CHINESE FRESH WATER SPONGES

that the boatmen in central China call the gemmules “prawn’s eggs.” Each specimen of sponge should then be carefully wrapped in a separate piece of paper and notes made of the conditions under which it was found, the nature of the water, kind of support upon which it was found, date, etc. If a number of interested naturalists would undertake to make collections and send them to the writer, he would gladly undertake to study the various specimens and determine to what species they belong. In this manner it would be possible to get some valuable work done in a comparatively short time.

If the sponges are found wet, it is best to dry them in the shade, and then wrap them as indicated above. If, however, it is desired to preserve them wet, they should be placed at once in alcohol of 95 per cent. strength and then changed after some days to fresh alcohol of the same strength. Or if one wishes just a small portion of the specimen preserved in this way and the remainder of the sponge dried and given the same number, this is a good way to collect them and entails less expense in preservatives. The dry material is much easier to send through the post office.

In most cases the determinations are based almost entirely upon the silicious spicules found in the skeleton and in the gemmule and for this purpose the dry specimen is almost as satisfactory as the wet one, though at times one may wish the wet specimen to determine certain features of the structure or the growth. It is very important to get the gemmules in each case as the spicules of this portion of the sponge furnish the most definite characters of the species.

The writer would welcome specimens of sponges from all over China. He would also be glad to exchange fresh water sponges with other workers in this group from other places throughout the world.

THE CHINESE CAT

By Rev. T. TORRANCE, F.R.G.S.

Some one has facetiously said that all good men love Cats. On this test the writer has no claim to be called good for he has never liked cats. As a boy he was a lover of feathered life and grew up with a natural enmity to their destroyers. A cat to him, for this reason, was a creature to be chased at sight. It follows he cannot do the animal justice in any paper of his; the only excuse for spilling ink now is to set forth more or less what the Chinese say about it. There is no doubt of their love for cats. We see them kept and prized and petted everywhere. What they have to say regarding their qualities is well worth hearing even if we cannot endorse all they say.

Cats in China fetch a relatively high price. Their necessity ensures this. Rats are so numerous that they are practically indispensable. To keep down rats, the Chinese reckon, is the chief end of a cat. They hate rats as they hate thieves and consign them to the same fate. Rats are the vermin of the household as the wild boars are of the crops, and robbers of society; all need an executioner—an exterminator. Puss serves as this. They comment freely on her grace of movement, the softness and beauty of her coat, the rare flexibility of her muscles and the cunning and agility whereby she catches her prey, but the point of utility comes first in their admiration. Beautiful cats, rare kinds and fancy breeds, are all classed as inferior if deficient in their ability to hunt.

Historical mention is made of the cat in the Book of Rites, an old Work which attained its final form in the second century A.D. It commends the continuation of certain sacrificial and theatrical ceremonies rendered to the cat god and the tiger god because of the services these rendered to man; for the one animal attacked the rodents and the other the wild pigs which devoured the field-crops.
The ancients of the Hsia, Shang and Chou dynasties 205-225 B.C. are said to have performed these rites. A very brief reference to the cat is made in the Book of Odes which, according to Sze Ma-Ch'ien, was compiled by Confucius.

The Ri Ya dictionary of terms speaks more at length but the exact age of it is in doubt. It was first edited A.D. 276-324. Tze Hsia, a disciple of Confucius, is credited with its completion towards 450 B.C.

The character for cat (喵) is made up of the radicals for T'ien, field, Ts'ao, grass and Chai, a debt or monster. The rat was the "monster" that ate the produce of the field which was called miao, the character for which was a combination of T'ien and Ts'ao. So the animal that attacked it was called Miao or Mao and written like field-produce but having the monster radical attached. Apparently the first name of the cat, Miao, was the same as that of field-produce but with a different tone and was later changed into Mao.

