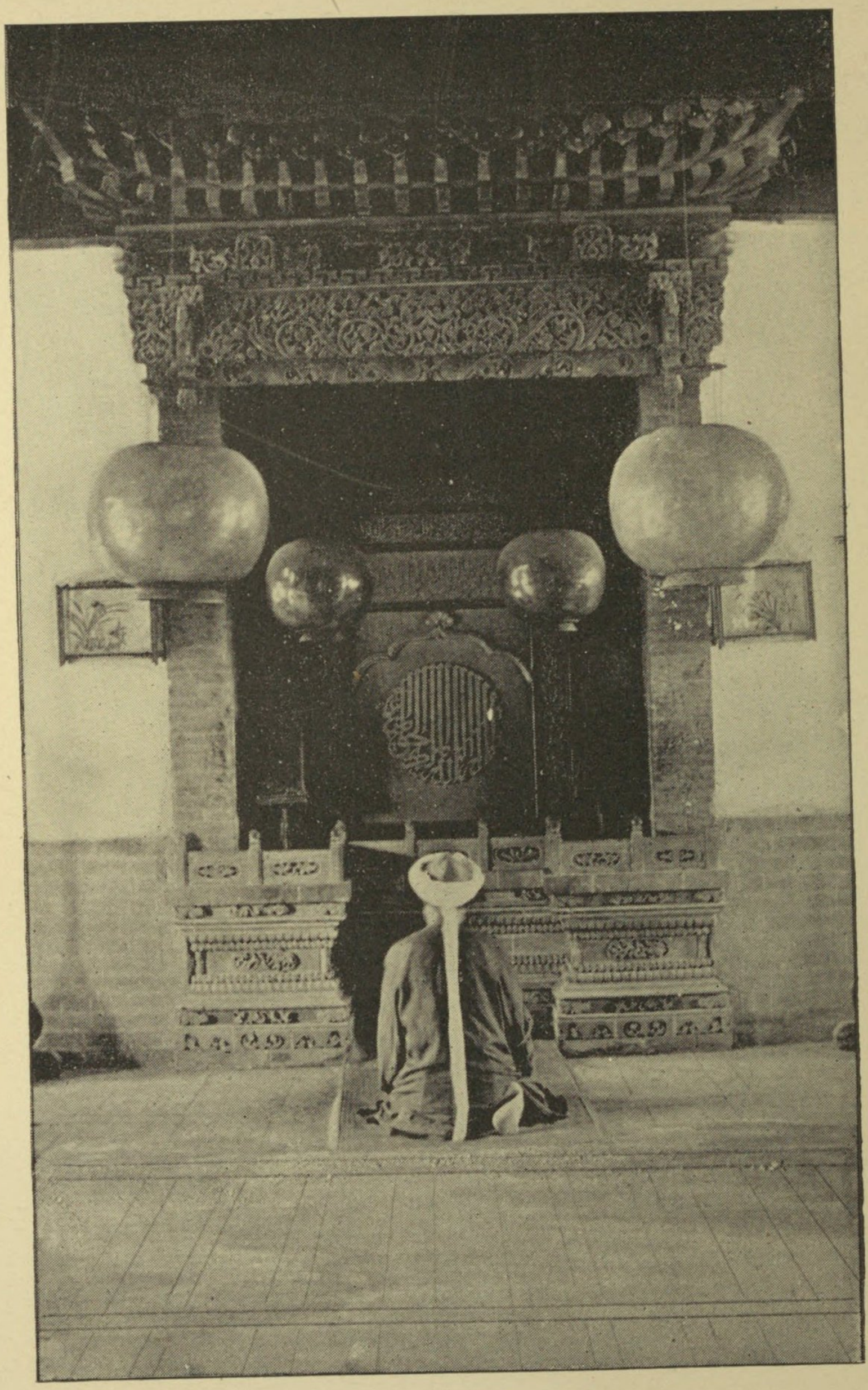
CHAPTER XVIII.

CONTENT AND CHEERFULNESS.

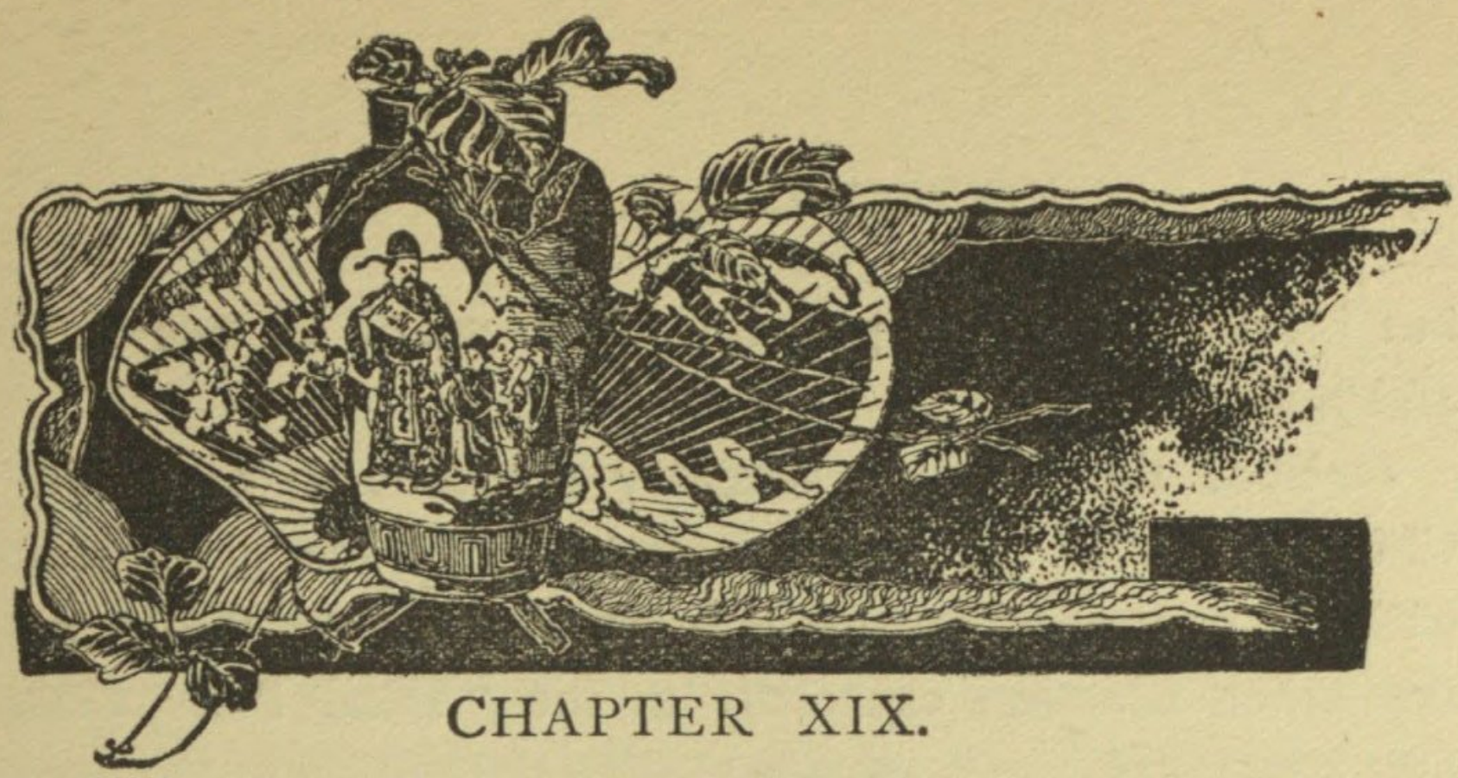
WE have already seen that the capacity of the Chinese to bear the ills they have, is a wonderful, and to us in most cases an incomprehensible talent, which has well been called a psychological paradox. Notwithstanding their apparently hopeless condition, they do not appear to lose hope, or rather, they seem to struggle on without it and often against it. We do not perceive among them that restlessness which characterises the people of most other nations, especially towards the close of the nineteenth century. They do not cherish plans which seem to them to lead ultimately to "a good time coming," and they do not appear to suppose that there is any such time to be expected.

