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OLD CHINESE PORCELAIN

PLATE I.—POWDERED BLUE WITH COLOURED DECORATION. Frontispiece

The middle vase is a Kang-he example of sprinkled blue decorated with various marine objects. The larger fishes are in red; the smaller designs in gold show other fish delicately drawn swimming through weeds and waves. In most specimens of powdered blue the gold designs are worn away to some extent. It was applied after the piece had been through various processes and another exposure to the oven might have proved a disaster. But in its worn form this over-glaze design adds depth and mystery to the already fathomless blue. The bottles seen on either side are also of the Kang-he period, and show characteristic coloured enamel decoration in reserves of white. These groups of flowers and rocks and the various popular symbols show very effectively against the powdered blue background.

OLD CHINESE PORCELAIN

BY

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These illustrations are taken especially for this book from examples in the British Museum.

OLD CHINESE PORCELAIN

CHAPTER I

AMONG all the china-wares of the world no examples are so æsthetically satisfying and interesting as those of the Chinese. The Celestial poets have suggested that the discovery belongs to the far-off days before Kubla Khan decreed a stately pleasure dome in Pekin in centuries extremely early to the Christians. Just how early and where the Chinese first found and used the china clays from which can be made what is called the true or natural porcelain, is not greatly material. It is rather their talent in the manufacture, and their inexhaustible art in the decoration of their wares, that commands our willing admiration.

The craft of pottery, as has been said, is of immemorial age, and porcelain, no doubt, developed from the earlier earthenware. Some

of the first work of this kind is supposed to have been made in imitation of carven jade and other stones. From the days of the Sung dynasty the Chinese continued, under the patronage of their princes, to produce the most perfect and beautiful examples of porcelain. It may be said that among all the delightful vanities that the world of old ceramics lays before the enthusiastic collector, there is none to approach the original and incomparable porcelains of the Celestial.

The earliest pieces are now almost entirely lost to us, but we have at least plenty of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century examples. The blue-and-white, the blanc de Chine, the delicate egg-shell of various periods, the families of black, of yellow, of green, and, later, of rose, the single colours, and a hundred others, are still with us. One great advantage of Chinese porcelain is that you can collect one thousand pieces and never have two alike, so many are the periods and so unlimited the ingenuity of the artists.

The craft appears to have prospered in China to great advantage under the *Ming* dynasty,

PLATE II.—A RARE MING VASE

This beautiful piece is painted in blue underglaze and other colours over. A phœnix rests beneath the conventional and decorative rock from which springs the beautiful flower of the magnolia, the petals of which are painted in white enamel, and outlined in black after a fashion that gives great distinction to this particular class of Ming work. The phœnix or Ho-Ho bird combines the characteristics of almost all feathered bipeds, but it has divine attributes as well, and therefore appears in many honoured ways on old Chinese porcelain, and generally with excellent decorative effect.

or, at all events, during certain periods of it, for that dynasty lasted from A.D. 1368 to 1648. But under the present reigning house, that of the Manchu Tartars, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the fine work of the Ming was developed even further, and at the present time—although not perhaps for the European markets—excellent work is manufactured, and the glorious traditions of the China we call Old Nankin religiously preserved.

WORKS OF REFERENCE

The period dealt with in this small monograph on an enormous subject is, with a slight side-glance at earliest times, from the Sung dynasty, 960 to 1279 A.D., to the end of the eighteenth century.

The books published in England which will be found among the most useful and interesting in this connection are as under:—

Those volumes in Captain Brinkley's fine work on "Japan and China" which deal with ceramics. The late Mr. Gulland's two volumes, "Chinese Porcelain," with many hundreds of

valuable illustrations. The loving labour of an enthusiastic collector strengthened and sustained with notes by Mr. Larkin, the practical and reliable dealer. Dr. Stephen W. Bushell's works on Chinese Art, containing an enormous quantity of facts stated with grace and lucidity. Mr. Hobson's chapters in "Porcelain of all Countries." The notes of the late Sir Wollaston Franks of the British Museum, to whom we owe so much in regard to Chinese Art. The catalogues of the various museums—but this list might be lengthened until it included all books on the subject written during the last decade, for they are excellent each in their particular way.

TECHNICAL TERMS

In Mr. Gulland's volumes is given a list of the more or less technical words ordinarily used in regard to the subject and their meaning. Perhaps one may repeat and add to some of these. The *paste* may be described as the vessel as it leaves the potter's hands before being baked. The term *hard paste* may be said strictly to belong to all Chinese porcelains,

PLATE III.—MING FIGURES

One of the favourite quarries of the modern collector of antique Chinese porcelains is the kind of Ming figure here shown. The colours are at once brilliant and distinguished, the statuettes themselves usually represent the Taoist immortals, and often gods more or less, at play. Fu, Lu, and Shou—happiness, rank, longevity—are frequently found represented in this ware, which is at once rare and brilliant, distinguished and decorative.

although *soft paste* is sometimes spoken of. The hard paste means, of course, the body of the real porcelain as produced in China when the non-fusible clay called Kaolin was combined with a fusible stone called Petuntse. This produced the so-called *Natural* porcelain, as against the various pseudo-porcelains made in Europe, and now called soft-paste chinas. Soft paste of a different kind appears to have been made in China, but only to a small extent.

MANY AUTHORITIES

Captain Brinkley congratulated the French, and later the Americans, on their taste for Chinese soft paste in the form of the monochromatic wares, and those decorated with blue *sous couverte*, such as the Celestials themselves chiefly admired. But the soft paste is a somewhat misleading title. Dr. Bushell disposes of it shortly by saying in effect—hard paste contains only natural elements in the composition of the body and the glaze; soft paste is a body formed by the artificial combination of various materials agglomerated by

the action of fire, in which the compound called a frit has been used as a substitute for natural rock. No soft-paste porcelain, as here defined, has ever been made in China. But in some excellent notes on the various periods of "blue-and-white" the same authority speaks of a finely crackled glaze used in "the forerunners of the so-called soft paste" about 1426–1435. Gulland gives many photographs of examples of the classes of soft paste bought so keenly by American collectors from the early céladon to the light-in-weight specimens in blue-and-white of Kang-he, Keen-lung, and Yung-ching. Mr. Hobson, among others, considers that the soft paste should be called soft glaze, and, technically speaking, he is undoubtedly right. On examination any piece of Chinese "soft paste" from, say, the most authentic American collection, will show the body to be really hard. But the phrase has come to have a certain meaning to those few who desire these wares, and no other term will serve.

The *Biscuit* is the paste after it has been baked, but before it has been glazed. Such a biscuit body is often used in Chinese figures

in juxtaposition to the glaze, the biscuit being left bare, as it were, so as to represent the flesh, while the glaze is used to show the robes and decorative materials. The *glaze* is the composition, varying in its constituent parts, put upon the paste or biscuit to give it a vitreous appearance; the glaze may be plain, or contain a pigment clear or opaque. *Enamel* is the colour when applied mixed with a glassy flux. It is often superimposed on the glazed piece, usually in a design showing the white groundwork, but, in one sort of porcelain, it is applied to the entire surface, so that the object becomes a completely enamelled piece. *Slip* is a white porcelain composition, not unlike the coloured enamels, but somewhat thicker. This is frequently used as a decoration on coloured grounds, largely those various delicate shades known as céladon. The naturally artistic people of France were in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the warm admirers of all Chinese porcelains, and thus the various examples almost invariably bear agreeable and allusive French titles. Céladon as the name for old porcelains of the various shades of green

resembling jade is a good example of this fact. It owes its origin to the quaint figure in the seventeenth-century *L'Astrée* by d'Urfé. This hero, the courtier in pseudo-rustic dress, the amorous-shepherd-man-of-the-world, "*Céladon*," always appeared on the stage in green, which varied through many tints of blue-green to green-grey. When the Chinese porcelain of this colour appeared before the fashionable French world they gave it the name of their favourite shepherd of sophisticated comedy. But so that the affair should not be too simple, *céladon* is also used as the term for the sort of glaze of any Chinese porcelain which hides the substances of which the vessel is made. These two uses of the word have now been accepted so long that any change would be difficult, otherwise *single glaze* or *whole glaze* might perhaps serve in place of the second meaning of céladon.