This domestic animal is described in books ancient and modern as a beast of prey. Thus it is a creature of darkness and cunning. The wild cat is spoken of in the same category but has a different name, li. Though the habits of the same are similar they have been regarded from ancient times as distinct. The two, it is declared, can interbreed but the offspring is half-wild in its habits. A cat should have, it is said, a body like a li and a face like a tiger. Certainly the cry of the wild cat is much different to that of the tame, and its flesh, they say, good to eat and wholesome in contradistinction to the household cat, which is not regarded with favour. In Szechuan, only the very poor care to partake of it. Strange to say, wild cats live in Chinese cities as well as in the country.

The writer one night surprised it by lamplight as he was in the act of raiding a wild dove's nest in the wisteria at the front door and had fairly to stand still in sheer admiration.

To secure a good cat one has to consult a dealer. He is often to be seen with a number, of varying ages, in basket-cages at the market, or hawking them around the streets. The greatest cat-expert in Chengtu is a man named Yeh Pai-Tsze in the T'itu street. The difficulty is to get one that is first class and that will stay after it is brought home. This expert has the reputation of being able to tell such at sight. It is wonderful the points that the Chinese can see in a cat, that we are ignorant of.

Their preference is for one with a short body, i.e., one not too long for its size but in seemingly proportion to its height. The head must be round and, as has been said, in appearance like that of a tiger. The length of the tail should, at least, match the length of the body up to the neck. Such a breed has a compact, agile, business look about it, as contrasted with the loose, long bodied species which is regarded as a wanderer and to the long faced kind which prefers stealing chickens to its legitimate work of hunting rats.

Though utility be the chief value of a cat in this land, the Chinese are far from despising its points of beauty. This is only what one would expect in the Flowery Kingdom, and particularly in West China where art and letters have flourished for so long and Chengtu its capital is called the Hibiscus City. Their love begins where every lover's love begins, at the eyes. These, it is said, should be as yellow as gold and as clear as silver with the brightness of sparkling water. In patois this cat-eye colour is termed Kin-Yin Seh—the gold and silver colour.

The ears should be long and thick. Thin ears are a sign that a cat cannot stand cold. When walking, a puss with proper ears will keep gently moving them as if she were on the alert for prey.

The whiskers are required to be stiff and plentiful. In colours we see a larger variety than at home. There are blacks, whites, yellows, natural greys, light greys, dark greys, slates, etc. A pure colour of any kind is much prized. A combination that is sought after is a white throat and breast with a black neck and back. It is called "the dark cloud over the snow" (黑云白雾). Another favourite is where the body is all white and the tail only is black. It is called the Sueh-Li-T'o-Chiang (黑里透黄). When the colour from a distance shows to be one, but when nearer there appears a faint variation of brownish stripes it is called the Ch'an-Teh-Ko (斑亭客). This peculiarity can be seen occasionally in dogs and kine. True tortoise-shell cats are few and hard to find; the black, white and yellow colours are very often mixed
with patches of wild grey. When found they are greatly prized. They go by the name of the three-coloured cat.

Before buying a cat its mouth should be examined. The ribbed lines on the roof are most significant. The best animals have nine lines, the next best seven, and the poorest only five. The examination requires care if not skill. The dealer seems to get away with his assertion the most of the time, for you cannot contradict him unless you are prepared to convince him by an actual examination. The five lined cats are said to be proficient only three months in the year: the seven lined for ten months; the nine lined cats hunt all the year round. This mouth examination is taken as a good all round test. Naturally there are exceptions even as there are other tests, but this is the first. A cat with nine lines may be lazy but he has the breeding in him. The laziness may spring from sickness, from too much petting or over feeding; or perhaps it has been taken too soon from its mother.