But the terms "patience" and "perseverance" by no means cover the whole field of the Chinese virtues in this direction. We must also take account of their quietness of mind in conditions often very unfavourable to it, and of that chronic state of good spirits which we designate by the term "cheerfulness." Our main object is to call attention to the existence of such virtues; yet we may perhaps be able incidentally to suggest certain considerations which in part help to account for them.

By the term "contentedness" we do not mean to imply that any individual in China is satisfied with what he possesses in such a way and to such a degree that he does not wish to better his condition. The contentedness of the Chinese, as we



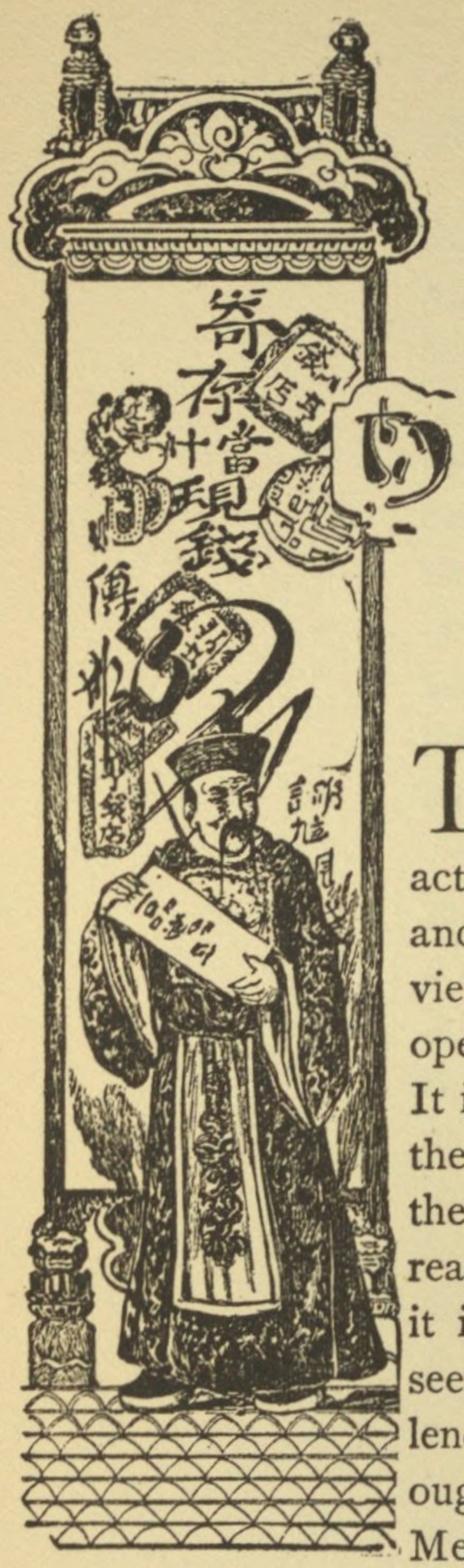
INTERIOR OF A MOHAMMEDAN MOSQUE.



CHAPTER XIX.

FILIAL PIETY.

To discuss the characteristics of the Chinese without mentioning filial piety, is out of the question. But the filial piety of the Chinese is not an easy subject to treat. These words, like many others which we are obliged to employ, have among the Chinese a sense very different from that which we are accustomed to attach to them, and a sense of which no English expression is an exact translation. This is also true of a great variety of terms used in Chinese, and of no one more than of the word ordinarily rendered "ceremony" (*li*), with which filial piety is intimately connected. To illustrate this, and at the same time to furnish a background for what we have to say of the characteristic under discussion, we cannot do better than to cite a passage from M. Callery (quoted in the "Middle Kingdom"): "Ceremony epitomises the entire Chinese mind; and in my opinion, the Book of Rites is *per se* the most exact and complete monograph that China has been able to give of herself to other nations. Its affections, if it has any, are satisfied by ceremony; its duties are fulfilled by ceremony; its virtues and vices are referred to ceremony; the natural relations of created beings essentially link themselves in ceremonial—in a word, to that people ceremonial is man as a moral, political, and religious being, in his multiplied relations with family, society, and religion." Every one must agree in Dr. Williams's comment upon this passage, that it shows how "meagre a rendering is 'ceremony' for the Chinese idea of *li*, for it includes not only the external conduct,

