As a people, the Chinese are frequently happy in their choice of names. Poetic fancy may soar somewhat in their designation of natural objects, but precision and beauty often find immediate expression as well as marked emphasis on essential features. The characters Mokanshan (莫干山), equivalent to Le mont sans souci or “Don’t worry mountain,” are a tribute to the insight of the author—if not a monument to his literary facility.

Looking through Chinese eyes, Mokanshan is, to begin with, free from care about fengshui, that elemental conception of the equilibrium between wind and water so necessary to every favoured spot in China. It is a place where the orderly sequence of shine and shower, breeze and calm, cold and heat, has resulted in exuberant natural life. It has never been difficult for primitive man to find good luck for himself where Nature has been kind to her own. The presence of sufficient food with the absence of famine, pestilence, and complex diseases tends to dissipate superstitious fear, while it opens up the imagination of thoughtful, susceptible, leisure-gifted minds. Again, Mokanshan has not had much occasion for anxiety about official oppression like the people in the plains below. Grasping officials and their still worse yamen retainers, have felt it scarcely worth their while to track the mountains to gather taxes in excess from those who could so easily elude them. Further, by geographical position, the population are largely free from the “cark and care” that pertain to the masses of Chinese densely crowded in the lowlands. Away from the gaudy glare of official life and the great centres of commercial display, their ambitions are more simple, easily satisfied with longevity and the extension of landed property. Many of the natives have never seen a city and respect no visible power other than that of local leadership tested by muscle or sustained by custom. The independence and self-reliance of these mountaineers is refreshing after contact with the ordinary types.
Situated mainly in the Wuk'ang District of the Huchow Prefecture of the Chékiang Province, Mokanshan is about 150 miles from Shanghai, and thirty miles north of Hangchow.

Amateurs are persuaded that the Yellow Sea, once dotted with protruding rocks, has been slowly filled up by the great rivers pouring into it, the Yangtse especially. Mokanshan thus antedates the vast coast-plain extending from its foothills to the shore line. This view seems sustained by the evidences of extensive erosion and advanced rock disintegration. Abundant vegetation extends to the very summit of every peak in the range. None of them exceed 3,000 feet in height, the average is less.

So far no mining has been invited by surface veins nor have deep borings been attempted. It has been suggested that previous alluvial formations from remote sources, fused at great depths before upheaval, explains the paucity of mineral. Experts may some day decide this and other practical questions.

With a surface soil of rich black mould and subsoil of adhesive clay, Nature runs riot in producing tree, shrub, and flower. Conspicuous and charming are the many millions of feathery bamboos waving luxuriant shade from gorge to cliff, from peak to deep ravine. Patches of spruce, secondary pine, and fragrant shrub abound, while the dense undergrowth revels in flowers of every form and colour. Lilies and ferns are so abundant that every house may decorate at pleasure; grasses, mosses, and vines are also to be found in places. Natural springs gush from fissured rocks or trickle down from beds of impervious clay. The snows of winter seem stored up to mingle with the summer showers. The product is very much like the lithia waters out of the Blue Ridge districts of the United States.

Approaching by houseboat from the Grand Canal, the waterway winds in and out among the foothills, usually bared of trees by fuel seekers. Temples crown the choicest hill-tops, reminding us of the high-place worship of the ancients. An occasional pagoda is seen to reach up in order to soothe the dragon of the sky as he is supposed to float sinister and resentful above the heads of men. Fruit and mulberry trees dot the fields, while rush and reed invade the unfenced farms. Leaving the boat at Sangyaobu, where there is a resthouse, sedan-chairs are taken, borne by coolies whose leg-muscles distend like the body of a full-fed python. Crossing a plain through rice-fields, melon patches and gardens, the lover of natural beauty finds himself surprised and pleased as he begins the ascent.

Long avenues of bamboo arch the winding roads as graceful as a bridal pathway, grand enough for a conqueror on parade. Further on the sound
of falling water soothes the ear after the eye has tired of that slimy creep of the slow canals. Mountain trout pause for an instant in the now limpid streams, then dart lightning-like into the shady depths of rocky pools. Birds chorus the sunrise joyously, but their sunset songs are sweetest as they nest in the sheltered forest. The rush of a startled fawn, the grunt of the wild hog, or the cough of a badger, may entice the sportsman to be ready with his gun. Higher still the tea gardens claim a casual glance, while hardy, roughly-clad mountaineers bearing heavy loads pass on to market. After the first mile Sentinel Rock, black-browed and scarred with age, frowns as the path winds around his feet. Here too, Giant Gorge opens wide and deep, as if to remind the world of the massive marks P'anku left his chisel strokes to make at random.