PLATE IV.—MING EWER, JAR, AND BASE OF WATER-PIPE

The ewer in centre is elaborately painted in colours on white ground with designs of fruits and flowers. On the neck there are two five-clawed dragons and two seal characters: Wan, 10,000; and Shou, longevity. There is also the mark of the period 1573–1620. The shape is one popular with the Persian and Indian buyers at that time, and might have belonged to the same foreign owner as the base of a water-pipe which stands next, and was no doubt made for other than Chinese buyers. The square vase with cover is also of the Ming style, but is a class of piece which has been greatly reproduced in various periods.

CHAPTER II

THE subject of marks on Chinese porcelain is as difficult as it is alluring. One is almost tempted to say that there are no marks worth a moment's consideration, and yet with study much may be gained by clearly understanding them. The Chinese and Japanese authorities place no reliance on the date marks, except when they substantiate the opinion they may have formed of a piece of porcelain from other causes—such as paste, glaze, decoration, and so forth. In such cases the mark becomes conclusive evidence.

MARKS AND RE-MARKING

The various classes of marks include year periods, such as the reign of a sovereign, and hall marks which show the place of production or the studio from which the piece came. It is generally stated that the period marks

were first used in the eleventh century, and continued with various lapses through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Apart from the date and hall of production signs there was also a number of symbolic marks, such as the leaf, the fungus, the peach, the symbols of the eight precious things, and so forth, all largely used in the Kang-he period, which, however, do not greatly help the collector, for they belong to all time.

WESTERN INTEREST

The introduction of Oriental porcelains into Europe came slowly. The Chinese caravans carried their native china—which was supposed to turn colour and break if filled with poison—into Persia and Asia Minor in very far-off days, and the Arabs effected some trade with the Celestials as early as our ninth century. But it was not until the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese began their vast Eastern undertakings, and early in the seventeenth, when the Dutch established their Oriental trade, and later,

about 1640, when the East Indian Company of this country increased their operations, that the fine porcelains shipped from Canton began to be seen generally in Europe. The desire for Oriental wares grew with the possession of them, and the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English developed the trade rapidly during the seventeenth century.

Various authorities have classified the Chinese productions in the following chronological form, with a statement of the decoration employed in each period. First, the primitive, the Sung and Yuan dynasties, 960–1367. At this time the pieces were not painted, but glazed in six different ways—namely, single-coloured glaze, crackled and uncrackled, flambé glazes, soufflé glazes, and glazes of several colours. Second, the Ming period, 1368–1643. At this time porcelains were painted in colours, sometimes under glaze in cobalt-blue, copper-red, or in five or more over-glaze colours, sometimes in under-glaze and over-glaze together. Another section shows single-colour grounds decorated in colours, and ornament in white slip over blue and brown. Yet another form is in gold over an iron-red,

in mixed enamel colours on crackled or monochrome backgrounds, and in medallions of the well-known Chinese forms. Third, the Kang-he reign, 1662–1722, when the various sections included etched patterns and embossed designs, open work or reticulated pieces, and open work in the shape of grains of rice filled in with thin glaze, became the fashion. *Laque burgauté* was then invented, and imitations of many materials, such as agate, marble, jade, and patinated bronze, were made. Veined woods, carved lac, and so forth, were also copied cleverly in porcelain. Indeed, it has been said of this and the following periods that the Chinese could reproduce almost any object in their ceramic wares. Fourth, the period of Yung-ching and Keen-lung, 1723–1795, when foreign designs were largely used. This era produced four marked varieties of porcelain—namely, plain white, that painted with blue, which had been of course a specialty of the Kang-he period, and the various enamel families which were brought to great perfection, and also examples which were afterwards decorated in Europe. Thus, from this short statement, it may be seen that

PLATE V.—KANG-HE FAMILLE NOIRE PAINTED WITH FIVE COLOURS

Very characteristic examples of this family may be seen in the two jars and covers, showing floral designs on a ground of black washed with green enamel. They belong to the best period of the work, and are among the finest examples. But beautiful as they are, it was the desire of the craftsmen to suggest an earlier period, and the large vase shows the mark of the Emperor Ching-hwa of the fifteenth century, whose porcelain was sought for under Kang-he. Although more ancient, and therefore more beloved by the Chinese, the earlier work is no more satisfying than the beautiful production in Kang-he famille noire. It is reproduced in our day, but with singularly poor effect.

those who admire Chinese porcelain have before them an enormous field, but it is one in which the cunning of the potter and the skill of the artist leave no room for boredom or satiety.

CHAPTER III

THERE are many romantic stories, as I have said, of the antiquity of Chinese porcelains, and a couple of thousand years before the Christian era was not at one time considered too remote a date. But modern inquiry has not been able to find any evidence of porcelain before the Tang dynasty, 618 to 220 A.D.—and very little then. With the Sung Emperors, 960 to 1259 A.D., we come into a more reliable period. The few very early pieces of porcelain still remaining are of that, probably the initial, era of the craft. This is the view of such acute modern technicists as Mr. Burton, who has himself carefully examined the best authenticated specimens of wares attributed to the Sung, and has come to the conclusion that, as he says, "We are here in the presence of the very birth of Chinese porcelain, when the first steps were being taken which ultimately led to the appearance of the perfect ware." Captain

PLATE VI.—KANG-HE FIGURES OF BIRDS

The stork resting on a rock is very pleasing in design and colour, and the cocks combine those qualities of naturalism in detail and decorative unity which were fully developed at this period. The curious rocks which support the cocks are so arranged as to form incense burners, a very frequent use for decorative pieces of this character. All these birds of the Kang-he period show close study of nature, and are produced with no small animation and vigour.

Brinkley tells very fully the story of the various traditions of early porcelains prior to the Sung, but these affairs are hardly within the practical politics of the modern collector.

THE SUNG, 960-1279, AND YUAN, 1279-1367 A.D.

Even this period need only be glanced at, for the few examples known are safely housed, and the most fortunate hobby-hunter cannot hope to happen on them unexpectedly. These pieces often show in the form and decoration that they were copied from earlier bronzes, and they possess, combined with a certain dignity and beauty, some qualities of clumsiness, and hint at an imperfect knowledge of the craft. The colours are simple glazes, and not painted on under glaze. Translucence is usually absent, and the pieces substantial of make. The Sung dynasty principally produced seven classes of ware, some of which were of a semi-porcelain character, and some are said to have foreshadowed the *flambé* wares of later periods. Those colours which are now called céladons, pale blue to light green, belong to this time.

Up to our thirteenth century a earthenware or stoneware was preferred to hard porcelain, but both the colours and appearance of all the china of this time have been more or less closely copied since, and thus its characteristics have passed into other and more easily accessible periods.

THE MING, 1368–1643 A.D.

The first Emperor of this dynasty, Hung-Wu, rebuilt the enormous factories of Ching-tê-chên in the province of Kiangsi, and after that time these works retained the monopoly of the craft. The Royal orders were, as Dr. Bushell says, conceived on a magnificent scale: 26,350 bowls with 30,500 saucers to match, 6000 ewers with 6900 wine-cups, and 680 large garden fish-bowls, were some of the items included in a Court order of the year 1554.

Early Ming céladons were not unlike those of the Sung; but with the passage of time many improvements were effected, until the old clumsy qualities were left behind, and a sophisticated and beautifully decorated ware was produced,

which set the type for almost all future work. Examples in the museums show the characteristics of the Ming wares to have been a marked richness and feeling for beauty in the cosmopolitan sense. At South Kensington the baluster vase, with turquoise and white on a dark blue ground, shows the early spirit of the period. Cobalt-blue was greatly favoured under the Ming, and used in many ways. In the early fifteenth century the "Mohammedan" blue was introduced.