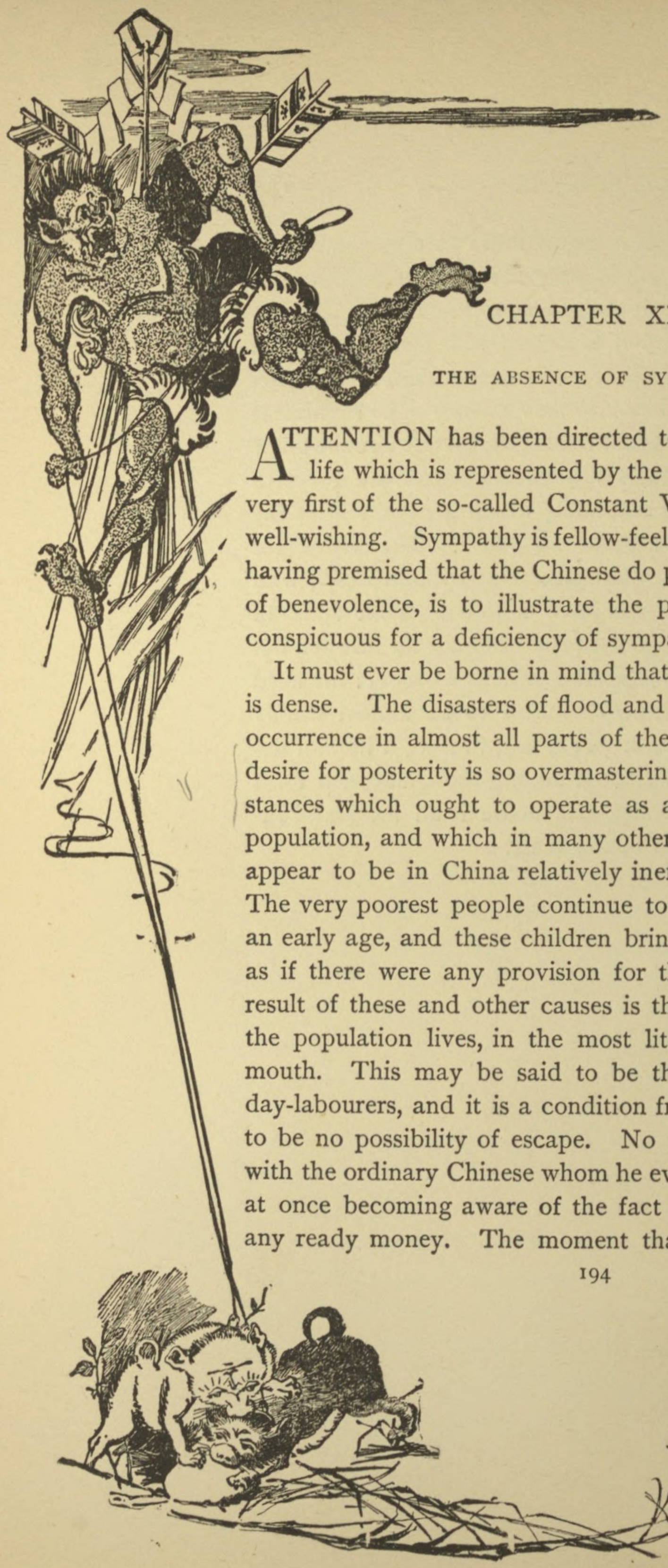


CHAPTER XX.

BENEVOLENCE.

THE Chinese have placed the term "benevolence" at the head of their list of the Five Constant Virtues. The character which denotes it, is composed of the symbols for "man" and "two," by which is supposed to be shadowed forth the view that benevolence is something which ought to be developed by the contact of any two human beings with each other. It is unnecessary to remark that the theory which the form of the character seems to favour, is not at all substantiated by the facts of life among the Chinese, as those facts are to be read by the intelligent and attentive observer. Nevertheless, it is far from being true, as a superficial examination would seem to indicate, that there is among the Chinese no benevolence, though this has been often predicated by those who ought to have known the truth. "The feeling of pity," as Mencius reminds us, "is common to all men," widely as they differ in its expression. The mild and in some respects really benevolent teachings of the Buddhist religion have not been without a visible effect upon the Chinese people. There is, moreover, among the Chinese a strong practical instinct in every direction, and when the attention has once been directed towards the "practice of virtue," there is a great variety of forms in which there is certain to be abundant scope for the exercise of benevolence.

Among the kinds of benevolence which have commended themselves to the Chinese may be named the establishment of



CHAPTER XXI.

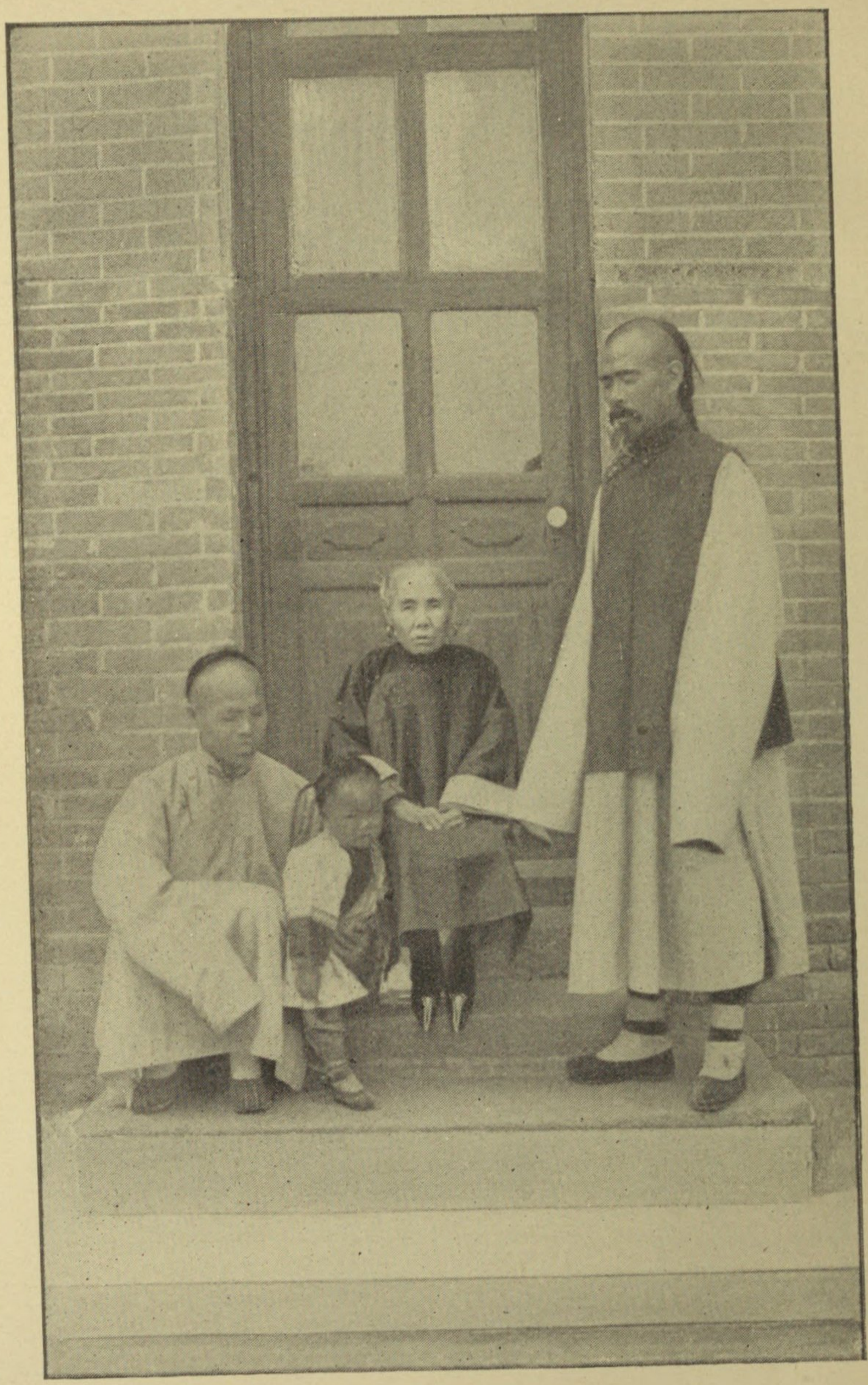
THE ABSENCE OF SYMPATHY.

