

HISTORY OF CHINESE MEDICINE

Being a Chronicle of Medical Happenings in China
from Ancient Times to the Present Period

by

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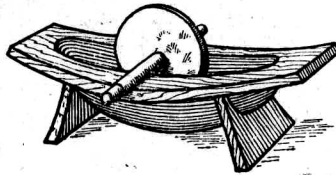
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GENERAL PREFACE

The idea of producing a history of Chinese medicine from its earliest beginnings as an indigenous and mysterious art to the subsequent introduction of so-called "western medicine" into China and its steady progress therein was conceived more than fifteen years ago. From the very commencement of the work quite a number of unforeseen difficulties were encountered.

In the first place, scant and disjointed sources of information alone were available. Innumerable journals, books, reports, etc. in many languages and widely scattered over several countries had to be consulted and combed, and the required information carefully checked. The difficulty may be gauged by the following instance: only one complete set of the China Medical Journal since its first issue in 1887 was procurable in Shanghai—and that at the offices of the Medical Missionary Association.

In the second place, owing to the wide distance until recently separating the two authors of this work, extra labour was entailed and much valuable time consumed. It was also realised that on account of the nature of the book, containing as it does numerous Chinese characters and names of persons and places in Chinese, publication in Europe or America would have been difficult if not impossible.

A history of Chinese medicine should take account not only of the theory and practice of the time-honoured native art but should incorporate the achievements of modern medical science which have resulted in the remarkable progress of the last century. Chinese medicine, to be understood, and its significance appreciated, must be studied as one whole. With its roots deeply embedded in the soil of four milleniums of empiricism, it only began to extend into the atmosphere of constructive effort when there was grafted on to it the vital principles of observation, experimentation and co-ordination so characteristic of modern scientific medicine, and without which no advance was possible. In no other field of endeavour in this country has the experimental method realised such concrete and far-reaching results as in the domain of medicine.

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The reader may notice, and wonder at, the discrepancy in the sizes of the two Books: Book One, dealing with the panorama of medicine from the earliest recorded period to the close of the eighteenth century and covering only one-fourth of the entire volume, while Book Two, treating of the past hundred and thirty years, extends to more than 400 pages. The explanation is simple. Apart from the natural difficulties inherent in the collection and preservation of records of medical discoveries during the epochs covered by the first Book, medical effort in China came to a practical standstill long before the close of the seventeenth century, remained dormant throughout the fruitful years in Europe following the impetus of Harvey's discovery, and was only resuscitated with the advent of the medical missions.

The aim of this book is twofold. To students of the old school, with their praiseworthy efforts to preach and retain the admittedly manifold virtues of the ancient order, the account of how the modern conception of the prevention and treatment of disease came to gain a footing in this conservative land should make inspiring reading and yet serve as a reminder that the world (particularly medical science) has not remained stationary since the time of Hua T'o. On the other hand, protagonists of experimental medicine, in their laudable attempts to inculcate the spirit of scientific research into the masses, are urged not to spurn the lessons of the past but to see in the old tradition, not something to be rejected, but a background that throws into vivid relief the wonderful achievements of the present age.

As the work proceeded, it was found necessary to centralise the collection of data under a colleague who could devote more time to the proper application of this task than the authors burdened, as they were, with their official duties. The authors were fortunate in securing the services of Dr. Robert Pollitzer (graduate of Vienna) who, for ten years and more, has been the right-hand man in scientific and literary pursuits of one of them (W.L.T.), and without whose collaboration and indefatigable energy the completion of this History would have been unduly prolonged.

The authors also desire to state that, although they have consulted one another for years over the publication of this work, each is wholly responsible for his own portion.

In the preparation of this book considerable assistance has been derived from the files of the China Medical Journal, National

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Medical Journal, Chinese Recorder and other publications, as well as from ancient Chinese literature and personal narratives of many friends, Chinese and foreign. The illustrations have been chosen with care, not a few being from old paintings and engravings in the authors' private collections. Professor Bernard Read, of the Peiping Union Medical College, has kindly supplied some treasured photographs in his possession for use in this work. Wherever possible, due acknowledgment of the source is made under each illustration.

Chronological Tables as well as Indices of Persons and Places, covering about one hundred pages, have been compiled with the utmost care; it is hoped they will prove not the least useful part of this History.

Both Dr. Robert Pollitzer and Miss Alice Wu have devoted much time and labour in seeing the book through the press. To them, as well as to the printers (who have shown the greatest patience in completing a book of this magnitude) the authors wish to tender their best thanks.