CELESTIAL REPRODUCTIONS

As Disraeli said of English literature, the most remarkable feature of Celestial work is its reproductiveness. The earliest examples have been copied again and again in various centuries by the Chinese themselves, and, as I have pointed out, they have not hesitated, in those cases where marks showing the dynasty and reign were used, to reproduce these exactly. Thus the work of the collector, Celestial or European, is not of the easiest. But for the fact that many seventeenth- and eighteenth-

century copies are as pleasant to look upon, and as agreeable to the sense of touch, as the originals, the collector's self-imposed task would be a heart-breaking one. In this connection it has been said that we can refer most of the old specimens of Chinese porcelains that are seen in collections to-day, even when they have earlier dates, to the Kang-he period, 1662–1722. Perhaps the best way to distinguish the old from the newer is to study original examples in public or private collections. This is not a very new suggestion, I fear; but it is a sound one. The counterfeits most likely to come before a modern collector are very largely Japanese or European. Hungary and France, and I think Holland, show considerable cleverness in these reproductions, which we should admire more freely if they did not so often become impositions. But those who are accustomed to the sight and touch of originals will not be greatly disturbed by a growing trade in spurious Oriental wares, for those to whom the knowledge is important will soon acquire sufficient skill to differentiate the thing that is from the thing which ought to be. How useful this in-

PLATE VII.—BUDDHISTIC FIGURE AND TWO BLUE VASES

The statuette is of an early type, which has been greatly reproduced, this example probably belonging to the eighteenth century, as do the two self-coloured vases on either side. These pieces are shown, as all Chinese porcelains should be, on the stands designed for their use. Frequently the ebony, or lacquer, or silken stand is an important part of the composition of the object, and when the two pieces are separated, more than half the decorative effect is lost.

formation may be, and how dismaying the lack of it, is proved frequently now in the more important auction-rooms.

DECORATION

During the many hundreds of years that the Chinese have produced their porcelains there have, of course, been considerable changes in the styles of ornamentation. And yet when once they entered upon the period of painting upon the biscuit or over the glaze certain conventionalised forms became as it were perennial, and were handed from one reign to another or from one generation of potters to the next-but-one. Ornamental designs are almost always used to convey a religious meaning, or to suggest good wishes for the future and congratulations on the past. The use of shadows and the ordinary rules of perspective are unknown to these ceramic artists, but, on the other hand, their beauty of line, their exquisite proportions, and their sense of decoration make them *par excellence* the painters of porcelain.

EARLY DAYS

The first decorators aimed at producing the shapes and ornaments of the already old bronzes and the designs of ornamental jade and polished stones. Indian mythology lent its influence through the Buddhist religion, and old Persian and Syrian pottery gave a thousand hints to the Celestial artists. Conventionalised forms of gods and animals, flowers, fruits, and leaves gradually gave way to more naturalistic representations as the single-colour glazes and indented patterns were superseded by the painting of designs on the biscuit. In the later Ming period the old desire to reproduce the effect of some other material began to disappear, and porcelain for porcelain's sake was made in enormous quantities. The decorations then most in vogue were of various distinct classes.

THE THREE RELIGIONS

One of the most marked is that of the figure subjects connected with the three most important religions of China—Confucianism, Taoism,

and Buddhism. The first deals mainly with mortals who have, with the aid of the *literati* of their period, put on immortality. Confucius himself, the God of War, and the Spirit of Literary Culture, are the three most generally in evidence. Taoism gives the porcelain decorators an enormous number of subjects. Among these the most appreciated divinities are Fu, Lu, and Shou—Happiness, Rank, Longevity—to whom is added the ruler of the Taoist paradise, a gracious and gentle lady, Hsi Wang Mu. There are also many cheery gods and many with demon faces; there are the eight immortals who patronise various professions or businesses, and there are other more or less important personages. But however different their action upon life or their value in a system of philosophy, they are accompanied in the art of the decorator of porcelain with many graceful symbols, and are invariably of admirable line and proportion. Of the Buddhist figures the same may be said. Vary as they may, they are always decorative and artistically pleasing. Buddhism attacked China in its vigorous youth, but did not take any strong hold until early

in our Christian era. The eighteen Buddhist apostles are greatly depicted, especially perhaps Ho-Shang, a jolly personage supposed to be the last incarnation of the Buddhist Messiah —the same figure as the agreeable Hotei, god of Contentment to the Japanese. Equally popular is the goddess of Mercy, Kuan-Yin, a charming and beneficent figure usually holding a child. Six more or less mythic animals find their way to Nirvana, and have therefore been adapted by the Chinese artist to the uses of pottery. The *nâga* of India becomes the dragon of China, and then passes into many forms; he bears three claws in his first state, and four later, and five under the Ming and present dynasties. It is, of course, a well-known emblem of the emperors. The Indian *garuda* becomes a composite bird of gorgeous appearance, combining many other birds from the peacock to the swallow. This quaint and complicated ornithological specimen is very adaptable, decoratively speaking, and is a symbol of the empresses in particular and of brides in general. The lion is caused by the Chinese artist to take on strange forms, and is usually a gentle and

PLATE VIII.—FUCHIEN FIGURES

Since the early Ming days the statuettes produced in various tones of white at Fuchien have been greatly admired. The three religions of China—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—are largely represented in the *blanc de Chine* of this factory, and many of the divine beasts and symbols are beautifully made in the wares of Fuchien. These have of course varied somewhat throughout the ages, but the characteristics of a fine satin-like glaze over a perfect biscuit will be found in all examples.

playful creature in his divine shape. The Kylin owes something to the lion, but has so many origins as to become a purely mythical decorative beast, who looks rather unkindly to the Occidental eye, but is warmly appreciated by the Chinese. The hare, the horse, and the elephant are also immortals, and appear on porcelain in various ways. Elephants' heads often form handles, and horses of queer design are seen at play, but the hare does not make a very distinguished appearance on china ware. The many other decorative *motifs* suggested by the religion of Buddha, the systems of Confucius (551 B.C.) and Lao-Tzu (604 B.C.), form a long list, to which must be added many classical stories and lighter legends.

In the latter periods of the Ming the porcelain painters sometimes gave a glimpse of the luxury and elegance of Court life, or the amusements of what would now correspond to our house-parties in the country. The tall and aristocratic girls formed charming subjects for decoration within and without their beautiful rooms. Pieces thus ornamented were appreciated early by the Dutch traders, although they

gave them the name of "Lange Lijsen," which may be said to add to Oriental æsthetics a touch of Batavian grace. To call these Celestial maidens long Elizas, to reproduce in common delft the distinguished beauties of the East, to vulgarise the artistry of the Orient, was the fortune of the traders of the Netherlands, and they carried the affair through with enthusiasm, and, incidentally, gave Northern Europe the best pieces of Oriental porcelain it received before the first sacking of Pekin. After the pictures of social and child life under the Ming came the warlike decorations of the great Kang-he period and, later, the purely ornamental conventions elaborated in the interests of European trade.

