The Chinese are known to be great connoisseurs of life. In 4,000 years of history, they have developed the enjoyment of living into a fine art which even the less prosperous among them know how to practice. One phase is traced by the pen of Mr. Wu Ming (伍铭) and the brush of Sapajou in the following pages.—K. M.

In spite of the fact that there are growing numbers of people in this country who have or pretend to have cultivated a fondness for Lipton's tea— with milk and sugar added, of course—in preference to the much finer specimens of the beverage to be procured in their own country, the Chinese as a nation nevertheless remain unrivaled as the greatest tea drinkers in the world. Tea-drinking with the Chinese is indeed at once both an art and a science not likewise cultivated or even understood in any other country.

In the matter of wine-drinking, however, it is difficult to put the Chinese in their proper place. It cannot be said that individually there are among the Chinese no great drinkers, nor is it true that collectively the Chinese are rather inclined toward temperance. Wine-drinking, in point of fact, is quite common in the country, but the people are not conspicuously noted for it. One opinion, given by a literary man of the past and recently transmitted to the English reading public by a famous writer of the present, is that "great drinkers of tea are not fond of wine, and vice versa." This theory is, however, not conclusive; for, although in support of it many instances have been given of connoisseurs of tea who drink little or no wine, there has been no evidence to show that, on the other hand, great connoisseurs of wine showed any aversion toward tea. From our way of looking at it, the trouble is that, of the two beverages, tea has been given a higher place of honor than wine, and matters related to the latter drink have paled into comparative insignificance in the face of the more important and perhaps less harmful beverage, tea.

IMPERIAL REVELERS

At any rate, wine came into Chinese life at a very early date. It is recorded that during the reign of the great Emperor Yu, who, in 2205 B.C., founded the first regular Chinese dynasty, the Hsia, there was among his court officials one I Ti, who succeeded in producing a kind of wine, which was offered to his imperial master. The great Yu tasted of this new beverage, and so greatly alarmed was he with the pleasure-giving qualities of
the wine that he, great sage that he was, exclaimed: "In after ages, there will be sovereigns who will forfeit their empires through overindulgence in this beverage called wine." He immediately dismissed the poor official from his favor and himself abstained from further indulgence in the drink.

Unfortunately, the example of the great and wise emperor was not always or universally followed, and his prophecy was to come true—on more than one occasion. The first person who was to prove the truth of his words was one of his own scions, the last ruler of the great dynasty he founded. This sovereign, Chien Kuei, reigned from 1718 to 1766 B.C. and is now regarded as one of the most infamous characters in Chinese history. He "built terraces for which his people were forced to give their services, and his country's wealth was fully exhausted; dug a canal which was filled with wine and lined its banks with distiller's grain; and there indulged in pleasures of extravagance and waste." A revolution resulted in his abdication and the establishment of the Shang dynasty in 1766 B.C.

Of course, it must be assumed that the circumstances which led to the collapse of these dynasties were necessarily more complex than those described here. But it has been pointed out that indulgence in wine was the root of all subsequent evils, and that, in a word, wine was responsible for the downfall of the two infamous rulers. This lesson was not lost sight of by the founders of the Hsia dynasty (1122 to 255 B.C.), which succeeded the Shang. One of the first acts of the new dynasty was the issue of a ban against wine.

**INCREDIBLE CAPACITY**

Nevertheless, wine has come into Chinese life, and come to stay. Through the ages of Chinese history are to be found drinkers among all ranks and in all places. The greatest drinker in the country, from the viewpoint of capacity, appears to have been one called Chunyu Kung. In reply to a question from the Emperor about his wine capacity, he is stated to have said:

> I am drunk after the first *tou*, but I may also not be drunk until after the full *shih* . . . On the occasion of a feast in the presence of Your Gracious Majesty, with court officials around, I am filled with awe and, drinking with my body prostrate, I am fully drunk after the first *tou*.

> When my father entertains a guest, and I wait on their table with reverence and respect, drinking to their health now and then with wine from the table given to me, I become intoxicated after about two *tou*.