ATTENTION has been directed to that aspect of Chinese life which is represented by the term "benevolence," the very first of the so-called Constant Virtues. Benevolence is well-wishing. Sympathy is fellow-feeling. Our present object, having premised that the Chinese do practise a certain amount of benevolence, is to illustrate the proposition that they are conspicuous for a deficiency of sympathy.

It must ever be borne in mind that the population of China is dense. The disasters of flood and famine are of periodical occurrence in almost all parts of the Empire. The Chinese desire for posterity is so overmastering a passion that circumstances which ought to operate as an effectual check upon population, and which in many other countries would do so, appear to be in China relatively inefficient for that purpose. The very poorest people continue to marry their children at an early age, and these children bring up large families, just as if there were any provision for their maintenance. The result of these and other causes is that a large proportion of the population lives, in the most literal sense, from hand to mouth. This may be said to be the universal condition of day-labourers, and it is a condition from which there appears to be no possibility of escape. No foreigner can long deal with the ordinary Chinese whom he everywhere meets, without at once becoming aware of the fact that hardly any one has any ready money. The moment that anything whatever is



Native Women Sewing and Weaving Lace.



FOUR GENERATIONS.



CHAPTER XXII.

SOCIAL TYPHOONS.

AMONG a population of such unexampled density as in China, where families often of great size are crowded together in narrow quarters, it is impossible that occasions for quarrels should not be all-pervasive. "How many are there in your family?" you inquire of your neighbour. "Between ten and twenty mouths," he replies. "And do you have everything in common?" you ask. "Yes," is the most common reply. Here, then, are fifteen or twenty human beings, probably representing three, if not four, generations, who live from the income of the same business or farm, an income which is all put into a common stock; and the wants of all the members of the family are to be met solely from this common property. The brothers each contribute their time and strength to the common fund, but the sisters-in-law are an element of capital importance, and very difficult it is to harmonise them. The elder sister-in-law enjoys tyrannising somewhat over the younger, and the younger ones are naturally jealous of the prerogatives of the elder. Each strives to make her husband feel that in this community of property he is the one who is worsted.

The younger generation of children furnish a prolific source of domestic unpleasantness. Where is the society capable of withstanding the strain to which it must be subjected under conditions such as these? Troubles of this nature are far from



CHAPTER XXIII.

MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT FOR LAW.