Plant forms with a symbolic meaning deeply rooted in one or other of the Chinese religions, and hinting of compliments and good wishes, are as the sands of the sea in number. Each season has its flower. The decorative moutan peony represents spring; the lotus, summer; the chrysanthemum, autumn; and the wild plum is for winter. The citron, peach, and pomegranate stand for happiness, long life, and the family;

PLATE IX.—A VASE WITH SYMBOLS AND THE DIVINE KYLIN

The quadrangular vase in the centre shows the ornaments or symbols in relief. The mystical trigrams known as Pa-kwa are placed either side of the circular emblem Yang-ying. Whether considered as symbols or merely as decoration the result is equally satisfying. The piece shows beautiful glaze and colour, and is a type reproduced frequently from earliest times. The Kylins are coloured sea-green and brown with a blue glaze background, and show all the peculiarities of their conventional character. These pieces are intended to hold joss-sticks, and have doubtless served before many altars. The expression which appears repulsive to the Western eye is welcomed as an aid to good fortune by the Celestial.

the fungus, the gourd, the sweetflag, the pine, and the bamboo, with many others, are to be found on Chinese porcelains of all periods, always with excellent effect. A glance at the illustrations will show that the main divisions of decoration, say the figure-pieces, the landscapes, the purely decorative treatment of plant forms, the naturalistic handling of fruit, flowers, and the like, the use of characters and symbols as a means of ornament, were employed in all periods, and still hold the field. A race which is perfectly satisfied with the wisdom of Confucius and the immemorial philosophy of their ancestors will, it is hoped, be true to the artistic qualities of their middle national life, and remain untouched by the vitiating breath of Western culture.

EUROPEAN DESIGNS

How unfortunate the Chinese artist becomes when he attempts to adapt himself to our taste in design is shown in an interesting department of the subject of porcelains. At the British Museum, and elsewhere, are many examples of the eighteenth-century pieces,

which were produced by the Chinese at the suggestion of European traders or residents. From the time of the Jesuits, when the Chinese attempted to reproduce in etched line on plates and dishes the story of the Cross, even to their efforts to model well-known resident foreigners and their families, every piece may, I think, be said to be an artistic failure. Occasionally, with simple armorial bearings, they were fairly successful, but frequent mistakes in colours in the coat and lettering of mottoes and so forth occur. As a whole our desire to win the Chinese porcelain painter to the methods of the West was a complete failure, and a fortunate one. Our own painting on Chinese porcelains is a less important affair. Where we have attempted to reproduce the spirit of Celestial work we have not greatly charmed, and in those cases in which we have been content to paint Chinese porcelain in the European manner we have satisfied Western taste without, I am sure, convincing the decorators of Ching-tê-chên that their artistic civilisation is a failure, and the traditions of the Ming played out.

CHAPTER IV

THE famous works of Ching-tê-chên appear to have absorbed all the other porcelain factories of any importance in the Empire of China with the exception of Fuchien. This is perhaps only true as regards their reputation in Europe, for, no doubt, in the long course of years, some other potteries produced porcelain for home consumption; many of course put forth a vast quantity of pottery.

BLANC DE CHINE

Fuchien had produced a stoneware in the Sung period, and the works which had long ceased to be used were revived under an early Ming Emperor. These later productions were of the fine white material so long admired by the connoisseurs originally of Spain and then of all countries. First produced in the fifteenth century, it continued to be made down to the

middle of the eighteenth. But with a growing demand for Chinese "antiques" the State has attempted to fill the want, and *blanc de Chine* is once more produced in more or less the old forms in its native country and elsewhere. It is also imitated very badly by some European producers of pseudo-antique wares. The old ware is, however, excellently finished, and is translucent when held up to the light; the new lacks these qualities to a great extent. Dr. Bushell notes that the old ware differs widely from other Oriental porcelains, the paste of smooth texture being of a creamy-white tint resembling ivory, while the rich, thick glaze, which has a satiny aspect, like the surface of soft-paste porcelain, blends closely with the paste underneath. Among the most characteristic early forms produced in this white ware are to be found the excellently modelled representations of Buddhist divinities and heroes who had become saints and sages. Among these, the famous goddess Avalokitesvara was frequently and beautifully produced. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when the Jesuits had made many converts to Christianity in Japan,

PLATE X.—BLUE-AND-WHITE VASES AND BEAKERS

A typical set of covered jars and vases in Kang-he porcelain, such as was made early in the eighteenth century for Western buyers. When the collector speaks of "blue-and-white," it is of this style and this period that he usually thinks. The colour, the technique, the drawing, and the form of these pieces are extremely beautiful, but there are signs by which you shall know that they were not produced by the Chinese artist for the Chinese patron. For example, these sets of five pieces were suggested by the traders for the decoration of Dutch mantel-shelves: Chinese houses do not offer any space for such an arrangement.

these figures and statuettes of Avalokitesvara, the Goddess of Mercy or of Maternity, had been imported from Korea or China, and were used to represent the Holy Virgin. Divinity, grace, beauty, and serenity are shown in these finely wrought statuettes, and indeed all the early work of Fuchien is curiously finished and satisfying to the æsthetic sense. It is said that it was not so greatly appreciated in its native land as in Japan and Europe, especially in Spain and France. But its constant use in China, and the fact that it was especially employed in the representation of the gods, and the production of the cups and joss-sticks—holders, and vessels of a religious and ceremonial character—point to the fact that the Chinese were not unappreciative of this particular branch of their porcelain. At the present time the gods and goddesses, especially Kuan Yin, the divine "hearer of prayers," and the other perfect figures and clearly modelled pieces, are greatly sought for. Their importance in a scheme of modern decoration is now greatly appreciated. The reserved and quiet beauty, both of their form and colour, have made many enthusiastic worshippers of

the various early productions of Fuchien. Some little time ago, when admirers of porcelain permitted themselves to be dithyrambic on the subject, in the old French forms of verse, the following *villanelle* was written in its praise:—

Collectors may still make merry
With their *familles*—rose and green.
Pure beauty lies in the very
Heart of the *blanc de Chine.*

There are ivory, alabaster,
And whites that are argentine—
Mere chromatic disaster
Compared with the *blanc de Chine.*

Whites—viveous, candid, snowy,
Pearly, and cream, we've seen.
These are but *posé* and showy
On the shelf near our *blanc de Chine.*

Emperors, divers and splendid,
Long dead in the days that have been,
Were heroes who proudly defended
The glories of *blanc de Chine.*

Gods, perfervid and mighty;
Goddesses, kind, serene—
Perfect as, purer than, Clyte—
Still live in the *blanc de Chine.*

PLATE XI.—TWO KANG-HE FIGURES

These personages are coloured with a brilliant turquoise and other blues, and their faces, once coated, are now starred with gold. In the photograph this gives rather an unpleasing appearance, but in the original the pieces are very attractive. They probably represent immortals of considerable importance, but their symbolism is not very clear, and they must be classed merely as figures of gods made late in the seventeenth century.

An' you will, snatch our Mandarin treasures,
And shatter our *céladon fin*,
But spare us our last of pleasures—
The adorable *blanc de Chine.*

For those who are in London, and would care to study representative examples of the various periods of Fuchien, the collection given to the nation by Sir Wollaston Franks, and now admirably displayed at the British Museum, is always available. There one finds numerous figures of the Chinese deities, libation cups, incense burners, and sacred Kylins, and other animals. Almost all these figures are of exquisite proportion and form, and, to those familiar with the technique of various porcelains, present an *ensemble* of especial perfection. Little is known of the sculptors who may have made these pieces, but Mr. Burton, speaking of the beautiful modelling of many of them, says that although they have been blocked out in moulds, it is obvious that every individual object has been finished with a modelling tool. He adds, "The only ornament is such as can be stamped, tooled, or engraved in the paste, or added to the pieces in the shape of modelled

flowers, a style of design greatly fancied by the early European porcelain makers, and largely copied at St. Cloud, Meissen, and Bow." Thus it will be seen that although Fuchien only produced one kind of porcelain, and that only in varying grades of white, its fame spread, and the graceful objects of its production became known and cared for in every corner of the ceramic-collecting world.