> On meeting a friend I have not seen for some time, and talking over old times over a friendly meal, I become less restrained, and it will take five or six *tou* of wine to get me drunk.

> At a party of friends to which men and women are gathered to enjoy themselves with chatter and wine games, I feel a sense of elation in such jovial company and can drink at least eight *tou* of wine.

> But when a number of close friends gather at a late hour for a party where all restraint is removed and male and female guests mingle freely and unceremoniously until far into the night, when my hostess sends away all her guests except me,
to stay over the night, I become filled with happiness, and can drink at least another shih.

Now one tou of wine is calculated to equal over twenty catties or three gallons, so that one shih would be some two hundred catties or thirty gallons. It seems incredible that such a quantity of wine can be consumed by anyone, and the literal accuracy of the report has thus been doubted. It has, however, been pointed out in support of the truth of this record that in ancient China wine-drinking was undertaken in a manner different from modern times. Instead of having wine prepared in liquid form for the table, distiller's grain was served, and the drinker had himself to squeeze the liquid out of the grain for his drink.

Thus one tou or shih of wine really meant that quantity of distiller's grain, so that consequently the capacity attributed to the great drinker is much less incredible. Indeed, in descriptions of wine in old Chinese texts one always comes across the term "extracting wine." One of the usual methods employed in wine-extraction was to cover the distiller's grain with reeds and then to squeeze the liquid out of the grain. For this reason, reeds were in ancient days an essential part of the paraphernalia used in the offering of sacrifices, they being as necessary as cups to the enjoyment of the wine offered in sacrifices.

WINE-BIBBING POETS

The most famous of all Chinese drinkers was, of course, Li Po, usually accepted as the greatest of Chinese poets. Indeed, both Li and Tu Fu, close friends in life and close rivals to the claim of first place among Chinese poets in posterity, were addicted to drink. But though there may be differences of opinion as to who was the greater poet, opinion is unanimous as to Li being the greater drinker. Indeed, it was Tu Fu himself who immortalized Li the drinker in the following well-known verse:

A gallon of wine Li Po drinks,
A hundred verses flow from his pen.
About the streets of Chang-An he roams,
Tired, he makes the wine houses his homes.
Drunk, the Royal Barge he would not ascend,
Though to him they brought the King's command.
"Pray tell His Majesty this for me:
I'm drunk as a god, and as happy."

Li Po was subsequently known as the "wine god," or "wine immortal," and, as is well known, died the death of a poet and a drinker by jumping, after a heavy bout of drinking, into the water in pursuit of the reflection of the moon.

Another interesting poet-drinker was Liu Ling, who lived in the third century A.D., one of a group of seven hard-drinking scholars who formed a club called the "Bamboo Grove" and were subsequently honored as the "Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove." Liu Ling appears to have been the greatest drinker among the group, if not the best scholar. He always went about with wine and had a servant accompanying him carrying a spade; for the servant had orders to bury him where he lay should he fall dead from excessive drink, which, fortunately, he did not. Chieflly because of his drinking, his marriage was not a successful one, and in one of his compositions Liu Ling proffered the advice that it behooves a gentleman to pay no attention to the words of a nagging wife, particularly, of course, if she insists on complaining against one's drinking.

We shall only refer to one more poet-drinker, Tao Yuan-ming, famous for his love of simple life and his mania for chrysanthemums. He had such a fondness for wine that, as an official, he attempted to plant all the government fields with glutinous rice from which wine might be made. After retirement, he gave him-
self up even more to drinking and was hardly sober for a day unless his own wine was exhausted or he had no friends who could offer him a drink. Visitors to his house, on the other hand, were one and all invariably entertained with wine. Once a friend made him a present of twenty thousand cash, which money he immediately turned over, in full, to his wine merchant as a deposit against future purchases. At another time, he was invited to a meeting of prominent scholars at a Buddhist monastery, and he accepted the invitation only on the condition that he would be permitted to drink wine in the sacred place.