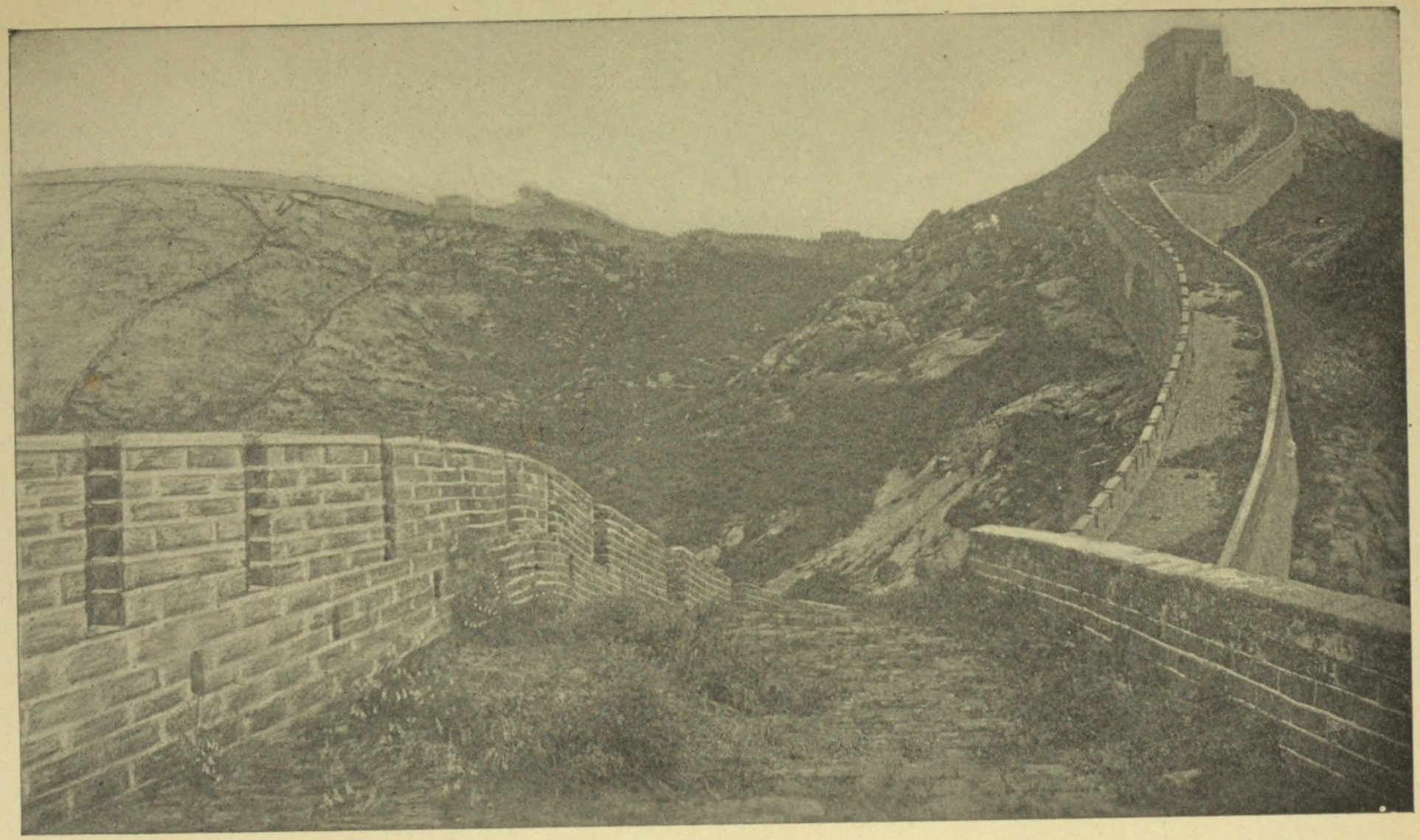
ONE of the most distinctive features of Chinese society is that which is epitomised in the word "responsibility," a word which carries with it a significance and embraces a wealth of meaning to which Western lands are total strangers. In those lands, as we well know, the individual is the unit and the nation is a large collection of individuals. In China the unit of social life is found in the family, the village, or the clan, and these are often convertible terms. Thousands of Chinese villages comprise exclusively persons having the same surname and the same ancestors. The inhabitants have lived in the same spot ever since they began to live at all, and trace an unbroken descent for many hundred years back to the last great political upheaval, such as the overthrow of the Ming Dynasty or its establishment. In such a village there can be no relationship laterally more distant than "cousin," and every male member of an older generation is either a father, an uncle, or some kind of a "grandfather." Sometimes eleven generations are represented in the same small hamlet. This does not imply, as might be supposed, extreme old age on the part of any representative of the older generations. The Chinese marry young, marry repeatedly, often late in life, and constantly adopt children. The result is such a tangle among relatives that without special inquiry and minute attention to the particular characters which are employed in writing the names of all who belong to the same "generation," it is im-

CHAPTER XXIV.

MUTUAL SUSPICION.

IT is an indisputable truth that without a certain amount of mutual confidence it is impossible for mankind to exist in an organised society, especially in a society so highly organised and so complex as that of China. Assuming this as an axiom, it is not the less necessary to direct our attention to a series of phenomena, which, however inharmonious they may appear with our theory, are sufficiently real to those who are acquainted with China. Much of what we shall have to say of the mutual suspicion of the Chinese is by no means peculiar to this people; it is rather a trait which they share in common with all Orientals, the manifestations of which are doubtless much modified by the genius of Chinese institutions. The whole subject is intimately connected with that of mutual responsibility, already discussed. Nothing is more likely to excite the suspicion not of the Chinese only but of any human being, than the danger that he may be held to account for something which has no concern whatever with himself, but the consequences of which may be most serious.

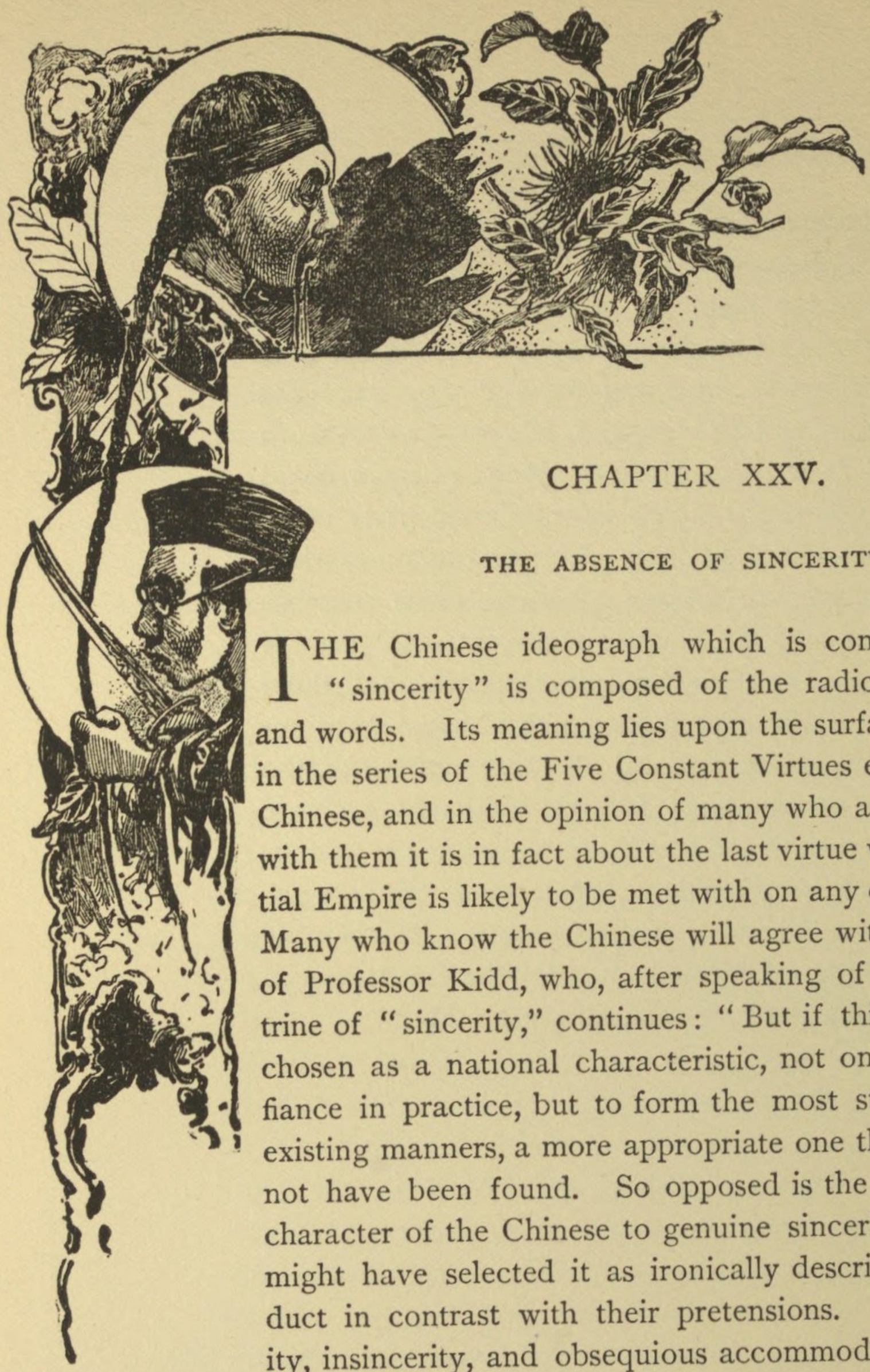
The first manifestation which attracts a stranger's attention of the chronic suspicion prevailing in China is the existence in all parts of the Empire of lofty walls which enclose all cities. The fact that the word for city is in Chinese the equivalent for a walled city, is as significant as the fact that in the Latin language the word which denoted army also meant drill or practice. The laws of the Empire require that every city