CHAPTER V

THE European collector has given a great deal of attention to the famous "Blue-and-White" period, which came in with the close of the Ming dynasty, and may be said to have almost ended with the reign of Kang-he, who ruled for the long period between 1662 and 1722. During this space of time the fine flower of Chinese blue-and-white porcelains was produced. All that had gone before led up to, and all that has followed since declined from, this epoch of ultimate success. These victories were not only in one direction, but applied to the many classes of ceramics then produced, and embraced such diverse productions as, say, the *laque burgauté*, and the single-coloured glazes, the brilliant enamels, and the various and vigorous examples of pure blue-and-white. Early in the reign were developed the apple-green and the famous ruby-red glazes, the latter being the forerunner of the delicious

peau de pêche. The *famille verte* was then also largely made, and towards the end of the reign the now greatly appreciated *famille rose.*

HAWTHORN OR PRUNUS PATTERN

The famous jars which were ornamented with sprays of prunus blossom on a ground of pulsating cobalt have been a great delight to Western connoisseurs. They are said not to have been so greatly admired by the original producers. On the vivid blue ground lines and facets were often added, giving further depth to the colouring, and suggesting sparkling cracked ice. The little story of these pieces is pretty well known. These pots with covers were used to hold the fragrant gifts for New Year's Day, and were decorated with the design which most clearly suggested the renewal of the year or spring to the Chinese imagination. An immense variety of prunus decoration was used at this period, always with charming effect. The beauty and grace of such pieces were always appreciated in Europe, and many examples have been held in

PLATE XII.—TWO ENAMELLED AND COLOURED PLATES

These are excellent examples of the Kang-he enamel work in colours, which was developed and improved in the following periods of Yung-ching and Keen-lung. Such historical and mythological scenes were very popular with the artists of the period, and form extremely decorative designs, which were used more or less in much of the delicate enamel work which followed in the next two reigns.

Dutch families even unto our own time. But it was reserved for our generation to pay nearly £6000 for one example from the Huth cabinet. It has been said that Mr. Huth gave a very small sum for it, but it is a little late in the day to hope to happen upon such a piece again, after so casual and fortunate a fashion. However, the £5900 which was given for this example is a wholly artificial price. The South Kensington Museum possesses an equally beautiful specimen of the plum blossom jar, which was purchased for £230. The Salting collection shows some delightful specimens of this wild prunus ornament applied to vessels other than the so-called ginger jars, such as bottles of many shapes, and various vases. The style of decoration has, of course, been used in many ways, and reproduced many times since the period in question—1662–1722. Even at the present time very great quantities of the so-called Hawthorn ginger jars are manufactured and sent to Europe, but they are totally without interest to the collector: the method, manufacture, the colour—everything is different. The cobalt-blue and the brilliant

white of Kang-he have passed, and the vessels which remain to tell of the accomplishment and grace of that period are certain to command a high price. One little point in regard to the jars may be noted. It is that the top or cap has often been replaced with a modern piece, usually made in China, and frequently copying the colouring and texture of the original very closely. This suggests the possibility of the clever Chinese potters of to-day producing, if they wished, something very nearly like the Kang-he pieces, which now command such extensive prices. This ability obliges the amateur collector to examine very closely these objects when they appear in the sale-rooms, although the experienced eye finds no difficulty in distinguishing the antique at a glance.

OLD BLUE-AND-WHITE

It was during the sixty years of Kang-he's reign that the export trade with Europe developed to a large extent. Under the Ming, Persia and India had received Chinese ceramic wares, but the trade of the Western countries

had not been sought. But at this later time the Canton merchants were busy with orders from the Dutch, and the potters of Ching-tê-chên received many hints as to the particular kind of wares which would be most popular with Occidental customers.

Up to about 1712 these exports were almost entirely of blue-and-white porcelains, and it is to this period that we owe the very large quantity of sets of three tall jars with covers and two beakers which now form part of every collection of Kang-he. The colour, the drawings, and the form of the ornament on these pieces are extremely beautiful, but there are many ways by which you shall know that they were not produced by Chinese artists for a Chinese patron. The Celestial craftsman did not, I think, make his vases in sets, and rarely produced pieces without some symbolism in the design or form, and some definite utilitarian object or some near connection with the religious ritual of his nation. The objects for export to Europe lack the essential qualities of Chinese work undertaken for the Chinese, and assume that character of ornament for ornament's sake which

is, in a subtle sense, destructive of the higher offices of art. But although the most characteristic note of Celestial work may not be found in the Kang-he blue-and-white porcelains produced for the European markets—Western models were supplied very early—great variety and infinite grace remain. Such collections as that of Mr. Salting, on loan at South Kensington Museum, will give some idea of the many forms of beauty that this cobalt colouring could be made to show. In London and Paris, at least, there are frequent exhibitions of large collections of the Kang-he period which suggest very clearly the sort of examples that some æsthetically-minded merchant prince of Amsterdam might have brought together when these pieces were coming freshly from the potteries of Ching-tê-chên and the port of old Nankin.

SINGLE COLOURS

One of many remarkable qualities of Chinese porcelain is that as you pass from one class of work to another, each seems more admirable than the last.

PLATE XIII.—LARGE PLATE AND COVERED JARS

These are fine examples of the Kang-he coloured work, which led on to the developments of this style during the next two reigns. The plate is decorated with a very fanciful rendering of butterflies, ripe millet on the stork, and an elaboration of the favourite rock *motif*. The covered cups show examples of those tall and graceful Chinese ladies engaged in social pleasures which the Dutch traders named "Lange Lijsen."

Beautiful and decorative as are the blue-and-white examples of Kang-he, the single colours produced in the same period are equally wonderful and interesting. During this long reign the Imperial factories were under the guidance of at least four remarkable directors, and each produced different but equally splendid varieties of porcelain. The first of these superintendents was the originator of the widely appreciated single-colour porcelain, called after him by the name of Lang-yao. Brilliant red and apple-green are the two colours of this ware. The first, now generally known by its French title of *sang de bœuf*, was the result of experiments intended to recapture the then lost colour of antiquity—the sacrificial red of 1426–1435. The porcelain of this style is technically perfect. The glaze, rich in colour and in feeling, is completely under the control of the potter, and conforms to the limitations of space imposed upon it with perfect correctness. The Lang-yao ware, whether in the varying shades of oxide of copper, from blood red to pale ruby, or in the beautiful apple-green, is always finely and wonderfully made. This perfection has

often been attempted since without complete success. Among the other single colours of this victorious period are the various shades in the key of blue, which reach from the delicate *clair de lune* to the deep *lapis-lazuli* and the mazarin.

POWDERED BLUE

A pleasing department of these single colours is that remarkable blue which was blown on to the porcelain through gauze, and often thus used as a groundwork for those "reserves" in white, on which designs were applied in various ways. The powdered blue has become an especial department of collecting, and many seek only for specimens of this work, of which a number of kinds may be found. Very frequently this ground is decorated all over with fine lines in gold. In this connection it often happens that decorative use is made of the design of fishes in movement, or again purely conventional forms are employed. Plate I. shows three photographs of examples, but, as with other departments of Chinese ceramics, a collection of some twenty pieces should be seen

together to judge of the resource and cunning of the artists. The list may be continued to include various lustrous blacks and browns, such as chocolate, bronze, *café au lait*, dead leaf, and old gold; the turquoise-blue of several shades, such as the kingfisher; the purple glaze and the tiger skin, which is formed by many colours in combination. Examples of all these superb glazes may be found in most of the museums and private collections. They were at one time chiefly imported by the Dutch, but probably also by the English and other so-called Indian trading companies. Such pieces were also greatly appreciated by the Chinese themselves, and possessed a far greater vogue in their native country than the Kang-he "blue-and-white" and the blanc de Chine, which the Dutch and English delighted, and delight, to honour.

CHAPTER VI

THE Kang-he period, which was so rich in the vivid, shimmering, various blue-and-white, so victorious in its single colours, from the delicate *clair de lune* to the intense black, or brilliant *sang de bœuf*, was equally successful in the improvement of the enamels over glaze, which form those "families" of coloured porcelains which have delighted artists all over the world for close on two centuries.