Other distinguishing marks are: a good cat when picked up by the nape of the neck brings its hind legs up towards its body. An expert hunter snores in his sleep. Piebald legs even in the short-bodied class are a disqualifying sign; like those with long hair on the feet, they love to go off upon wide, prodigal excursions. Black patches on the mouth are ominous; the flesh should be uniformly red. Black soles or foot-pads are preferred to white, or black and white. The foot-pads of the wild cat are all black. The pads are healthiest when moist or oily. When standing, the claws should not show. If they do, their possessor is one that goes prowling over the house tops upsetting your own and your neighbour’s tiles. Beware of him! The bend of the foot should be free from long hairs but should there be three long hairs the cat will not return until the third watch; four, until the fourth watch; five, until the fifth watch. In the best sort, the bones of the tail are not perfectly round but slightly flat. The city of Songpan, in the extreme north-west of Szechuan, is famous for this feline peculiarity. On stroking the tail it should rise straight up. On scenting prey, it should wag slowly and definitely. A long, fine tail is thought to be ideal; where it is too thick and does not curve, the animal is lazy. From the ear of a first class cat a sort of long hair can occasionally be drawn out.

The cat par-excellence is where all rats disappear from the house as if by magic. It does not require even to call; on the mere scent of it they flee immediately. No hunting is necessary. If such a cat enters a room and a rat comes scampering over the ceiling the inmates of the house can hear it stop abruptly, for in terror it scents its enemy below. Rats, it is affirmed, can distinguish between cats; they will go searching through adjoining rooms when only a second rate one is kept but never will if it is a first-rater. They know by instinct whether or not they can break the law and, if so, how far they can do it with impunity. They know who is who. The oily exudation from the soles of their enemy’s feet tells them as to his presence and measure of ferocity.

Having found a good cat one’s business is to keep it safely. Each family carefully guards its pet. In cities and towns it is often tied up by a cord or has a weight attached to it sufficiently heavy to prevent its wandering. For that is always dangerous. It seems to be no more a sin in China to steal a cat than to steal a book; the owner is the one to blame, if he allows it to come within a neighbour’s reach. In that case it is as good, until its master finds out where it is, as if he had presented it to him.

And where a cat is caught that has made havoc in the house tiles, the logic is clear that its owner has forfeited any right to its possession. The city of Kienchownan is famous for its breed of good cats.

Stories of the intelligence of the cat are as numerous here as at home. Though a fleet-footed animal, it relies most on stealth and cunning in hunting. It will wait patiently and quietly at a hole, at a run, or in some favourable place and pounce suddenly on its prey. Where there is a double exit it knows by instinct which is the better. When quick action is required it can dash in with suprising speed or make a great leap to catch its bird or rat. The more clever, it is solemnly averred, can calculate the whereabouts of a rodent by means of arithmetical scratches on the ground. They can hoodwink people by lying still until the room is left for a minute when they will snatch some tasty morsel left uncovered.

Their most innocent looking composure after a depredation shows that they think there is no fault in thieving. Still, if trained and fed decently, they know how to behave even to letting alone young pigeons, chickens and canaries. But never fish; no cat can stand that temptation! At the best they cannot be trusted all the time; they are thieves by nature and liable to lapses. At meals they can be punctual; they know who feeds and who pets them. They
call out in distress to such in the most knowing way. Some respond readily to play and can even be taught tricks. A few resort to devices of themselves to get what they want. Their fondness for those who pet them is sometimes marvellous. The writer has seen a Chinese cat manifest the most excited affection for its owner on its return after an absence of several days; it mewed so excessively that its tones were almost articulate. In China the cat has for long been called "woman's slave"; there is no doubt she can do far more with it than a mere man.

Chinese cats, like those in Europe, show great attachment to particular places. A purchaser, if he is wise, will take it home in a closed bag; otherwise it will find its way back. It is surprising from what distances a cat can return. For this reason Chinese prefer buying a kitten; when grown it won't run away. A mother forcibly removed will escape at the first chance carrying her kittens by short stages with her.