A Portion of the Great Chinese Wall.



A Chinese Boy's School (Christian).

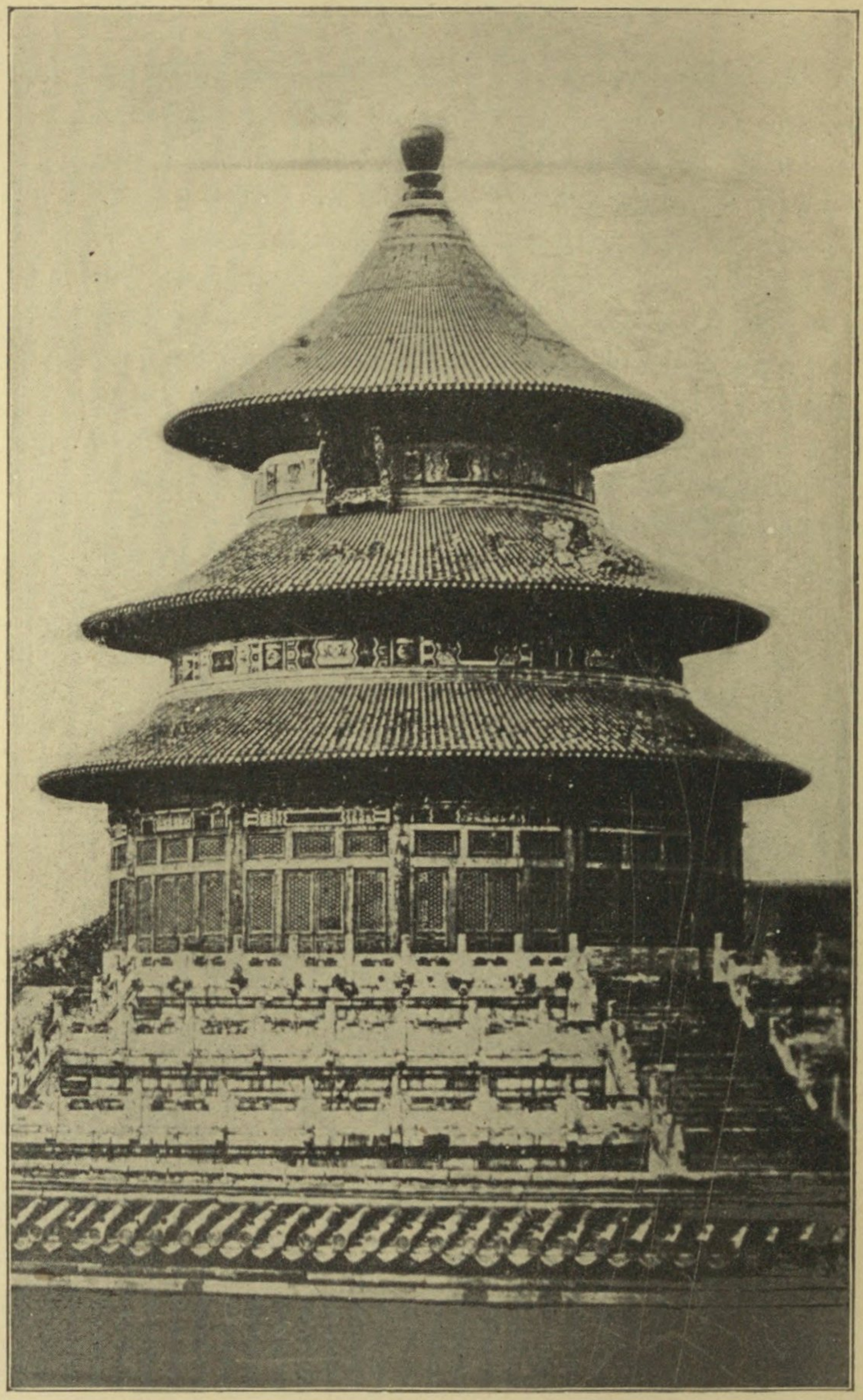


CHAPTER XXV.

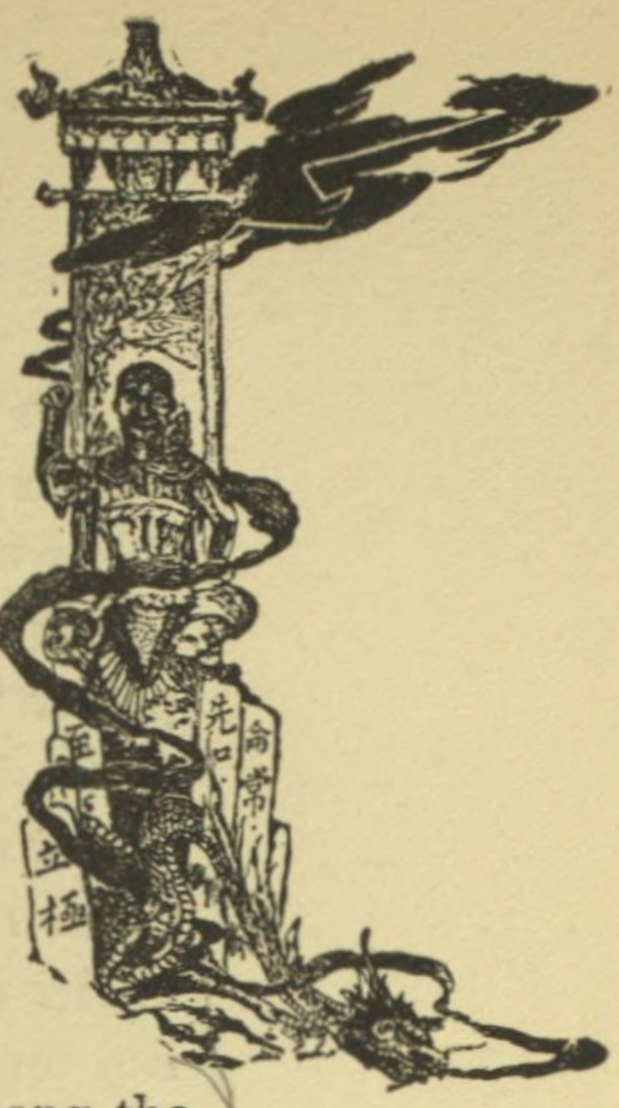
THE ABSENCE OF SINCERITY.