ENAMELS

These enamels were used in three colours and in five, but, early in their history, owing to their application to porcelain already decorated with blue under glaze, and the use of gold, the colours on the enameller's palette may be said to have been seven. Perhaps the greatest beauty of form and brilliancy of colouring is to be found in the *famille verte* at its best. This

PLATE XIV.—TWO FAMILLE NOIRE JARS WITH COVERS AND A VASE

The middle vase is a splendid specimen of the Kang-he famille noire decorated with dragons on a ground of black. The ground is washed with a thin green enamel, which gives great brilliancy and distinction to the piece. The jars with covers are also remarkable for their beauty. They represent the famille noire painted with three colours, after a method that was at once popular and very effective. These specimens are among the most beautiful examples of their type to be found in Europe.

particular decoration, no doubt, originated under the Ming, but it was in the Kang-he period that it developed, and most European examples are probably of the more recent date. It disappeared after about 1736, giving way to the *famille rose* type of decoration.

FAMILLE VERTE

Into this family all kinds of delightful forms and designs were introduced. Many of the dishes and covered jars are of considerable size; the beakers and vases are of almost every shape employed by the Chinese, and the appearance may be said to be among the most distinguished of Celestial ceramics. In a chapter on Kang-he, Mr. Hobson writes of the five-colour decoration of this period as consisting of enamel blue, brilliant green in two shades laid on in thick patches, iron-red, pale yellow, and a manganese colour, which varies from purplish-brown to brownish-purple; black also was used with admirable effect, especially for outlining the design. Mr. Hobson adds, "This was the period of the finest *famille verte*

porcelain, the *ne plus ultra* of enamelled wares. The body and glaze are faultless, and the forms irreproachable; the colours are distinguished by full tints of jewel-like brilliancy, and the designs unite the bold grouping and breadth of treatment of the Ming decoration with the skilful brushwork of a more polished age." This warm appreciation may be justly extended to the other groups of porcelain of the period named by the French at a later date.

FAMILLE NOIRE AND FAMILLE JAUNE

The first of these was probably made to some extent under the Ming, but the green-coated black was further developed under Kang-he, and produced some very beautiful results. Especially has this been the case where the background has been of black, and, as in many pieces, decoration, such as the flowers of the four seasons, has been applied in green, white, and aubergine. These vases, bowls, and other pieces often show very admirable line decoration of black on a yellow ground, which is said to distinguish Ming and early Kang-he. The

PLATE XV.—HAWTHORN OR PRUNUS PATTERN

Kang-he blue-and-white does not offer any more generally appreciated pattern than that of the sprays or blossoms of prunus on a ground of pulsating cobalt. These examples are now to be found in every collection, and the most distinguished of them have brought sums of over £5000. They were originally designed to hold the fragrant teas, such as are used for gifts on New Year's Day, and were decorated with designs which suggested to the Celestial mind the coming of the spring. Like the other specimens of the early Kang-he period, such as the stoppered bottles on either side of the jar, the blue and the white wares are here seen at their very best, and the pieces may be said to mark the perfection of this class of porcelain.

diaper pattern, the Joo-e-head, herring-bone, diamond, and a dozen other forms, are constantly used in this work. The prunus blossom and spray, employed with so much effect in the blue-and-white porcelains, is also seen to great advantage in the *famille noire.* But here the flower and branches are, of course, in varying colours, and often used in conjunction with birds of bright plumage, foliage of other plants, and decorative rocks, the latter usually in various shades of green. The china-ware of this particular make has been through a long process and many firings. In one of the stages of its production a transparent green glaze appears to have been floated over the whole of the black groundwork, and the result is a fineness, a smoothness of surface, and a beauty which make it, to me, the crowning point and culmination of Kang-he wares.

It might be said that among ten thousand loveliest porcelains beloved, beloved is *famille noire.*

The yellow family, like the black, no doubt originated with the Ming, but it did not grow to any very wide extent. It was usually pro-

duced in combination with the green enamel, and made into pieces of exquisite beauty; upon the brilliant yellow ground is to be found the usual decoration of the period—symbolic and other plants, the lotus, the sacred flower of Buddha in many forms, and the various forms of sweetflag are largely in evidence. Frequently pieces of the early *famille jaune* are decorated with diaper pattern in bright enamels, surrounding reserves of white ground, in which utensils connected with the worship of their gods and symbolic objects and emblems are depicted. These are delicately and artistically drawn in aubergine and green, yellow and black enamels, and the *ensemble* is one of great attractiveness. As with the other families of this period, the porcelain itself is at once delicate in quality and elegant in form. Many other kinds of ceramics were produced in the reign, such as, for instance, the under-glaze *rouge de fer* and the great variety of examples in which admirably-drawn scenes of Chinese social life were enamelled in reserves on powdered blue, or the decoration was applied and raised, such as a branch of peach, or other

symbol, coloured with great skill, in the manner already spoken of.

Writing generally in this connection, Captain Brinkley says, in effect, that the quality of these various enamelled Kang-he productions is throughout exceptionally good. Neither among wares that preceded nor among those that succeeded it were there any of finer pâte or more lustrous and uniform glaze. He adds, "The exposed portions of the biscuit resemble soapstone, so smooth are they to the touch and so compact in texture. As a rule, with very rare exceptions, the bottom of every piece is carefully finished and glazed. Year-marks occur seldom; they are commonest upon small and choice specimens. Other marks are found, but they usually take the form of a four-footed censer, a leaf, or something equally without chronological significance." It would seem as though the potters considered the works were for all time, and needed no marks of a particular generation; or it may be they hoped the craftsmanship would be mistaken for the production of an earlier period, for the Chinese worship antiquity, and the old wares brought

the largest prices. But large or small as the cost may have been in its native country, it is the Western world that has made the enormous profits out of antique porcelains. The European dealers and the American buyers between them have now carried prices to a highly artificial point which yet seems likely to be maintained.

CHAPTER VII

WHAT among Chinese ceramics is there left to collect may well be asked in this connection. It is true that at the present day most of the examples of the Sung and Ming dynasties or, after these, of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries during the reigns of Kang-he, Yung-ching, and Keen-lung, are known and gathered into the museums or the cabinets of the connoisseurs. The finest of these only appear occasionally at the great auction-rooms and in places where the bids are enormous.

But there remains a very large quantity of that interesting and highly decorative family of ceramics belonging to the

LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

These are examples of the large table services and domestic pieces, which were made for European use in stout porcelain of somewhat rough character, but excellent form and pleasing decoration.

In the days when Josephine de Beauharnais lived gracefully among her debts in the Rue Chautereine, before she met Napoleon, the few pieces of furniture that her rooms contained were in excellent taste, but her table was served with earthenware, while a single dozen of blue-and-white china plates were reserved for guests. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, and for some fifty or more years after, few families of any station, provincial or urban, but had within their china-cupboards some such pieces or, more probably, some service of such ware for gala days and state occasions. This porcelain was made under Kea-King (1796–1821), and somewhat earlier, in huge quantities for the Western markets. It is divided from the great days of Kang-he by the Keen-lung period of perfect production and perfect painting, mainly in enamels. These large services were produced too late and too lavishly to please the fastidious amateur's taste, and were obviously adapted to European, especially to English, requirements. As a matter of fact, the seventeenth-century Kang-he and the mid-eighteenth-century Keen-lung were largely made for the Western trade

PLATE XVI.—TWO KANG-HE TRUMPET-SHAPED VASES AND MING VASE AND COVER

In the centre is a characteristic Ming blue-and-white vase of chrysanthemum scrolls, which is thought to belong to the period of 1506–1521, and shows the perfection of the craft attained so early in the sixteenth century. Further development is shown in the vases of Kang-he which follow. These display the mark of the double ring. The scenes are of a domestic and aristocratic style that belong rather to the last days of the Ming than the warlike times that followed on. But the periods of Chinese porcelain, like other arbitrary divisions of time, often overlap each other, and often exhibit in one era what are supposed to be distinctive marks of an earlier period.

also, but those examples, as has been shown, were much more finely fashioned and a very great deal more costly.