"HAVE A LITTLE DRINK"

As on practically every other social issue, there are, generally speaking, three opinions on wine-drinking: in favor of total abstinence, of moderation, and of full indulgence. Apart from consideration of such dire consequences as the collapse of empires referred to in the beginning of this article, the case for supporters of total abstinence from drink was neatly formulated by a Chinese writer in the following epigram:

A little drink avails one of nothing.  
And what does excessive drinking avail?  
When one has some proper business to attend to,  
a drink interferes with his plans.  
But where there was no trouble of any sort existing, a drink can be counted on to produce some trouble soon.

Moderation in drinking is, of course, sane advice and in keeping with the general principle of the Doctrine of the Mean. Moderation in drinking is, indeed, the advice of all sages and great scholars if they had occasion to refer to drinking, unless they themselves happened to be hard drinkers. The general consensus of opinion is that a little drink is a good thing, particularly to promote friendship and on occasions of festivity. There are special "occasions" when a little drink is in order, or even needed. The opinion of one writer on such occasions for a "little drinking" is as follows:

When rare flowers blossom, have a little drink.  
When a bosom friend calls and is making a short sojourn, have a little drink. When you propose to proceed outdoors during very cold weather, have a little drink. When you are very hungry, and the partaking of heavy food at once is inadvisable, have a little drink. When rare wine is available, have a little drink. Follow the above rules, and you have mastered the art of drinking.

"LET US BE DRUNK"

But the real drinker will not be satisfied with half measures and does not call it a day until his limit is reached, or until he is dead drunk. To get drunk, in the opinion of by far the majority of drinkers, is one of the greatest pleasures of life; and why should one start to drink at all if one fails to attain that state of blissfulness of being completely drunk? As one writer said:

Wine may be compared to soldiers. A state may not have occasion to call on the services of its army for a thousand days, but it cannot afford to be without a standing army for a single day. Likewise a man may not taste of wine for a thousand days, but he cannot afford to remain sober on a single drinking occasion.

The pleasures to be derived from drunkenness have from time immemorial induced people to seek in the cup an escape from their moments of sorrow. Wine therefore affords people a means to tear themselves from their worries. We have the saying which states: "Be drunk but once, and a thousand sorrows are swept away." There is also the well-known couplet which runs:

We have wine today, let us be drunk;  
The worries are for the morrow, let them then come.

One of the most famous poets composed a line to the effect that the "quality of a wine is measured by its ability to banish sorrow." But such a desired result can only be obtained by getting completely drunk. Otherwise the very opposite may
be achieved, as it is said of him who "tries to banish his sorrows with wine, but only finds more sorrows heaped upon himself instead."

THE WATER OF SHAOHSING

One of the reasons which tend to lower the prestige of the Chinese people as wine drinkers is the complete lack of variety in their wines. As a matter of fact, only two kinds of wine may be counted, that made from rice and the liquor distilled from kaoliang. There are also a number of "medicinal wines," which are merely wines to which certain medicinal preparations are added. The only variety is the place of origin of the wine, and certain wines are better than others because of the better method of production, greater age, or the better quality of ingredients available at the place of production.

Water, for instance, is one of the most important factors that go to make the quality of a wine, and it is chiefly because of the superior quality of the water that the principal wine-producing districts have come into existence. One of these districts is Ts'iang Chow, in Hopeh province, and there is an interesting legend attached to the special wine-manufacturing quality of the water there. As the story goes, toward the end of the Ming dynasty a wine shop in that city and bordering on the river was one day visited by three old men, who drank till they were drunk and left without paying for the wine. The next day the trio called again, and the wine-shop keeper, being of a genial disposition, did not refer to their irregular conduct on the previous day. This time, after getting drunk, the old men threw what was left of their wine into the river and left again without paying. The old men were not seen again, but from that moment the water in the river showed a change in quality and was found to be excellent for the making of wine.

Of an even better quality is the water of the Shaoshing district in Chekiang. For this reason Shaoshing wine has become the best and most popular in China and is virtually the standard alcoholic beverage in this country. When we think of Shaoshing, we think at once of its wine. When we talk of wine, we mean only that from Shaoshing. As wine matures with age, one of the best brands of Shaoshing wine is that known as "Maiden's Wine." This name is derived from the practice prevalent in the district of parents preparing a wine on the birth of a daughter and keeping it until her marriage, when the wine forms part of her trousseau. The wine thus attains an age of at least twenty years or so. The jar containing such wine is beautifully decorated, and hence the wine is called hua ti'ao, which means "florally decorated." At present, however, the term hua ti'ao is loosely applied to all the better varieties of Shaoshing wine.