Deep down in sheltered coves bamboos grow more than fifty feet in height, with a girth of twenty inches, true giants in a giants' home. A memorial arch, a tribute to woman's fidelity, marks a charming spot about halfway up. Steep climbing over gravel-beds, rocky ledges, and steep inclines brings the visitor to Glen Turret, a summer-home that caps a truncated cone, lifted apart from the rest of the range. Here Art and Nature combine to "feast the eye and ravish the soul" with summer profusion. Passing the police-station and the "commissary," rude reminders of social and creature necessities, one branch of the pathway leads to Prospect Point, Rock Bank, Ruthville, and other picturesque places, fast filling with cottages. The other path leads up the Grand Stairway (180 steps of stone) from whence a glorious east-view repays a halt. Passing Hygeia, the place so healthy that even the clouds come there to repair, the visitor may descend to visit the Cascade or stroll further on to see the Tiger Heads.

Climbing Thunderbolt Ridge will bring the whole mountain into view. In front is Central Heights, dotted with cottages; on the right are Valley View, and the Mont Clair, and Fairholme estates; on the left, Sunnyside, Bellevue, and Utopia, while beyond all and above all is Pagoda Peak, the highest point of the mountain. Traces of the once famous pagoda built there centuries ago still remain. When China revives it is to be rebuilt, if teashop talk be true. From this point the view is best of all—to quote an earlier description: "The skies of Italy, the verdure of Japan, the grandeur of the Rockies, is suggested if not blended in the dilating panorama. Unique and charming, millions of bamboos bow with feathery grace to the smiling breezes. The murmur of cascades echoes from the deep ravines or breaks in medley against the granite cliffs and jutting crags. Off to the north is the Great Lake gleaming in the sunlight; on the east the vast coast plain, bisected by the Grand Canal, extends beneath the horizon to meet the waves from
the Yellow Sea; southwards, over the foothills, come silvery flashes from the Gyiendang River as it winds in graceful curves towards Hangchow Bay; on the west, cosy valleys and clustering villages linger near at hand, while crest, ridge and peak, break ranks at last in a long march to the Himalayas.” The variety is such that the eye never tires, and by way of contrast compare a July sunrise with an August sunset, or a moonlight calm with a noonday typhoon.

Attention has been called to the display of colour, tint, and shade, during the afternoons. Perhaps, more striking is the wonderful twilight greys. At the full moon in August, just as the sun has dipped in the west, owing to the different degrees of density of the atmosphere, the cloud strata are distinctly defined and the shading is marvellous during the transition from sunshine to moonlight.

To the visitor who has time and inclination, there are short trips to such attractions as the Cascade, the Monastery, the Tile Yards, and Lost Lover’s Land. There are numberless picnic places for the children, bathing pools for boys, flower fields for girls, and quiet nooks for camp stool and summer novel. Seasons vary from year to year but, counting from June to
September inclusive, rain, mist, or fog is likely one day in three. As a rule there is a difference of about ten degrees between the summit and the foot of the mountain. Careful observations taken in 1904, during the forty-three days from 1st August to 12th September, resulted as follows:

- Average maximum temperature: 78.23
- Average minimum temperature: 68.65
- Mean temperature: 73.44
- The highest temperature recorded: 82.00
- The lowest temperature recorded: 65.00

During long drought the mercury runs up into the nineties but on account of the elevation the air is not oppressive.

Pioneers built very much like the natives, walls of clay, tile roofs and Chinese lumber being cheaper, but as experience accumulated changes for the better became possible. Now stone walls, corrugated iron roofs, and Oregon pine are most in favour.
If it be true that Diocletian abdicated the Imperial Throne at Rome and retired to the hills of Dalmatia to plant cabbages, no one need feel surprised if some enthusiastic Mokanshander invites the whole community to inspect a potato of his own growing. Of necessity some housekeepers still gather their fruits and vegetables from rows of tins arranged on pantry shelves, but veteran summer residents of Mokanshan may find health, happiness, and table abundance at the end of their hoe.

The advent of foreigners and their activity in building has caused much comment among the local Chinese. “Teashop talk” has discovered reasons, latent and otherwise, which are supposed to explain the presence of so many “outside” people at this particular spot in China. Out of variant versions come the following.