A USEFUL HOBBY

Still, as the production of those cherished periods are not for all of us, a less wealthy man of taste may, I think, find the china of this late period extremely interesting and, like eighteenth-century furniture—with which it harmonises admirably—as useful as it is distinguished. The many admirable books on porcelain which have been published during the last ten years or so treat this particular ware with marked indifference or contempt, but the harvest of a quiet eye among the old-china auctions shows one that the prices are constantly rising, and that the supply does not increase. An ordinary sale of antique porcelains at any of the more famous auction-rooms, from Christie's downwards, will probably contain some lots of this class of china—plates, dishes, tureens, and the like. Five pounds sterling will give a good result, provided the

pieces are not cracked and broken, and are of the boldest and best designs.

SOMEWHAT NEGLECTED BY IMITATORS

So far the imitators and impostors, who are extremely busy with all Oriental porcelains, have, with the exception of a few jugs and pots and plates and bowls, left the late blue-and-white and coloured services alone.

"ORIENTAL LOWESTOFT"

Although this period as a whole has not been considered worthy of the attention of the copyists and maker of pseudo-antiques, one branch of it has been greatly flattered by imitation. It will be remembered that at one time these coloured services, especially those examples with Europen armorial bearings, were attributed to the small English factory of Lowestoft. People collected this Chinese ware under the name of Lowestoft with great avidity, and various French firms, finding that they could produce very cheaply a class of hard-paste china which would pass for this mis-named

porcelain, developed the trade with an amount of *élan* worthy of some nobler cause. The result was that a few years ago copies of these Chinese services, which were made to pass as Lowestoft, flooded the market. In the earlier years the French imitations were very carefully made and decorated. Of late the fraud has been exposed, and the present consignments would neither deceive nor delight the most utter novice.

NOT THE "TRUE BLUE"

It is certain that the coloured examples of this late period have none of the charming delicacy of the Keen-lung pieces, and the blue is not the true blue of Kang-he, the white is not so clear and beautiful, the quality of the porcelain by no means so precious. But there is the touch of a still fine period about all these pieces, a sentiment of those graceful, leisurely days when every mistress of a country house took especial pleasure in her Oriental china, and cared for it with

> "The soft white hand that stroked her lace
> Or smoothed her wimples."

Under the Regent, although taste was departing from the old Georgian simplicity, there yet remained a pleasing interest in the more graceful applied arts. Our own porcelain factories flourished and brought forth some excellent things, but the Oriental wares that the East India Company had first made possible and then popular were still prized and used with careful thought upon hospitable occasions. Such sets as those held in reserve by Josephine were then in use, but destined soon to disappear before a flood of machine-made European goods that overwhelmed good taste and caused the articles of the table to become absolutely undistinguished, if not offensive. The dishes are of various oval forms, or are long, rather narrow, and with cut corners that give an octagonal result. These sets included most of the same objects that a modern service provides, from soup plates to sweetmeat dishes. Hot-water plates and one or two other pieces, now *démodé*, are also included.

GEORGIAN SERVICES

Thus the amateur will find that he can, with some agreeable labour, reconstruct a complete service. Perhaps the plates of one course may not be decorated with precisely the same design as those used for the next, but the colour, shape, and size may be identical, and the *ensemble* perfectly preserved. As a matter of fact, even when the same pattern is carried out on all the pieces, they will not be found on close inspection to be quite similar. For the design was applied in under-glaze blue or over-glaze enamels by various hands, and there are always slight changes that give a trifle of individuality and interest to each separate piece. As I have said, the period during which this late blue-and-white was shipped to Europe synchronises with the vogue for Chinese armorial porcelain services decorated in China with coats-of-arms, mottoes, crests. But while, in our time, these coloured services were mistaken for old Lowestoft—for which there was good demand—the late blue-and-white has never had

the advantage of being considered an eighteenth-century English production—to my mind the designs are too good for English work. Indeed, it has always been treated, until the present time, as of little account. Decoratively speaking, it is infinitely more valuable than the English services of Spode, Ironstone, and the like of the same time, which now fetch good prices, but, as I have said, it has hardly become the fashion, and there still remains a chance for the modest collector. This class of ware, to which is sometimes added an over-glaze design of red and gold, has been occasionally attributed to Japan, which country certainly produced examples, but not so largely as was at one time reported. From the useful plates and dishes of these services one may turn to slightly more fanciful and uncommon objects, although in this connection almost every object is primarily for use. There are, however, vases of this period in no small numbers, and many bowls and tea-bottles are to be found, although they belong, perhaps, to the beginning of the time of this class of production.

DECORATIVE PIECES

Large wash-hand basins with bottles for water may be discovered in this style of blue-and-white, as well as many smaller ones intended for shaving purposes. The fine, heavy cisterns and flower-tubs and pots of this period grow less common every year, and the enormous bowls for gold and silver fish are now being sought.

PRICES MAY GO UP

A little while, and those who appreciate this sort of thing will have brought all the straggling specimens back into collections, and the value will increase considerably. Some of the plates, dishes, and so forth have a pleasing design worked on the paste and under the glaze. This style of work has been a favourite decoration for many centuries with Chinese ware, but when it is seen in this period it always marks a careful piece of work, perhaps made for European markets, but produced with a finer sense of

art than the Celestial potter usually cares to bestow on porcelains intended for the "foreign devil."

These large services are still generally spoken of as *Nankin*, a name with a pleasing suggestion of beauty still clinging to it, for that was the Chinese port through which they issued on their journey westward.

While many of the plates intended for dessert are delicate and light, the square salad-bowls and many other pieces have the very heavy, strong quality which is characteristic of most parts of these services. The tureens, for example, are generally of great thickness, the handles are solid heads of animals or models of fruit; the vegetable dishes should withstand the roughest handling, but are often of charming shape and pattern, frequently made in a set of five, to fit round a tray which encloses them. Sauce-boats, salt-cellars, plates with a broad flat rim—the native Chinese plate, whatever its size, is of a saucer shape—milk-jugs with covers, teacups with handles, all these and a dozen other pieces were specially made for our Occidental uses, and were immensely

popular here. The blue-and-white tea-sets, often lightened with a little gold, were somewhat earlier than the large services, and have become more difficult to obtain of late.

The decoration of these late pieces is very much on the lines of seventeenth-century Chinese porcelains. Landscapes, animals, birds, and flowers are, however, more freely used than the representations of native gods and saints or the symbols of various Eastern religions. Much of the ornamentation of these late eighteenth-century porcelains has very absurdly been called a variant on the also misnamed "willow" pattern. That design, which was unfortunate enough to fall into English hands and become transformed and deformed late in the eighteenth century into the vulgar "willow" pattern of our own heavy transfer-printed bourgeois services, has as little to do with a willow as have the designs on these plates and dishes to do with the English rendering of the Chinese idea.

The bamboo, the lotus, the tree peony, with the chrysanthemum and winter-blossoming plum, are among the more realistic designs

used, but the conventional patterns—suited, as it were, for any market—are those generally employed by the Chinese for this, the final, class of ware now sold to the public as "Old Nankin."