THE Chinese ideograph which is commonly translated "sincerity" is composed of the radicals denoting man and words. Its meaning lies upon the surface. It is the last in the series of the Five Constant Virtues enumerated by the Chinese, and in the opinion of many who are well acquainted with them it is in fact about the last virtue which in the Celestial Empire is likely to be met with on any considerable scale. Many who know the Chinese will agree with the observation of Professor Kidd, who, after speaking of the Chinese doctrine of "sincerity," continues: "But if this virtue had been chosen as a national characteristic, not only to be set at defiance in practice, but to form the most striking contrast to existing manners, a more appropriate one than sincerity could not have been found. So opposed is the public and private character of the Chinese to genuine sincerity, that an enemy might have selected it as ironically descriptive of their conduct in contrast with their pretensions. Falsehood, duplicity, insincerity, and obsequious accommodation to favourable circumstances are national features remarkably prominent." How far this judgment is justified by the facts of Chinese life we may be able better to decide when we shall have considered those facts in detail.

We have assumed that it is a reasonable theory, and one which we believe is supported by the opinion of competent



THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN, PEKING.



CHAPTER XXVI.

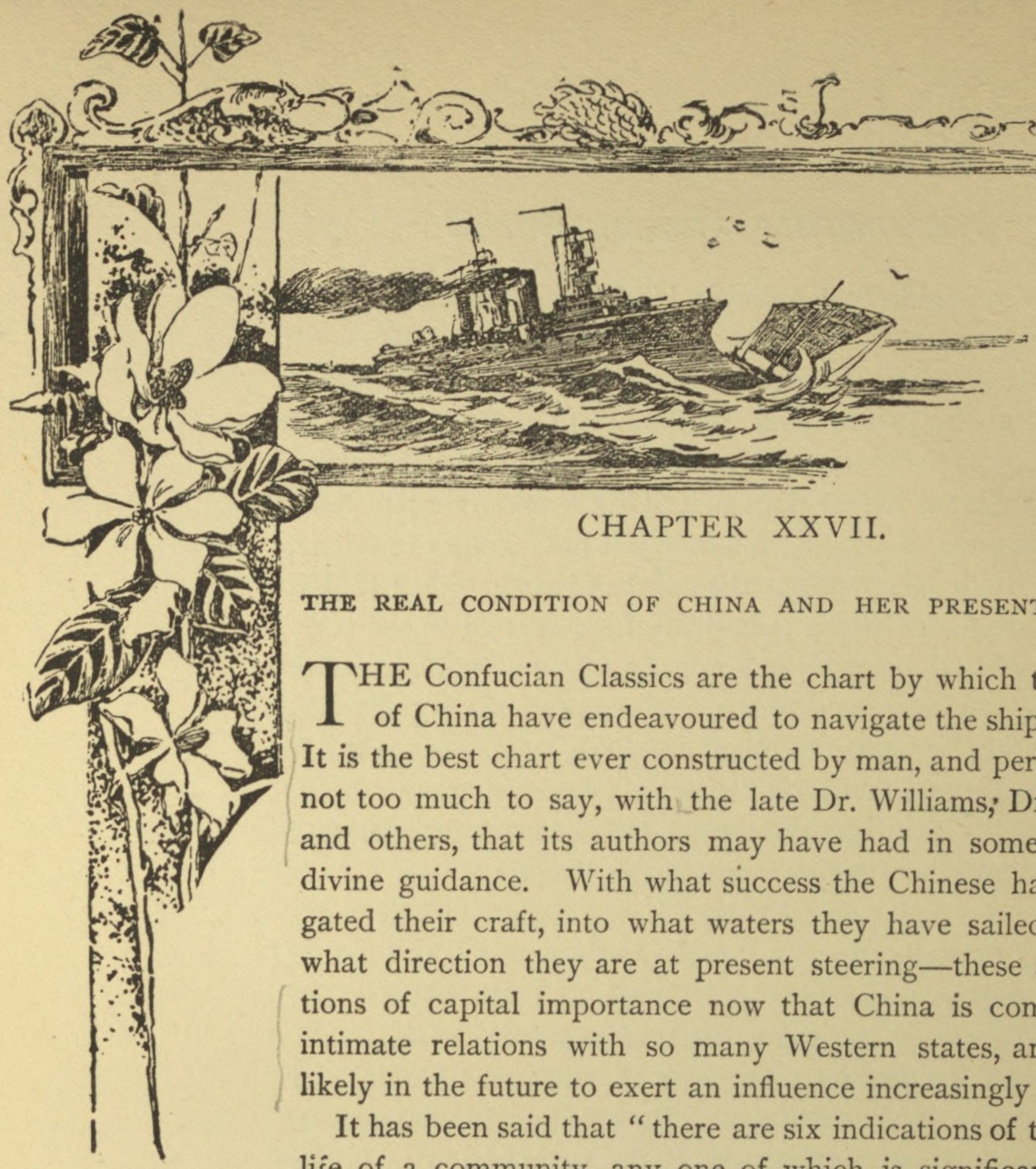
POLYTHEISM, PANTHEISM, ATHEISM.

