Mourning in China.

When a person dies in China, if the members of his family have sufficient money to mourn for him properly, they send out and get professional mourners. These mourners come in and according to their pay enthusiastically wail for the departed. They keep it up day and night until the time set for the funeral, and then they follow the body to the field or to the river bank where it is to rest. But the burial doesn't take place then. The dead man has to wait for the arrival of the "auspicious time" before his bones are finally covered. The auspicious time is settled by the astrologors. They cast the horoscope of the deceased and then they study the heavens. The auspicious time does not arrive until the particutar star or planet under which the man was born is at the proper angle with the sun and earth and is as near as possible over the spot where the burial is to take place. When the astrologers say that this time has arrived, the friends or the family of the deceased go to the field or the river bank and shovel earth over the coffin, making a perfect mound, which is supposed never to be disturbed. Any disturbance of it is a descration to be avenged by the descendants of the deceased.

Besides seeing that the deceased is properly mourned for and at the auspicious time is buried, it is obligatory on the relatives to provide proper clothing for the departed spirit and money to enable him to pay his way in the spirit land. There are dozens of stores in Chinese cities where one will see great bundles of silvered paper made up in the shape of little boots or shoes similar to the silver shoes that pass for money all over the Empire. This is spirit money. In the same stores if you inquire you will find paper clothing and paper trunks. When the coffin containing the body is taken to the spot where at the end of a month or six months, of perhaps a year, it is to be buried the relatives buy a lot of this spirit money and several suits of paper clothing and a trunk or so and take it out to the grave, where they burn it beside the coffin. Whether the spirit pockets the smoke or what it does, the Chinese say that the act provides the money necessary in the spirit land and the clothing that will make the spirit present able to his fellow spirits. Driving along a river bank near Shanghai a distance of about two miles the New York Sun correspondent counted eighteen coffins that were waiting for the "auspicious time." Some of them were new and some had been out so long that they were weatherbeaten.

On this subject of coffins it may be said here that a most acceptable present from a youth to his old folks is a coffin, or, better still, two coffins in which they may be buried when they die. The presentation is in no wise a hint that it is time the recipient should use the present, but it is a mark of filial affection that is always appreciated. The presentation is usually accompanied by a good deal of ceremony possibly by a band and always by great rejoicing. The old folks who receive the coffins put them away in the best room in the house and never lose an opportunity to show them to their friends. If your sons don't present a coffin to you it is not at all out of the way for you to go out and buy one for yourself and put it aside for the day when you will need it. It is just as much the custom to provide yourself with a coffin before you die as it is in the United States to provide a family lot in a cemetery to receive your remains.

The most conspicuous thing in the yamen of the viceroy of the province of Chili when the civil government of the allies took possession in Tientsin was a handsome hard wood coffin that the viceroy had provided for himself. It held the post of honor in the yamen. But in his case the forethought had been all for naught, for the allies came to him so suddenly that he had to escape from his yamen through a hole in the rear wall and later he committed suicide and his body went floating down the river along with those of thousands of other Chinamen who had been killed during the fight that accompanied the capture of the city or by the allies after the city had been taken. His coffin was thrown out in a woodpile in the rear of the yamen.

One of the things that a Chinamen fears most is that he will die away from home and his body will not find its way to a resting place beside those of his ancestors. The ship on which the correspondent came to China carried a number of Chinamen as steerage passengers. One day one of these passengers died.

'We'll have a burial at sea,' said a first class passenger to the first mate.

'Not on your life,' said the mate. 'Do you think we'd throw away $25? Not much.'

'What do you mean?' asked the first-class passenger.

'Mean,' said the mate, 'mean what I say. That passenger is worth $25 more dead than when he was alive. The doctor gets $12 and the ship $13.'

'How,' demanded the passenger.

'Why,' said the mate, 'no Chinaman wants to be buried away from his ancestors, and one of the things that the Chinese Six companies in San Francisco does is to insure Chinamen against that. When a Chinaman lands in America or in Canada he pays a certain amount to the Six companies and that insures that his body shall reach home if he dies. The six companies has a contract with the steamship company and it pays $25 for every dead Chinaman we deliver in China. So we never bury them at sea. The doctor embalms the body and the company allows him $12 as his share. Yes, sir, a dead Chinaman is worth $25 more to us than a live one.'