K. C. WONG,
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Shanghai, July 15, 1932.

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BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I.

BEGINNINGS OF CHINESE HEALING ART.

China is one of the oldest as well as the largest nation in the world. She is the cradle of a very old civilization, older perhaps than that of any other lands save Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. But these countries have passed away while she continues to exist. It is not known who were the ancestors of the Chinese and where they came from. They were not the first inhabitants of the country in which they settled. Some suppose that they originally lived in the rich basin of the Euphrates, the mother of all races, and migrated eastward to what is now the modern province of Shansi in the valley of the Yellow River somewhen about the twenty-third century B. C. Like the Chaldeans and Israelites they were a pastoral people, but after they obtained possession of the territory from the aboriginal tribes they soon took up agricultural pursuits.

The early history of China abounds in myths and legends. It is believed that the first living being on the earth was P'ang Ku 盤古 who worked 18,000 years to form the heaven and earth. Some 500,000 years are supposed to have elapsed from the beginning of the world to the ascension of Fu Hsi 伏羲, the founder of the Chinese nation. And during that vast period there are countless myths and traditions describing the origin of the manners, customs, arts and industries, etc. of the people.

Anthropologists, however, tell us that the primitive peoples all over the earth have practically the same myths, customs, beliefs and superstitions, differing only in unimportant details. It was through long space and time that human races and racial customs have changed as they gradually evolved from a lower and plainer life to a higher and more complex development. Like the primitive folks of other races, the Chinese in this early stage of existence lived in caves, ate wild fruits, drank the blood of animals, and covered their loins with the skin of animals. They had to fight against wild beasts and sometimes got hurt or wounded. The meals being irregular, the food coarse and uncooked, and the body exposed to all kinds of weather, stomach troubles and other diseases naturally followed. As the most universal symptom of disease, the first indication of something wrong with the living organism is pain, to seek and to apply remedies for it is the most primitive of the primeval instincts. An injured dog licking its wound, or seeking certain grasses and herbs when sick, a child stretching its cramped limbs or scratching its irritated body are instinctive responses towards removing these evils. And such instinctive reactions are the origins from which definite curative systems have arisen during the evolution of every community.

But human knowledge at this stage was extremely limited for primitive man, knowing nothing whatever of physical laws, cause and

effect, yet seeking an explanation of the workings of nature, described them in the only way possible to him. He attributed to all inanimate objects his own sentiments and passions, fancying them influenced by the same things in the same way. This tendency to personify or animate everything is universal among savages; and in early philosophy throughout the world all natural phenomena are alive and, as it were, human in their nature. He was frightened by the flash of lightning, the eruption of an earthquake, the crash of thunder. The sun, moon, stars, clouds, storm and fire were to him the outward manifestations of gods, demons, devils, spirits or other supernatural agencies. Consequently health and disease were thought to be controlled by them and diseases, in particular, were regarded as the work of devils or were devils in temporary possession of the human body, which would only be cured of its infirmity when the intruders were evicted by the application of appropriate incantations, charms, and other superstitious practices.

Indeed the number of these devils, as they increased down the ages, multiplied to such an extent that current Chinese traditions have almost one particular devil to each disease. For example, nightmares are supposed to be caused by the fox ghost, pains in the abdomen by the house god. The devil of neuralgia uses an iron band which he forces on one's head producing that terrible pain. The god of thunder employs a hammer and chisel to strike one down. There are the water spirits to entice a person to the waters; the wicked devils to snatch away the souls of children; and the demons of malaria, three in number, one with a bucket of cold water to give the chills, another with a stove to set up the fever, and a third with a hammer with which to knock the head producing headaches (1). It follows that with the beginning of superstition primitive healing art, instead of the crude herb-therapy, became an affair of charms and spells, incantations and offerings. And out of these we have the advent of the witch doctor, faith and nature healers, and other quacks who profess to cure sickness by all sorts of miraculous devices.

(1) K. C. Wong: Chinese Medical Superstitions, Nat. Med. J. China, Vols. 2 and 3.

CHAPTER II.

FOUNDERS OF CHINESE MEDICINE.