In the manner of feeding, the Chinese show not a little common sense. Its rice, they say, should be cooked soft and mixed either with boiled fish or with raw, fresh beef, minced fine. It thrives better when slightly underfed; eating to satiation produces lassiness. Cold food gives rise to indigestion. In winter it needs a heat-producing diet. Pigs entrails, thoroughly cleansed and boiled, with a pinch of sulphur, is good for this and should be served as an additional dish but the water should be thrown away. No salt is required. Food is best given when it calls for it, and then only in the morning and afternoon; if given at night it will not hunt so well. Bad fish and smelling meat are injurious. To allow a cat to lie near the fire spoils its appetite; it also spoils its glossy coat. All cats need warmth, but not too much. Their bed for this reason is best made of grass and not of rags or cotton wadding.

An occasional bath is good. To obviate danger to oneself it is necessary to make puss drunk first and a dose of peppermint is what is used. She can then be handled with impunity. Fresh peach tree leaves mixed with the hay in her bed keeps away fleas. The Chinese cat loves cleanliness; it is not often, if given a fair amount of liberty, that a dirty one is found. Their fur does not readily, it is alleged, harbour vermin. The Chinese have a saying that when a cat washes its face over the ears a distinguished visitor will arrive soon.

It will interest readers to know that the time of day can be told by a glance at pussy's eyes. When the pupils show as mere lines it is mid-day. In the mornings and afternoons they resemble a date stone. At night the pupils are round. With certain allowances any one with a fair amount of intelligence can by them tell approximately what hour it is. Abbé Huc in his book The Chinese Empire, refers to this peculiar mode of telling the time. It is further said that the particular hs'un (8%) (a period of ten days) of the month can be told by her manner of eating a rat. In the first hs'un she begins at the head or neck; in the second hs'un she starts at the back; in the third hs'un she devours first the hind quarters. This nicety of discrimination she shows likewise in her preference for her fellows: she shows more friendliness to those born in the same season of the year as herself.

The treatment of disease is comparatively simple. The best all round medicine and one used from ancient times is U-Yoh (♀%). The method of preparation calls for grinding with cold water. After mixing or warming with hot water it is poured down the cat's throat. If a little Lao-k'ou (♀%) is burned the fumes have an attraction for cats. For an appetiser Lao-k'ou (♀%) ground into fine powder and blown into the throat cannot be improved on. The same remedy cures indigestion. Kittens, eight or nine months old, occasionally change or renew their intestines. To assist nature, chicken guts are cooked whole and given. Matter of fact Westerners would give extract of male-fern. But the object of this paper, as stated, is merely to relate what the Chinese say and not to criticise.

No cat should be disturbed for the first few days after her kittens come. She is very suspicious then and may transfer them to a quieter place. It is even on record that she may devour her young if not given quiet. Kittens do not willingly leave the house they are reared in.

Many miscellaneous statements about puss are made; some are true, some amusing, more odd. The nose is cold and moist all year except for a little while in summer. The edges of the ears of cats that have eaten rats and of tigers that have eaten men become saw-like. Even a lame cat can feed itself. Cats to men act as claws: they do for him what he cannot do for himself; they plague his enemies. If you brush the fur of a lone cat with a
bamboo scrubber it is quite as possible for it to have kittens as it is to hatch out a chicken by merely keeping an egg in a warm place near the fire. The one phenomenon is no more curious than the other. Cat bones, cat hair, even cat whiskers are used as medicine. For instance, in bronchitis a cat's skull burnt to powder and mixed with alcohol is prescribed. Mixed with oil and applied externally it cures rat bite. The soup of cat's flesh is good for a deep running sore; but to be effective it has to be taken on an empty stomach. If you stroke the fur of a black cat on a dark night it emits sparks. According to Douglass's *History of China* the flesh of black cats in Canton is regarded as specially nutritious.