Many years ago, when priests were numerous on Mokanshan, a large amount of gold accumulated. It was announced that the tones from a bell made of this precious metal would soothe many evil, and secure the favour of some good, spirits for those living near this costly talisman. Accordingly, when the bell was finished priestcraft flourished until 360 establishments were in evidence. However, it was impossible to keep the bell in any one spot—irresistibly, it seems, it moved from place to place, presumably to approach nearer some favoured one. At last a head priest determined to bury it hard and fast to secure his own good fortune. The workmen, of course, were blindfolded and led to a spot he had chosen. Eventually the bell was planted firm and deep. This displeased the genii so much that the priest died and the secret perished with him. The other priests disputed about the location of the bell and all traces disappeared. Now the foreigners profess to dig foundations in order to build summer-houses, but it is perfectly evident that they are searching for the precious talisman. The proof is plain from the fact that they leave the houses empty about nine months in the year and only come when they can stay and use their instruments (thermometers, etc.) in the warm weather. The wonderful bell is sure to be near the man of the greatest age, with the largest number of sons and the heaviest bank account. The legend goes that when 360 houses have been built the Golden Bell will automatically come to the surface and the first finder will be happy ever after.

Some time after the Golden Bell had disappeared enough silver was collected to cast another equal in value and immensely larger. But as one of the periodic revolutions swept over China, the metal was buried for safe keeping. A forest fire overran the mountain and no one has ever yet been able to find the hidden treasure. Ostensibly, the Chinese labourers accept wages when they dig foundations for houses at Mokanshan, but anyone
who understands the matter knows that they are really seeking for lost silver; the money they accept from foreigners merely "saves their face." The lucky year within the cycle of 360 is evidently now not far away.

At a temple off to the south from Prospect Point there is an iron bell with an inscription. Regardless of what it says it must be read to mean, "If ever this bell of its own accord should ring the magic number, the Golden Bell will come to the surface; the Silver Bell Treasure will be disclosed and a peaceful change in China will make everybody happy for 360 years." When that cycle closes all houses at Mokanshan will disappear, and a wilderness of bamboos will cover the place, only to revive again in cyclic periods.

Centuries ago a Chinese Solon visited this apex of Mokanshan. He noticed the wind blowing all around, but where he stood it was perfectly still. He inferred that he had discovered the point of equilibrium between wind and water (probably the vacuum vortex of a small cyclone, produced by opposite currents of air). At any rate a pagoda was built there and vegetation flourished on every side. At last the pagoda fell into ruin, and the houses and people disappeared. So far no foreigner has been able to buy this place because it is an open question whether there would follow an era of great peace or revolution. The Water Dragon is favourable, i.e., allows the walls of houses to go up in moist clay, but the Wind Dragon is opposed because the typhoons sometimes blow them down. No more than 360 houses must be built at Mokanshan lest the Fire Dragon should emerge in anger and then Tashan would become a volcano and destroy everything around it.

During a rebellion in China a traitor was crossing the ridge that extends from Prospect Point to Tashan. Lightning struck him and shattered an immense boulder into three great fragments. The central piece has been removed but the other two remain, one on each side of the road. Cleavage and scars are still present to convince visitors.

Years ago a Chinese maiden was betrothed to a mountain youth. The two candles lighted on their wedding day burned evenly. They lived quietly to a great age and then died. Two pines planted at their grave still grow evenly. It is confidently asserted that this old couple can never quarrel as long as the trees are not disturbed.

Once a wise man, remembered as "The Nameless One," meditated upon the origin of things. He had no disciples, wrote no books, sought no office. He merely answered questions, satisfied if his ideas lived or lingered in the minds of the common people. When asked about the origin of the bamboo he told the following story.
Ages ago, when all animals were larger than now, two immense flocks of birds met high up over Mokanshan. After a dispute between the leaders a fight began in mid-air. Feathers fell so fast that they stuck upright in the ground. The soil was soft and fertile, the thicket of fallen plumes became a forest of the now “feathery bamboos.”

The Nameless One went on to say that “at first the world was covered with water, then mud. The dragon went to sleep. He slept so long that his scales and claws grew long and protruded above the surface. When men began to build houses and bridges and to pave roads, they chipped off the surface rocks, but it did not hurt the dragon any more than trimming the callous ends of a man’s finger nails. However, when they dared to quarry deep down into “living rock” they came to the quick or tender part of the dragon. When he moved away from chisels and hammers there was an earthquake, when he roared with pain, there was a typhoon. So prudent Chinese must not dig too deep lest all be destroyed.

All water is dragon sweat. When the wind dragon sweats it rains and soon turns sour. When the earth dragon sweats there are springs gushing
with water that is evil-tasting (mineral). As there is always good close to the bad, the primitive Chinese found the tea-plant growing close to the springs on the mountain sides. All Chinese know that "raw water is poison," so after boiling to remove the danger, tea leaves are brewed in to improve the taste. Barbarians may add sugar and milk, which is a depraved custom and spoils three good things, i.e., tea, sugar, and milk.

Ages ago the flesh-eaters fought the fruit-eaters and drove them from the forests and hills to the swamps and mud. When nearly perished for food the fruit-eaters began to eat swamp grass seeds, and found them so wholesome that they decided to plant the grass and use the seed for food. In this way the rice plant came into favour.