There are many legends concerning the founders of Chinese medicine. The first was Shen Nung 神農, the Divine Husbandman, who was supposed to have reigned 2838-2698 B. C. It is said that he had a head like an ox and was born with great wisdom. As the father of agriculture he taught the people how to cultivate the five grains as food so as to avoid the killing of animals. He examined the hundred herbs and established the art of medicine (2). Like Mithridates, King of Pontus, who achieved a reputation in the art of taking poisons, he is said to have tasted seventy different kinds of poisons in a single day. Later authorities, however, reduced this number to twelve (3). It is also asserted that the term "poison" only meant the active principles which may not necessarily be poisonous.

To him is usually ascribed the writing of the *Pen T'sao* 本草 or *The Herbal*, which is supposed to be the earliest treatise on medicine. Unquestionably the ancients knew the properties and uses of many plants but this book could not have been composed by him for the term "pen t'sao" was only first employed in the reign of Han Ping 206 B.C.—25 A.D. The style of writing and the references contained in it all point to its being a product of about the first century B.C.

The *Pen T'sao* is a little work of three "chuans" 卷 or volumes. Its original texts are no longer known to us except through the quotations of various commentators. Of the 365 drugs enumerated, about 240 belong to the vegetable kingdom. They are classified under three main groups, 120 being listed as "superior," 120 as "medium" and 125 as "inferior," the total number corresponding to the number of days in a year. The superior drugs are supposed to be non-poisonous, possessing rejuvenating properties and can be taken for long periods without harm. The medium drugs are said to have tonic effects, their toxicity depending on the dosage. The inferior drugs are only employed for curing disease, being considered poisonous and should not be taken for any length of time (4).

Shen Nung is worshipped by native drug guilds as their patron god. On the first and fifteenth day of each month incense and offerings are put before his shrine. A ten per cent discount on all drugs is usually given on these dates. In most cities a temple of medicine is erected to perpetuate his memory (5). He is venerated as the Father of Medicine.

(2) 淮南子修務訓篇 Huai Nan Tzu Hsiu Wu Hsun P'ien.

(3) 宋劉昉通鑑外記 Sung Liu Lu Tung Chien Wai Chi.

(4) 本草綱目 Pen T'sao Kang Mu or the Great Herbal, a standard work on materia medica.

(5) For a detailed description of the temple at Peking consult Dudgeon's Chinese Arts of Healing, Chinese Recorder, Vols. II & III.

Another noted character in Chinese healing art was Huang Ti 黃帝, the Yellow Emperor, who lived 2698-2598 B.C. In conjunction with Ch'i Pai 岐伯, one of his ministers, he is said to have written the famous classic *Nei Ching* 內經 or *Canon of Medicine*. Hence the medical profession is sometimes spoken of as the art of Ch'i and Huang. But historical researches proved that this work was not composed by him but a later production most probably written about the end of the Chou dynasty. The legends connected with Huang Ti are many. He is said to have visited most of the immortals and obtained his knowledge of medicine from them. The True Middle Emperor gave him the formula of the "nine gourd powder"; the little spirit Huang Kai handed him the "nineteen gold and silver prescriptions". He went to see the two goddesses, Scarlet and White, in the Golden Valley, and then composed the chapters on diagnosis and the pulse. He invented the nine needles for acupuncture and wrote a treatise of 18 volumes on medicine and surgery. Finally he secured the recipe for making the "nine tripod pills." He set up a stove to prepare this medicine. Thousands of tigers and leopards came to take care of the fire for him. When the pills were finished a yellow dragon descended from heaven to conduct him to paradise. About seventy of his most faithful ministers and concubines followed in the train, the lesser officials being left behind.

Other legendary doctors of this period were:—

Chiu Tai-chi 僦貸季, the teacher of Ch'i Pai; he specialized in the pulse.

Ch'i Pai, the most famous of Huang Ti's assistants; he tested the actions of herbs, cured the people's sickness, and wrote books on medicine.

Lei Kung 雷公, a pupil of Huang Ti. It is said that the seven chapters following the *Essay on Chi Chiao* 至教論 in the *Nei Ching* were from his pen. A book on the art of dispensing was also attributed to him.

A great surgeon was Yü Fu 俞跗; he cut open the skin, dissected the muscles, severed the blood vessels, tied the tendons, and even washed the stomach and cleansed the intestines (6).

There was also a veterinary surgeon named Ma Shih-huang 馬師皇, who was an expert in treating horses. One day a dragon with drooping ears and gaping mouth came to him for treatment. He punctured his lips and mouth and administered a decoction of liquorice. The dragon was cured. Thereafter many dragons came to him for medicine and one day they carried him away no one knows where (7).