The plates are printed by Bemrose & Sons, Ltd., Derby and London
The text at the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

MARKS ON
CHINESE PORCELAIN

FU SHOU SHUANG CH'ÜAN
A Bat and two Peaches, reading
"Happiness and longevity"

MEI HUA
A Sprig of Prunus, with two rings

A FOUR-LEAVED FLOWER

THE JOO-E-HEAD

THE "CHANG" or KNOT,
said to signify longevity

FIVE CIRCLES WITH
FILLETS

A FLOWER WITH SIXTEEN
LEAVES

A STORK OR HERON
WITHOUT A TAIL

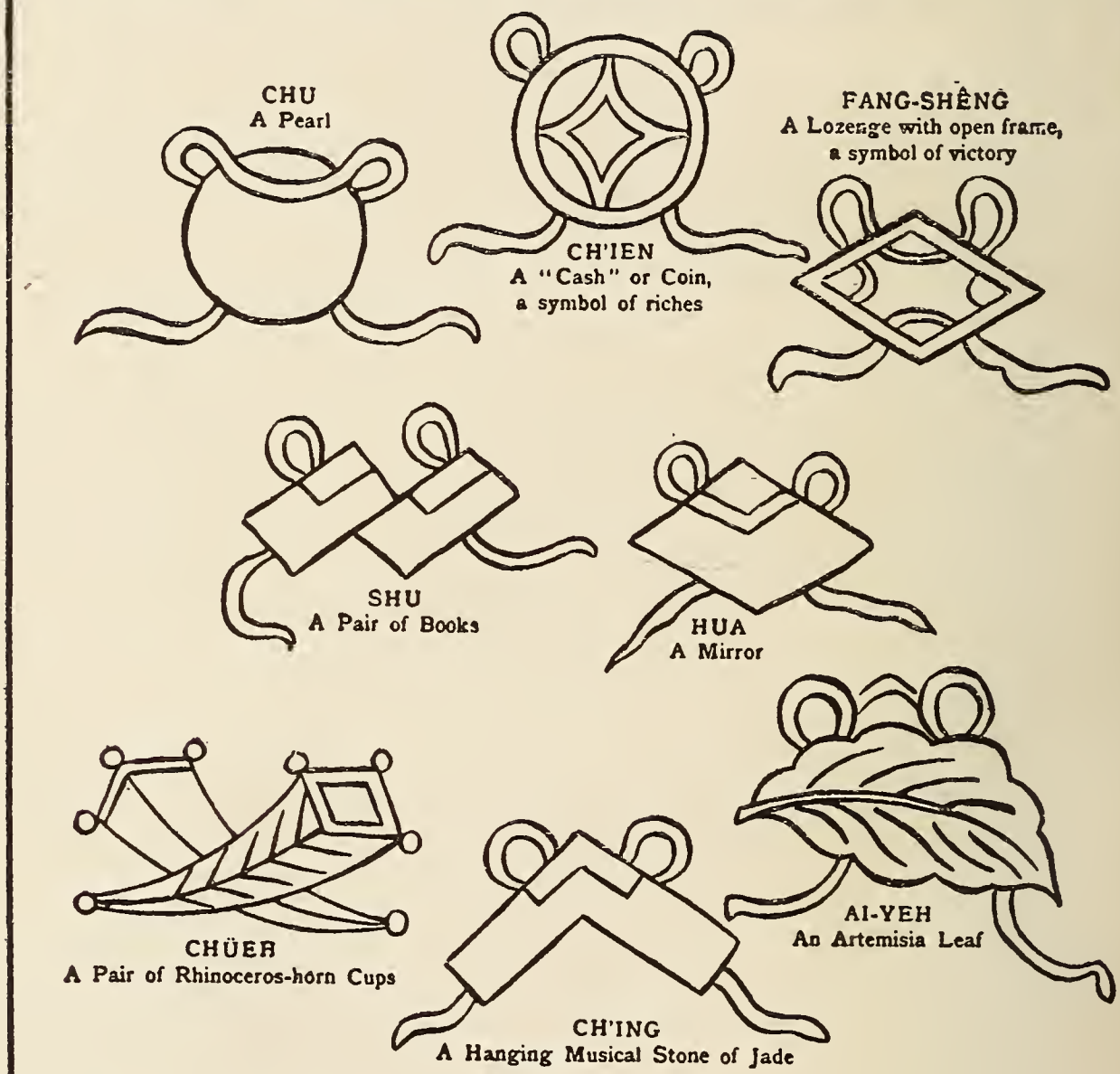
TING
Four-legged Incense-burner

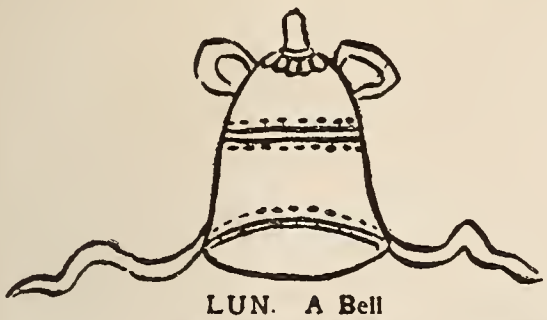
AN INSECT

TING, or INCENSE-BURNER

SYMBOLIC MARKS AND DECORATIONS

PA PAO. THE EIGHT PRECIOUS THINGS





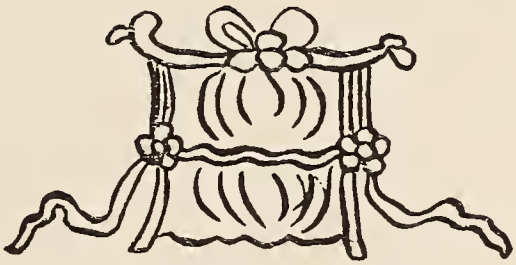
LUN. A Bell

HUA. Lotus-flower

LO A Conch Shell; the chank-shell of the Buddhists

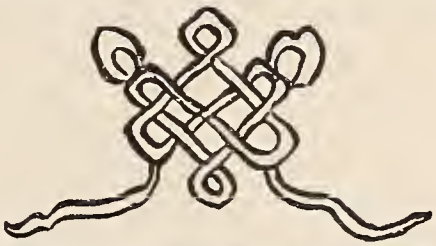
P'ING. A Vase with Cover

SAN. A State Umbrella



KAI. A Canopy

YÜ. A Pair of Fish



CHANG. "Entrails": an Endless Knot, and also an emblem of longevity

The Eight Buddhist Emblems of Happy Augury

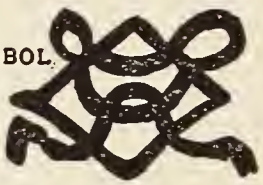
SYMBOLICAL MARKS AND ORNAMENTS

THE PEARL

THE CONCH SHELL
which signifies a prosperous journey

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

THE SVAŜTIKA SYMBOL
inclosed in a lozenge



A PAIR OF FISHES
An emblem of domestic happiness

PI TING JU I
A brush pencil, cake of ink, and sceptre of longevity, reading "May things be placed as you wish!"

T'U
The Hare, an emblem of longevity

CHIAO ÖEH
A "palm leaf," with fillets

LIEN HUA
The Che plant, or "Lotus Blossom"

LING CHIH
The "sacred fungus," used as an emblem of longevity

MARKS OF THE MING DYNASTY

洪武年製

Hung Woo (1368-1398)

永樂年製

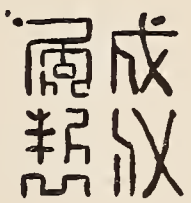
Yung Lo (1403-1424)

大明宣德年製

Hsüan Tê (1426-1435)

大明成化年製

Ch'êng Hua (1465-1487)



成化年製

Ch'êng Hua (1465-1487)

大明弘治年製

Hung Chih (1488-1505)


大明萬曆年製
WAN LI (1573-1619)
大明隆慶年製
LUNG CH'ING (1567-1572)
大明嘉靖年製
CHIA CHING (1522-1566)
大明萬德年製
CHÊNG TÊ (1506-1521)
THE CH'ING DYNASTY
大清順治年製
SHUN CHIH (1644-1661)
崇禎年製
CH'UNG CHÊN (1628-1643)
大明天啟年製
T'IEN CH'I (1621-1627)
大清康熙年製
K'ANG HSI (1662-1722)
大清雍正年製
YUNG CHÊNG (1723-1735)
大清乾隆年製
CH'IEN LUNG (1736-1795)
雍正御製
YUNG CHÊNG Made by order of the Emperor
CH'IEN LUNG (1736-1795)