GOOD HOSTS AND BAD WINES

Coming to the actual art of wine-drinking, we may, broadly speaking, consider the matter under two categories, that of drinking at a party or feast and that of drinking for the drink alone. A Chinese wine party, whether held in a restaurant or at home, is conspicuous by the abundance of noise. This is due to two reasons. First, it is the prevalent practice of the host to force his guests to drink as much as they can be forced to do and, more often than not, beyond their capacity. The second cause lies in the popularity of that Chinese wine game of finger-guessing, in which two persons put out a certain number of fingers at each other, at the same time shouting out what each guesses to be the total number of fingers put up by both.
Various people have from time to time voiced their disapproval of both these practices. A host naturally wants his guests to enjoy his party, and in persuading them to have more drinks he is considered to have acted out of a proper sense of duty. But when the action is carried to such a point as to make a guest get drunk and suffer therefrom, the good motive becomes a bad one. Another explanation given—we do not know whether in good faith or in jest—for this behavior of a host is that he has no good wine to serve and is attempting to coax them to drink the inferior one offered. For would it be necessary to force one to drink the wine that is really good? As one writer puts it:

One of the calamities of life is to be present at a feast where the wine served is so bad as to taste like poison, while on the other hand the host is so sincere and respectful that you simply have to sit through the party and accept his kind offers to partake of more and more of the wine.

THREE GHOSTS

As to guessing fingers, the game as usually played is very rough and can sometimes become dangerously uncomfortable for one who happens to have the two opponents of the game sitting on either side of him. Then again the method of award, or penalty, is unfair, as it is the custom for the loser in the game to take a drink. Now the wine is something offered by the host to his guests and, in theory at least, is something pleasant. As such, it should be given as an award to the winner and not as a “penalty” to the loser, which would imply a slight on the quality of mine host’s wine.

Before leaving the subject of wine parties, it is appropriate to relate here a little legend which sets out to explain the vociferous nature of such gatherings. According to this story, when Tu Kang (the popularly accredited Chinese inventor of wine) first produced his drink, he had a group of friends to sample his achievement. While the latent qualities of the beverage were generally acknowledged, it was felt something was still wanting. Somebody proffered the suggestion that human blood might be added. Taking the advice, Tu Kang went out, met a scholar, and killed him outright for his blood, which he added to his wine. There was an improvement, but perfection was yet to come. Next he went out and met a ferocious pugilist whom he likewise killed, and whose blood also went into the mixture. Yet another person, a poor and shivering beggar, was similarly sacrificed for his blood. And the wine was perfected! But the ghosts of the three martyrs could not forget their contribution to the product and still continue to hover over wine parties. The scholar appears first, and under his influence the party usually starts in a gentle leisurely manner, with everybody remaining most polite to everyone else. Next comes the pugilist, and the influence of this ghost accounts for the vociferous and quarrelsome nature of the party as the feast progresses. Finally the beggar appears, and the guests, drunk and their vigor spent, become exhausted, spiritless, and shivering.

THE WINE SHOP

Wine-drinking, however, only forms a part of a wine party or feast. There is still the other part of feasting, namely, eating. It is difficult to say which is the more important. Some think that there is wine at a feast because the food is too good to be eaten without wine, while others think that the food is there because the wine is too good to be drunk without food. Whether the wine or the food is the principal object of a person attending a feast depends, of course, on whether he is a connoisseur of wine or an epicure—and it is possible in some cases that he is both. But the real drinker, the man who drinks wine for the sake of wine and of drinking, does not get real
satisfaction from a feast. For him it is the wine shop where he can satisfy his thirst without having to bother about food and ceremony and hosts and finger-guessing contestants.