'Where in China do you deliver the bodies?' asked the passenger.

'Wherever the corpse's ticket calls fo delivery,' said the mate. 'If he bought a ticket through to Canton we take him there or if he bought a ticket inland we deliver him at his destination.'

About this time there was a commotion around the forward hatch, and a crowd of the whites among the ship's crew hauled up a coffin with the body of the dead Chinaman in it. It was dragged along the deck and hoisted up and put in one of the life boats, where it remained during the balance of the journey.

'Why don't you make the Chinamen help in pulling the coffin out of the hold and putting it in the boat?' asked the passenger.

'Those fellows?' demanded the mate, pointing to his Chinese crew, 'you couldn't hire a Chinaman to touch a dead body unless that was his regular business. The Chinese who handle the dead are looked on as outcasts by the other Chinamen.'

It is a law in China that no undertaker or a descendant of an undertaker to the fourth generation shall hold public office. In this undertakers are put on the same plane with barbers, actors and prostitutes.

One of the most essential things for a man in China who dies away from home is a white rooster. A white rooster is needed to guide his spirit to the resting place of his ancestors. His friends will look after his body and will see that it is carried to the spot, but there must be a rooster to guide the spirit. There are no hearses in China and the coffins are carried on poles borne on the shoulders of coolies. When a body is being transported a considerable distance to reach th restin white rooster is perched on the top of the coffin in front and the more it crows the less chance there is of the spirit of the departed losing its way. A chinaman would rather die than lose an arm or a leg, because all chinamen believe that if you are not fully equipped with members when you enter the next world you will never be able to repair the loss there, and if you die minus a leg, for instance, you will go through eternity minus a leg. This is the reason that death by slicing is the most dreaded of all forms of punishment, and beheading is the next most dreaded. By the first process the body is supposed to be sliced in a thousand pieces, and usually it is, but it is impossible to sew it together again. A beheaded man must travel through eternity without any head, or if his friends succeed in getting his head and in sewing it on again, they must do so with the face to the rear, and that is the way the spirit has to wear it for ever.

Timid "Man-Eaters."

To most people a timid wild animal would seem the safest representative of its species. The show companies think differently. They dread a timid lion, tiger or leopard, not only because in its panic it is liable to injure its trainer, but because it may at any moment take fright from the slightest cause and spoil a performance. More animals are lost to the stage through fear than through viciousness. McClure's Magazine recalls an incident which occurred at the Porte St. Martin Theatre in Paris, and which has become part of the annals of the show business.

The chief feature of the exhibition was the casting of a young woman, securely bound, into a cage of lions. Unfortunately the woman who took the part of the victim was taken ill, and a substitute was found in the wife of one of the trainers, herself a trainer of some experience, but without acquaintance with these particular lions. As she was somewhat nervous, she carried a small club ready for use should occasion arise.

Amid the breathless silence of the spectators the ringmaster explained that the six lions in the cage were the fiercest and most bloodthirsty of man-eaters. Then the woman was thrust in at the cage door, but in the excitement of the moment the door was not securely shut behind her.

No sooner was she inside than the six monarchs of the jungle, seeing a stranger forced upon them, raised a chorus of shuddering terror, bolted for the cage door, clawed it open, and with dragging tails and cringing flanks fled through the rear entrance and found refuge in a cellar.

They were dislodged only after great difficulty, and it was a week before the ferocious man-eaters were sufficiently recovered from their fright to reappear in public.

Prepared to Carve.

The man who was dining with the family for the first time began the conversation, reported by the Philadelphia Press.

'Wasn't that the dinner bell that just rung?' the stranger asked.

'Yes,' replied the old friend of the family.

'Then where's the host going? I just saw him pass down the hall with his overcoat on'

'That wasn't an overcoat; it was a mackintosh. We are going to have roast duck.'

THE SAILOR'S RETURN.