When The Nameless One was called upon to explain the reason for the vermin that abound in China he said: "Some sort of good is opposed to every evil."

In the early days the Chinese people slept in the open air during the summer months. As this produced (malarial) fevers, mosquitoes were sent to drive the people indoors, and those who used nets or curtains to their beds escaped both the mosquitoes and the malaria.

The first beggar in China was so lazy that he would not work; so lazy did he become that he never bathed nor changed his clothes. The louse was sent to make him scratch and go to work. It is still in evidence that beggars are chiefly infested with this parasite.

Owing to their fear of the dark the early Chinese began to crowd together when they slept, so that many evils resulted. Bed-bugs came to compel each person to have his own bed. It is still a fact that where people crowd together as in cities, towns, and villages, bed-bugs abound. The polite term for this pest is "Hangchow Guest," probably because that famous city was once so crowded that this pest abounded to excess and became distributed elsewhere by travellers.

Years ago a literary man living at the foot of the mountain had a beautiful daughter. She rarely went outside the high walls of her home, but from an iron-barred window, overlooking a rice-field, she watched a stalwart young farmer at his work. The delicate beauty of the face at the window attracted him, but when she smiled he was entranced. Her father, having borrowed money from a miserly old man, finally betrothed, or rather bargained her away as a secondary wife. So many tears fell from the once bright eyes that the young farmer, having made a light bamboo ladder, climbed up to the window and planned to carry her away with him. She told him to wait until her father went away to one of the examinations, and then to come on a dark stormy night and with some tools remove the brick
that held the iron bars in place. The plan was carried out without arousing anyone inside, and the happy trembling pair started across the mountains. On account of her small feet, progress was slow until he decided to carry her. As they went, snow began to fall and, fearing to light a lantern, they lost their way. Near a great rock, that still may be seen, a broken bracelet suggests where they hid from the fury of the storm. Whether they were frozen and eaten by wolves, or became drowned in the rapid torrents that followed the snow, is still a mystery. Many of his old companions felt sure that he had succeeded in crossing the mountains and in some far-off valley made a happy home in the deep shades of the bamboo forest. Those who care to do so may take an afternoon walk to Lost Lovers' Land.

Among the hill squatters were leaders of two clans, often opposed and hating each other most cordially. In physical prowess they were about evenly matched. However, after a carousal and protracted gambling, they separated long after midnight. In taking a short cut, one of the leaders, familiar with the mountain path, walked ahead carelessly. Suddenly he fell from a ledge on to the rocks below, calling out the name of his enemy as he went down. As he never recovered consciousness but died a few days after, his rival, who disappeared for a time, is supposed to have been the cause of the accident. Particularly so, as another enemy of the survivor was found dead in his lonely hut beyond Tashan some time afterwards, with marks of violence on his body. By hushing up or overlooking such incidents, the Chinese people allow these lawless men to increase in boldness, until some outrageous crime finally brings the soldiers to capture and punish, perhaps, the wrong man.

A young buzzard once asked his father why they were not on terms of cordial intimacy with the other birds. The father buzzard referred his son to the owl, who was once the official schoolmaster when the lion was king. The owl hesitated, but finally said: "Ages ago the buzzard was the equal of the eagle in keenness of sight, length of wing, and sharpness of claw. Owing to the energy and endurance of the eagle, he caught more prey than the buzzard, and having a more temperate appetite, he never gorged himself, and always had something left over. The buzzard waited around until the eagle had finished or happened to call shortly after the feast was over. As the eagle generously gave him an invitation to eat, the buzzard never refused, even when the carcase remnants had begun to decompose. In fact, he developed the habit of waiting around when other birds were busy, and developed such a taste for tainted meat that he finally did not care for fresh food, but actually enjoyed meat that was repulsive to the other birds. As the flavour of his food clung to him, social visits from
the other birds became less frequent, and at last it was intimated to him that his presence was not desired at the open-air concerts of the feathered tribe. Failing to practise, he lost his voice, and now he never sings. He became so unpopular that he was not allowed to attend funerals until all the mourners had departed." On his way home, the young buzzard ate so much of a dead sheep by the roadside that he forgot all that the owl had told him. "Moral: appetite is a sure index of character.

The real sage of Mokanshan was a mat weaver, who had several hundred disciples. He was called to court but preferred private life—a life without care.

Folklore, myths, legends, fables, riddles, and proverbs abound. Those who speak the local dialect may find material for better understanding the Chinese mind, and some amusement in addition.

The Chinese authorities have recognized the foreign community as such and furnish police protection. A voluntary association has been formed, whose board of directors have appointed committees on information, transportation, supplies, and public improvements. Property has increased in value, and steady growth in the number of house-owners indicates that Mokanshan is appreciated.