# MEDICINE IN CHINA.[1]

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WE KNOW only too well how the Chinese kill—but, how do they cure? What are their ideas of physiology, of therapeutics? No one can inform us better on these points than one of the companions of the French minister to China, M. Pichon. We allude to Dr. Matignon, major of the army, attached to the legation at Pekin. Now let us see what that learned physician says.

Dr. Matignon has recently published a volume, "Superstition, crime et misère en Chine." This is a collection of very interesting and very precise information regarding the morals and beliefs of the Celestials, and it is to be hoped that it will find, sooner or later, some English translator. "Let us first observe," says Dr. Matignon, "that the Chinese are overcharged men. Their valuation, perhaps containing some truth when first emitted, have ceased to have any great value at the present time. Without doubt, on numerous points, from the seventh to the eighteenth century, China was a hundred years behind Europe. But while the European has marched on in the path of progress, the Chinaman was not content to remain inert—or, rather, to draw back. He admired us, and even was guilty of laudable imitation, notwithstanding his ridiculous past."

Dr. Matignon shows us that Chinese medicine is not up to date in contemporary medical science. We have always participated in this opinion. Let us note from the first, that dissection is a thing altogether unknown in China. The human body being considered as the representation of a long series of ancestors, enjoys an intangible and sacred character. All the anatomical knowledge the Chinese doctor has is acquired from "fantastic pictures reproduced with variations for several centuries past—pictures in which the nerves and tendons, veins and arteries are all confounded. The cranium is depicted as a single bone, as well as is the pelvis, etc. The number of ribs varies in Chinese anatomy. Between the forearm and arm we note a kind of patella; the small intestine communicates with the heart; the colon, shown with seven convolutions, ends in the lungs."

[1] Based on translation from the French.

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According to Dr. Matignon, Chinese physiology is wholly original. "The heart is the prince of the body. Along with the pit of the stomach, it is the fountain source from whence is derived the ideas and the pleasures. The soul is seated in the liver, and from this gland all noble and generous sentiments have their origin.

"The gall-bladder is the receptacle from whence courage flows; a man is timid or belligerent according as it is located. The rising of the gall-bladder causes anger."

According to Dr. Matignon, there are strange functions ascribed to all the various organs. The Chinese have not the slightest idea regarding the circulation of the blood; and, as regards this same circulation, they have seventy-four different varieties of pulse.

"Their histological notions," says Dr. Matignon, "may be recapitulated as follows: The body is composed of five elements—fire, water, metal, wood, earth. These are connected with five plants, five tastes, five colors, five metals, five solid viscera. All diseases result from the perturbation of the harmony between these five elements."

Diseases, too, are often frequently attributed to spiritual influences. From this fact arises some of the Chinese therapeutic measures. They sew small squares of yellow or red papers in their clothing, these small papers being covered with cabalistic inscriptions; or yet again, these same charm papers are burned, and the patient swallows the ashes in some tea. Another method of struggling against evil spirits is to beat the mattress coverings with branches of the peach tree, sometimes with the weeping willow; or even better still, use a whip the lash of which represents a serpent. Difficult labors are treated by prayers of which a true Christian Scientist might feel proud, the priest putting the little prayer papers (the Christian Scientists will presently adopt this Chinese idea in order to save time) on the foreheads of the parturient. If, despite all this, the prayers remain unanswered, and the patient's condition grows worse, they use the "Supreme method" (another good idea for the Eddyites) and use a doll show in which figures the goddess of maternity. Bands of various textile stuffs, pieces of ancient money, strips of material on which are painted various animals, are commonly used hygienic protective measures of the "Faith-cure" kind. An empty gourd is an especial protection from small-pox; however, vaccination is well known. In case of epidemics they have processions and fire off shooting-crackers to frighten away the germs of disease, the expense being covered by public subscriptions.

Let us mention a curious process of intrauterine diagnostics.

*Process to Determine the Sex of a Child After its Conception.*—To the number 49 add the month of conception, afterwards subtract the age of the woman; then successively deduct from one to seven. You will have a remainder. If the latter is an even number, it is a girl; if an odd number remains, it will be a boy. For instance, a woman is pregnant at twenty-eight years, she conceived during the sixth moon; she will give birth to a boy. For instance, take 49; add the month of conception, which is 8; total, 57. Subtract the age, 28; remainder, 29. Diminish the deductions (1 for heaven, 2 for earth, 3 for man, 4 for the seasons, 5 for the elements, 6 for musical sounds (!!), 7 for the planets); there re-

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mains but 1. *The child can only be a male.* It is very interesting to note some of the characteristics of Chinese legal medicine. It is according to the veniality of the legal physician or the midwife, who, according to the circumstances of the case, must report all violent deaths. The following are some of the rulings laid down by the book of the Si-Yuen (Legal Medicine): "A suicide from anger or vengeance has the teeth tightly closed, eyes slightly opened and looking upward. You will at once recognize this sign. The face will have a disdainful aspect; the chest will appear dilated, which will appear to say: 'Death from a contrary heart.'"

"In case of hanging, take a stick and strike the rope. If it vibrates, it is suicide; if it does not vibrate, it is murder. In case of drowning, if the mouth and nose contain water, mucus and blood, it is the sign of suicide; if not, a sign of crime." The Chinese profess a true horror of surgery because of the religious respect in which they hold the human body. "Acupuncture and the opening of an abscess is the limit of therapeutic surgery," remarks Dr. Matignon.

There is one case where blood is permitted to flow, however—*i. e.*, in the case of castration—for the emperor has need of eunuchs, as well as have the princes of the royal family.

The party to be castrated is placed on a couch, where he is firmly bound. The operator, after twisting and compressing the parts to prevent the least possible flow of blood, cuts with a rapid movement, the knife being curved and very sharp. Sometimes scissors are used or a knife with a narrow blade. A hatchet even is sometimes used. A small peg of wood or pewter in the form of a big-headed nail is placed in the urethra. The wound is washed with pepper-water; afterwards leaves of soft paper soaked in fresh water are applied to the region operated on, and the parts carefully bandaged. The patient, supported by two assistants, is walked up and down the room for two or three hours, after which he is permitted to recline on a bed. For three days after the operation of castration no drinks are allowed. After the amputation a large and triangular-shaped wound usually remains. Healing occurs by granulation, and requires about one hundred days' time at the very least. After being thus emasculated the eunuch can enter the service of the imperial palace. The mortality from this operation is only from three to four per cent. Eunuchs always carefully preserve their amputated genitals in alcohol—they call them "precious stones"—and watch carefully over their really lost treasures, for the reason that a good Chinaman must arrive entire in the other world; that, it is to be feared, gives a feeble compensation for abstinence here below. Strange fact! European and American physicians enjoy the greatest consideration in China, for even as all consuls, engineers and missionaries are disliked by the best class of Chinese, so much the more are all foreign physicians held in high esteem and public favor. The men who can show the Chinamen the immediate benefits are the ones who are best liked.

The true adventurous portion of the medical profession have but to read Dr. Matignon's book and then their next move will be to secure a ticket for China. One doctor in China does more good than a thousand missionaries. All churches know this, and now send medical missionaries by preference.

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