CONFUCIANISM, as a system of thought, is among the most remarkable intellectual achievements of the race. It is true that the Western reader cannot escape a feeling that much of what he finds in the Confucian Classics is jejune. But it is not merely by perusing them that we are to receive our most forcible impressions of what the Chinese Classics are and have been, but by contemplating their effects. Here is the Chinese race, by far the mightiest aggregation of human beings in any one nation on earth, "with a written history extending as far back as that of any other which the world has known, the only nation that has throughout retained its nationality, and has never been ousted from the land where it first appeared," existing, for aught that appears, in much the same way as in hoary antiquity. What is the explanation of this unexampled fact? By what means has this incomputable mass of human beings, dwelling on the Chinese plains from the dawn of history until now, been controlled, and how is it that they appear to be an exception to the universal law of the decay and death of nations?

Those who have investigated this subject most thoroughly are united in declaring that this result is due to the fact that, whereas other nations have depended upon physical force, the Chinese have depended upon moral forces. No student of history, no observant traveller who knows human nature, can fail to be impressed, to the point of deep awe, with the thought



A Chinese Idol.



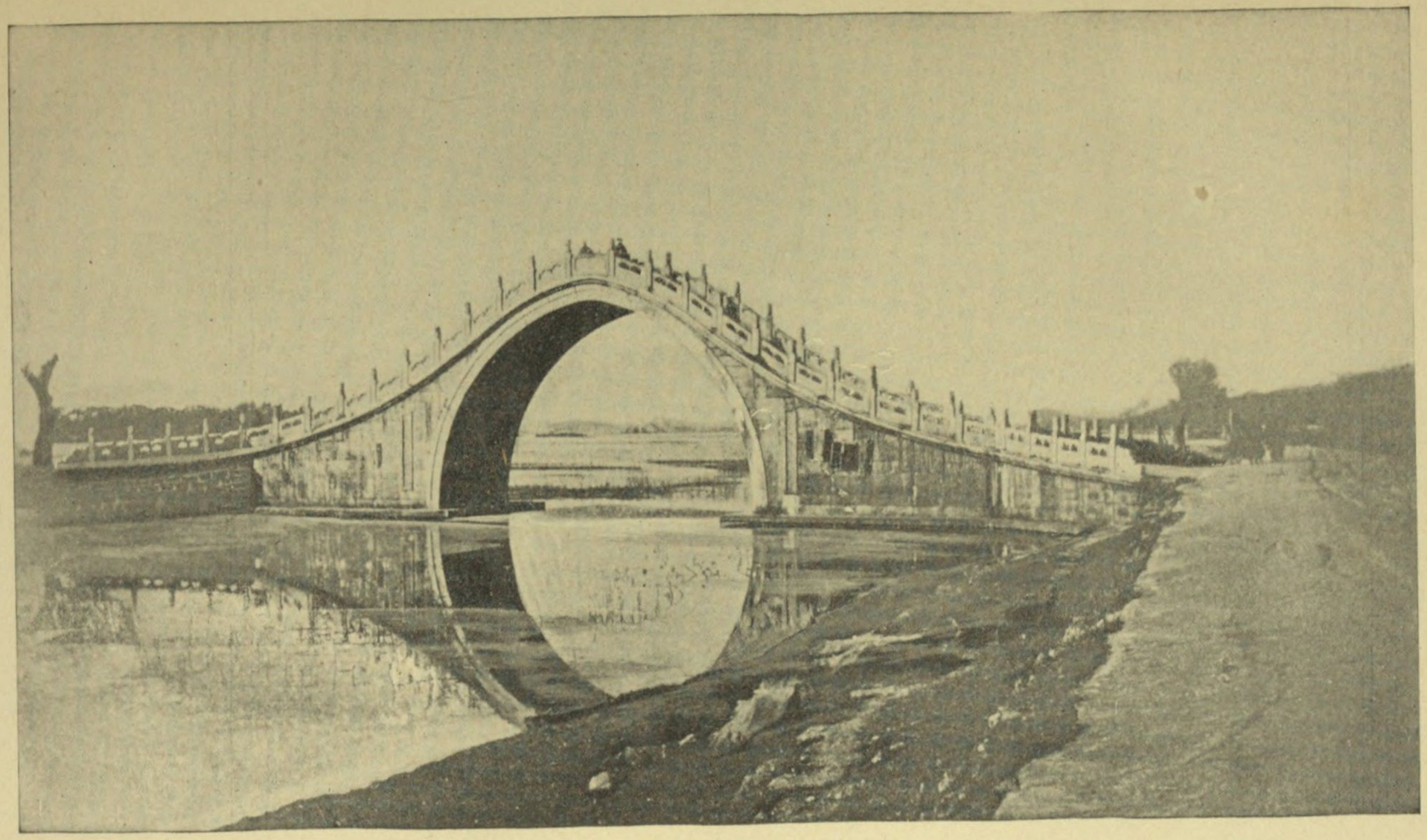
CHAPTER XXVII.

THE REAL CONDITION OF CHINA AND HER PRESENT NEEDS.

THE Confucian Classics are the chart by which the rulers of China have endeavoured to navigate the ship of state. It is the best chart ever constructed by man, and perhaps it is not too much to say, with the late Dr. Williams, Dr. Legge, and others, that its authors may have had in some sense a divine guidance. With what success the Chinese have navigated their craft, into what waters they have sailed, and in what direction they are at present steering—these are questions of capital importance now that China is coming into intimate relations with so many Western states, and seems likely in the future to exert an influence increasingly great.

It has been said that "there are six indications of the moral life of a community, any one of which is significant; when they all agree in their testimony they afford an infallible test of its true character. These are: (1) the condition of industry; (2) the social habits; (3) the position of woman and the character of the family; (4) the organisation of government and the character of the rulers; (5) the state of public education; (6) the practical bearing of religious worship on actual life."

In the discussion of the various characteristics of the Chinese which have attracted our notice, each of the foregoing points has been incidentally illustrated, albeit incompletely and without that observance of proportion necessary in a full treatment of these topics. In a survey of the Chinese character the field of view is so extensive that many subjects must be



CAMEL'S-BACK BRIDGE IN THE GROUNDS OF THE EMPEROR'S SUMMER PALACE.

instincts." What China needs is righteousness, and in order to attain it, it is absolutely necessary that she have a knowledge of God and a new conception of man, as well as of the relation of man to God. She needs a new life in every individual soul, in the family, and in society. The manifold needs of China we find, then, to be a single imperative need. It will be met permanently, completely, only by Christian civilisation.



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