The Chinese in Szechuan know nothing of Persian, Angora, Chartreuse, Manx or Siamese breeds. But the writer has seen one long haired cat in Chengtu. It probably came from the north. Doubtless by selection and intensive breeding as fine strains could be developed here as at home. The first thing would be the institution of cat shows to stir up competition. Though the worship of the cat spirit has for long fallen into disuse, no people anywhere appreciate this domestic animal more than the Szechuanese; they know its qualities and its faults better than most. Nothing would be easier than to collect a fine series of anecdotes from them about it. Whilst the inclusion of such is not within the purpose of this paper there is one—a cat's eye story—that may be told; the exaggeration is so humorous. A renowned doctor was once consulted by a fellow Chinese about the healing of a diseased eye. Noting that it was beyond treatment he had it removed and replaced by a cat's eye. Meeting the patient some time afterwards he enquired how his new eye worked. He replied, it did splendidly during the day but at night he could not shut it, for it persisted in keeping open to watch for rats!

Black cat skins are extensively cured and made into fur garments. The fur is called *Tsze-M'ir*. It makes a light, soft, warm lining for gowns or overcoats and brings a ready price in the market. In quality and durability, however, it does not equal the wild cat skin. This makes the most comfortable of fur coats. Chengtu furriers distinguish three kinds of wild cat pelts. Strictly, there seems to be only two; one shows a darker shade in its stripes and this may be due simply to age.

Cats have been given a place in art by appearing in paintings and scroll drawings; so far no figures of them have been found among Szechuan grave gods. Dogs, horses, sheep, fowls, etc., are common. A small clay image of a tiger is among the writer's curios but he has never seen a tomb-likeness of this domestic animal. This is indeed curious, since it has been known in China long before it appeared in Europe.

It only remains to say that there are more cats in China than the *felis domestica* and more rats than the *Mus rattus*. Robbers and rebels are termed "rats"; soldiers and their officers, "cats". The parallel between the pursuits of the one and the other is so adaptable that the appellations come naturally. Rats plunder and destroy, so do robbers and rebels; what indeed is the difference between them? Obviously it is as necessary to keep uniformed "cats" as it is furry ones. Their function is the same. Hard experience has taught the Chinese too that there are vagabond soldier-cats as well as good ones; they have learnt well the distinguishing marks. How to treat them has long been a fine science. Too much creature comfort, too much petting, and too little drill is not good for them. None can be trusted too far, the hungry especially. The people's food, the people's wealth must be carefully covered or put out of their reach. Their eyes similarly have the *Kin-Yin Seh*—the gold and silver colour. They can see loot in the dark. They also need tying up—need being kept in place. It means ruin to the political house-tops if they run wild. The populace suffer when the rats and the cats, according to the proverb, go to sleep together (國風同被). The two sometimes do more than this: they get in league; then woe to the national larder. Stranger still is it when, in China not infrequently change into "cats". The metamorphosis can be traced at almost any time. Since the revolution the instances in West China have been most numerous. Indeed the official policy the most of the time has been not to exterminate the "rats" but to turn them into "cats." Now we have the dark spectre of a whole nation being overrun by "cats." There are all colours of them, blacks, yellows, slates, tabby-greys and now a new breed of reds in Canton. Lately, the unique sight has been seen of the Foreign Powers vieing with each other to gain their goodwill. Greater access to the poor man's cupboard was promised if they would agree to let the likin-fish alone. And the "cats" without the tremor of an eyelid pledged their honour to abstain.
On all this the writer makes no comment. Having a natural aversion to the creatures he is distinctly prejudiced and dare not pass an opinion. But he may be pardoned for saying that he has too great and too sincere a regard for the common Chinese people to wish to show these enemies of theirs any favour. It is impossible for any good man to love such "cats."

N.B.—A well-known work on the cat suitable for the average reader is called Mao-yüen. It can be bought in Shanghai. It supplies particulars and explanations that piece out much of the popular hearsay. For instance, it adds that it is male cats that have the odd 9, 7 or 5 lines in the roof of the mouth and female cats that have the even 8, 6 or 4 lines. The all-yellow, it seems, is the best or most favoured colour; the next in order are the white, black, and natural grey. It also gives a number of cat superstitions which seem to be common. The book, as its name implies, is a compilation of extracts from different writers.