The last name to be mentioned in this legendary period is I Yin 伊尹, the able and faithful prime minister of Emperor T'ang, founder of the Shang dynasty 1783 B.C. He is credited with having first dispensed medicinal decoctions.

6 (9) 史記扁鵲傳 Shih Chi Pien Ch'iao Chuan, or Historical Records, biography of Pien Ch'iao.

(7) 列仙傳 Lieh Hsien Chuan, or Lives of the Immortals.

CHAPTER III.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND MEDICINE.

In these early times the healing art consisted chiefly of herb-therapy, divination, incantation and other superstitious practices. The profession was entirely in the hands of priests and sorcerers, references of which may be found in the following ancient writings. Confucius said that if one has no perseverance one cannot even be a priest-doctor (8). According to the *Shuo Wen*, sorcerer P'eng 巫彭 was the first doctor (9), while the *Shih Pen* recorded that priest Wu Hsien 巫咸 was physician to Emperor Yao (10). The *Lü Lan* stated that priest-doctors employed poisonous drugs to treat and expel diseases (11). The *Sea and Hill Classics* remarked that in the east of Kai Ming there lived certain sorcerers named Peng 彭, Ti 抵, Yang 陽, Li 履, Fan 凡, and Hsiang 相, who were all skilful physicians (12). Thus religion and astrology merged into healing and, as in all early civilizations, the first doctor was a priest and the first priest a doctor.

It was not until the Chou dynasty 1140 B.C. that the functions of these two professions were separated. The *Chou-Li*, a classic handed down from the Chou dynasty, records that the chief sorcerer shall direct the junior sorcerers to make offerings in times of drought, and that the doctor shall superintend all matters relating to medicine and shall collect drugs for medical purposes (13).

An interesting side-light on the art of medicine may be gathered from the formation and development of the ancient Chinese character "I" 醫 for doctor. It is made up of three component parts. At the top on the left corner is the radical for a quiver of arrows or chest of arms 醫; on the right corner a hand grasping a weapon 攴 below the symbol for sorcerer or priest 巫. The complete character denotes that the priest employs strong weapons to kill or drive away the demons of sickness. Later, however, the third part of the symbol was changed to wine 酉, signifying that the practice of medicine was no longer confined to the priests but had been taken up by doctors who administered elixirs or wines to their patients.

Marvellous powers were attributed to these priest-doctors. Miao Fu 苗父 treated patients by simply looking towards the north and uttering ten words. Then all who came to him were cured (14).

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- (8) 論語 Lun Yu or Analects.
(9) 說文 Shuo Wen, a standard dictionary.
(10) 出本 Shih Pen.
(11) 呂覽 Lü Lan.
(12) 山海經 Shan Hai Ching or Sea & Hill Classic.
(13) 周禮 Chou-li or Chou Rituals.
(14) 說苑 Shuo Yuan.

Yü Fu 俞附 did not use herbs, but took a piece of wood to make the brain and a bundle of straw to form the body. He blew some breath into this manikin and the dead revived (15). The witchdoctor Hsien was so powerful that trees withered and birds dropped dead at his glance (16). Faith-healing was often employed. According to the *Su Wen* the primitive methods of treatment consisted mainly of diverting one's thoughts and changing one's environment which could be accomplished by prayer alone (17). The priests of old knew the essential points of a disease, whence it came, and utilized faith to combat the evil (18). This method was resorted to even by the intelligent classes. Duke Chou cured King Wu's illness through prayer (19). When Confucius was sick his disciple Tzü Lu offered to pray for his master (20). Medical practice at this ancient period, therefore, was chiefly a matter of spirits and demons, charms and plant lore and psychotherapy.

(15) 韓詩外傳 Han Shih Wai Chuan or Biography of Han Shih.

(16) 世本 Shih Pen.

(17) 素問移精變氣篇 Su Wen Yi Ching Pien Chi P'ien, Su Wen, First Book of Nei Ching.

(18) 素問賊風篇 Su Wen Tsei Feng P'ien; Su Wen, Chapter on Evil Winds.

(19) 書經金縢篇 Shu Ching Chin T'eng P'ien; or the Book of History.

(20) 論語子路篇 Lun Yu Tzü Lu P'ien; Confucian analects, Chapter on Tzu Lu.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF DISEASE.

