

acknowledged my superiority. Had I been content with a humbler place, it would quickly have been reported along the road, and, little by little, my complacency would have been tested. I am perfectly sure that, by never verging from my position of superiority, I gained the respect of the Chinese, and it is largely to this I attribute the universal respect and attention shown me during the journey. For I was unarmed, entirely dependent upon the Chinese, and, for all practical purposes, inarticulate. As it was, I never had any difficulty whatever.

Chinese etiquette pays great attention to the question of position; so important, indeed, is it that, when a carriage was taken by Lord Macartney's Embassy to Peking as a present, or, as the Chinese said, as tribute to the Emperor Kienlung, great offence was caused by the arrangement of the seats requiring the driver to sit on a higher level than His Majesty. A small enough mistake surely, but sufficient to mar the success of an expedition which the Chinese have always regarded as "one of the most splendid testimonials of respect that a tributary nation ever paid their Court."

On the morning of May 7th, as we were leaving the village where we had slept the night before, we were witnesses of a domestic quarrel which might well have become a tragedy. On the green outside their cabin a husband with goitre, enraged against his goitrous wife, was kept from killing her by two elderly goitrous women. All were speaking with horrible goitrous voices as if they had cleft palates, and the husband was hoarse with fury. Jealousy could not have been the cause of the quarrel, for his wife was one of the most hideous creatures I have seen in China. Throwing aside the bamboo with which he was threatening her, the husband ran

into the house, and was out again in a moment brandishing a long native sword with which he menaced speedy death to the joy of his existence. I stood in the road and watched the disturbance, and with me the soldier-guard, who did not venture to interfere. But the two women seized the angry brute and held him till his wife toddled round the corner. Now, if this were a determined woman, she could best revenge herself for the cruelty that had been done her by going straightway and poisoning herself with opium, for then would her spirit be liberated, ever after to haunt her husband, even if he escaped punishment for being the cause of her death. If in the dispute he had killed her, he would be punished with "strangulation after the usual period," the sentence laid down by the law and often recorded in the *Peking Gazette* (e.g., May 15th, 1892), unless he could prove her guilty of infidelity, or want of filial respect for his parents, in which case his action would be praiseworthy rather than culpable. If, however, in the dispute the wife had killed her husband, or by her conduct had driven him to suicide, she would be inexorably tied to the cross and put to death by the "*Ling chi*," or "degrading and slow process." For a wife to kill her husband has always been regarded as a more serious crime than for a husband to kill his wife; even in our own highly favoured country, till within a few years of the present century, the punishment for the man was death by hanging, but in the case of the woman death by burning alive.

Let me at this point interpolate a word or two about the method of execution known as the *Ling chi*. The words are commonly, and quite wrongly, translated as "death by slicing into 10,000 pieces"—a truly awful description of a punishment

whose cruelty has been extraordinarily misrepresented. It is true that no punishment is more dreaded by the Chinese than the *Ling chi*; but it is dreaded, not because of any torture associated with its performance, but because of the dismemberment practised upon the body which was received whole from its parents. The mutilation is ghastly and excites our horror as an example of barbarian cruelty; but it is not cruel, and need not excite our horror, since the mutilation is done, not before death, but after. The method is simply the following, which I give as I received it first-hand from an eye-witness:—The prisoner is tied to a rude cross: he is invariably deeply under the influence of opium. The executioner, standing before him, with a sharp sword makes two quick incisions above the eyebrows, and draws down the portion of skin over each eye, then he makes two more quick incisions across the breast, and in the next moment he pierces the heart, and death is instantaneous. Then he cuts the body in pieces; and the degradation consists in the fragmentary shape in which the prisoner has to appear in heaven. As a missionary said to me: "He can't lie out that he got there properly when he carries with him such damning evidence to the contrary."

In China immense power is given to the husband over the body of his wife, and it seems as if the tendency in England were to approximate to the Chinese custom. Is it not a fact that, if a husband in England brutally maltreats his wife, kicks her senseless, and disfigures her for life, the average English bench of unpaid magistrates will find extenuating circumstances in the fact of his being the husband, and will rarely sentence him to more than a month or two's hard labour?