Now by a wine shop we do not mean a restaurant. It is true that many wine shops, in an effort to keep up with the times, have developed their business and are not much different from restaurants catering both to the wine drinker and the eater. But there are still many wine shops of the old school which have held fast to their traditions and remained loyal to their clientele of drinkers. In this connection it has been remarked that the Chinese counterpart of the Western bar, or public house, is the teahouse. This statement is true in that the teahouse is to the Chinese what the public house is to the English. But this does not alter the fact that there are also places in this country where one can go for his daily pint.

We have said that the real drinker always goes to a wine shop. More than half of the customers of any wine shop are friends of old standing ranging from ten to thirty years. So loyal are these drinkers to the wine shop that, if they have occasion to give a feast, they have wine brought from their own wine shop, even though better wine may be procurable from the restaurant where the feast is given.

These wine shops of which we speak are spread over the whole city (we are talking of Shanghai, of course) and are almost identical with one another. They are not much to look at, and there is none of the modern decoration and air-conditioning systems of the fashionable Cantonese or Szechwanese restaurants. In front of the shop is the counter where wine is sold to those who want to buy some for their home or for a party in some restaurant. Bottles and jars are everywhere in evidence. Then there is the stove where wine is heated—and the heating of Shaoshing wine, incidentally, is an art cultivated by the keepers of a wine shop in a way unrivaled by those of restaurants. Behind is the parlor and principal hall where drinks are served. The furniture is old-fashioned and, more often than not, dilapidated. In some houses, a similar hall is kept on the upper floor, where more tidiness is in evidence. But, curiously enough, the best wine shops (by which we mean those establishments whose wines are considered the best) usually only keep a drinking parlor on the ground floor. Where both floors are open for drinking, the acknowledged drinkers always prefer the lower floor, which is always the less neatly kept of the two.

A SOLEMN ROUTINE

To such a wine shop the Chinese wine drinker goes in the evening—at any time from four in the afternoon to nine at night—coming from his office or from his home. The waiter comes and lays the drinking paraphernalia on his table, no questions being necessary, as he is an old customer and his particular variety, his capacity, as well as the way he wants his wine heated, are already well known. He does not need much food to go with his wine—for he comes here to drink—and may take some beans or ground-nuts, or some slices of the lotus-plant root (which is the best thing to eat with wine in summer). These are the few things available in the wine shop—if it is really an orthodox and, for that reason, a first-class one. If none of these things is to his liking, he may buy something from the hawkers who flit in and out of wine houses, carrying baskets of foodstuffs for sale. In this connection, one of the things which are growing popular
with wine drinkers in wine shops is the potato chip, which illustrates the ingenuity of the Chinese in incorporating a foreign commodity into their own life.

Other drinkers will be coming into the wine house. The faces are mostly familiar to one another, and the same are to be found there almost every day. Acquaintances may have been struck up, and it is also possible that two persons sitting at adjacent tables in the wine shop for about ten years do not know each other beyond their respective identities. There may be a little casual conversation, but no serious matters will be discussed. Occasionally, fast friendships may be made in the wine shop.

But the main object of the visit to the wine shop is to drink. Other matters are but incidental. Wine is priced by the catty and is served in pewter jugs by the half or quarter catty, so that the proper temperature of the wine may be preserved. The average capacity of an ordinary drinker is about two catties, but it is not at all uncommon to see people finishing five catties at a sitting and being none the worse for it. When the drink is over, some food may be ordered from a near-by restaurant, or the drinker may go home for his dinner. Or, if he happens to come at a late hour, he may have already had his dinner at home. He then pays the bill or, if he has an account, has the amount entered in his passbook and leaves the wine shop a happy (and sometimes drunk) man—to come again the next afternoon.

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO OUR READERS

Owing to the heavy increase in the prices of paper and printing in Shanghai, and in an endeavor to keep the price of our magazine within reasonable limits, we have decided to publish our regular edition as from October 1 on a different quality paper, i.e., the best grade of Swedish imported common printing paper. A limited edition will be published on white bond paper and will be available at a special price.

We shall continue to reproduce our photographs in both types of issue on the same quality art paper as used at present.

Starting with the October issue, the rates will be as follows:

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