Reliable history does not extend further back than the middle of the Chou dynasty, 722 B.C., which is one of the most glorious periods in Chinese history. Literature, art, philosophy, religion, government and all that is included in the term civilization flourished and reached a high degree of development. This dynasty is rightly called the age of philosophy for Kuan Tzu 管子, Chuang Tzu 莊子, Lieh Tzu 列子, and most of the famous philosophers were found at this period. And towering above all these were Lao Tzu 老子, Confucius 孔子, and Mencius 孟子, three of the greatest characters of China. Never, before or since, had so many men of genius appeared in the same narrow limits and space of time. These men wrote on all kinds of subjects. Their influence was so great that it was felt in every branch of literature. Thus we find medicine no longer an effective, practical, although restricted art, based upon observation and knowledge. We see rather, masquerading under its name, pretentious systems of healing carried to an absurd and extravagant extent; elaborate systems of theoretical knowledge, which, ever developing in complexity without gaining in meaning, have tended to become less and less effective in practice. The study of medicine was dominated by the scholastic subtleties of visionary philosophers and was characterized by reverence for authority, petrified formalism and a pedantic excess of detail. As a result of these varied speculations on the theory and causation of diseases there were evolved two doctrines which formed the basis of the whole of Chinese medicine.

The first is the Doctrine of the Two Principles called Yin 陰 and Yang 陽. Everything under the sun is supposed to originate from them. They are generally represented by a circle called the great absolute or infinite void 太極 and which is divided into two pear-shaped bodies by a double curved line. Attendant upon these diagrammatic elements are eight symbols, which are made up of a combination of triple lines—whole and broken—arranged in such a manner as not to repeat the combination. This Pa Kua 八卦 or eight

THE PA KUA 八卦



trigrams is supposed to date from Fu Hsi, the plan being revealed to him on the back of a supernatural animal called a dragon-horse, that rose from the waters of the Yellow river. Each of the eight

trigrams has a special name with a symbolic and fanciful meaning. But no one has been able to give a definite interpretation of them. Confucius was greatly enamoured of these figures and said that if he could devote fifty years to the study of these lines, he might attain wisdom. These symbols are chiefly used in divination and are generally interpreted as follows:

☰ Chien 乾, the Yang or active principle in Nature, heaven, ether, the N. W. point of the compass; ☷ Tui 兌, water, fountains, ascending vapour, lightness, the W.; ☲ Li 離, fire, light, heat, warmth, life, the S.; ☳ Chen 震, thunder, igneous exhalations, the quickening power of Nature, the E.; ☴ Sun 巽, the wind, expansive energy, flexibility, the S. E.; ☵ K'an 坎, water, the liquid elements, rigidity, cold, the N.; ☶ Ken 艮, mountains, what sustains, solidity, gravity, quiet, the N. E.; ☷ K'un 坤, the earth, the Yin or passive principle in Nature, complaint accord, drought, the S. W. on the compass card.

The Yang and Yin principles represent the male and female forces. They stand for heaven and earth, the sun and the moon, day and night, heat and cold, life and death, positive and negative, strong and weak, etc. corresponding to Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman of the Zoroastrians, Osiris and Isis of the Egyptians, the even and the odd of Pythagoras. In medicine everything is classified under these two main divisions. On the human body the skin or surface is Yang, the interior is Yin; the back is Yang, the abdomen is Yin; the empty organs are Yang, the solid organs are Yin. Of the five viscera the heart and liver are Yang organs and the spleen, lungs and kidneys are Yin organs. Within the Yang there is also something of Yin and within the Yin there is likewise something of Yang. Thus while the back is Yang, the lung being Yin it is a Yin within a Yang. The abdomen is Yin, but the liver is Yang, therefore it is a Yang within a Yin. Again the back is Yang and the heart is another Yang, so it is a Yang within a Yang. Similarly the abdomen is Yin and the spleen is another Yin, consequently it is a Yin within a Yin. A disease is Yang when it is due to external causes and Yin when it is from internal causes. So fever, affections of the upper body, respiratory diseases, when the onset is sudden, when the patient cannot bend his body, are Yang diseases. Consequently chills, affections of the lower body, circulatory diseases, when the onset is gradual, when the patient cannot lie on his back, are Yin diseases. A Yang pulse is strong, bounding and large in volume while a Yin pulse is weak and of low tension. When the Yin predominates one suffers from a Yang disease, when the Yang is in excess, a Yin disease results. Excessive Yang causes fever, excessive Yin causes chills. Even drugs have this distinction. Stimulants, resolvents, expectorants, pungent substances, and hot decoctions are classified as Yang drugs. Astringents, purgatives, haematics, bitter substances and cold infusions are Yin drugs. So when treating patients these matters should be remembered.