INTRODUCTION.
The translation given below is that of the groundwork of the Chinese Farce performed at the Tung Hing Theatre on Nov. 15, 1869, before H. R. H. the Duke of Edinburgh. I call it the groundwork, because I found, to my very great disappointment, that much of the best fun of the piece was not contained at all in the small "acting edition" (almost as badly printed and got up as if it had cost sixpence at Laoy's in the Strand) which I purchased for a few cash in Queen's Road. In fact, it would seem that the book of a Chinese play bears much the same relation to the play itself as a very meagre libretto does to an Opera, and the actors "write up" their parts and introduce "local jokes" as occasion may demand. In the printed play before me, also, there is no list of dramatic persons, no stage directions whatever, no orders as to costumes or properties, no entrances or exits, and no punctuation. The whole reads on in one long sentence from beginning to end, even the names of the persons who speak not being distinguished in any way from the rest. Figure to yourself, dear reader, a passage of Shakspeare printed like this:— "Falstaff dost thou hear me Hal prince ay and mark thee too Jack Falstaff do so for it is worth the listening to these nine in buckram that, I told thee of prince so two more already falstaff their points being broken points down fell their hose falstaff began to give me ground but I followed me close came in foot and hand and with a thought seven of the eleven I paid prince o monstros, etc."

I have therefore literally translated the dialogue, the only departures from literality being caused once or twice by the manufacture of rhymes in the parts that are sung. The stage-directions however are necessarily an interpolation, and in them I have endeavoured to restore the spirit of the play as I saw it.

Persons who cannot believe anything to be a translation unless it reads like the speeches of Indians in Cooper's Novels, or the tall talk of imaginary Romans in Mr. Whyte Melville's 'Gladiators,' or the very astounding English which scholars who translate Chinese think it incumbent upon themselves to write, will be sure to fall foul of at least two points in this attempt at a vernacular rendering of a vernacular play.

One is that the respectable Mr. A-lan calls his wife "my dear," and the other, that they go off singing "fol-lol." Now in stern truth, A-lan says "my wife" and says it again and again, but as in English 'my wife' is not a common style of address when speaking to the partner of one's joys, and as "my dear" is, and as "my dear" represents the idea perfectly, that is, the common title by which a husband addresses his wife, I have used it, and people who think it "doesn't sound Chinese" must perforce be content with this explanation. Also, as to the "fol-lol" with which the last duet concludes, in serious sober fact the husband and wife leave the stage with a prolonged
and triumphant Ah—ah—ah—ah: a sort of cadence effect, and marked in the book as an ad lib passage, to be sustained in "linked sweetness long drawn out" to any number of musical flourishes that may seem good to the performers. So, as "Ah" or "Oh" is not a common termination to English melodies of the less instructed class, and as those classes certainly do incline to fol-lol (or words to that effect) as a refrain, I take my stand on fol-lol, I stake my reputation on fol-lol!

The pig is represented by a small piece of wood, about the size of a brick, trailed at the end of a string, the scenery is hit, and the furniture of the stage a table and a chair or two, which represent either the inside or outside of a house, a street or a doorgate, as occasion may require. The jokes turn in the first place on the inveterate gambling of a Chinese "ne'er do well," and the following explanation had better be given here, rather than be added in the shape of notes. When A-lan speaks of having "bought a figure" he is alluding to the game of Fan-tan, in which money is staked on either side of a square board, numbered from 1 to 4, and the player wins or loses according as one, two, three or four counters are left of a handful taken at random and counted away by fours. "The Black Tortoise drew in his head" is a cant phrase signifying an adverse run of luck. When A-lan is taking his oath, he says, "low lights," instead of, "three lights," because his head is full of his gambling losses, and he cannot think of anything else.

"Bean curd" is the white Blanc-mange-like mass which may be often seen hawked about the streets, a preparation of bean flour which looks nicer than it tastes. As this is almost invariably sold by hucksters, a shop to supply it would be the very humblest kind of establishment, as may be judged from the small amount of capital required to start the business. "Cash" (English readers may be informed) are bronze coins the size of farthings, with a hole in the centre to string them together; ten are nominally worth a halfpenny. "Tortoise-egg" is a common abusive epithet. A faithful translator ought to replace it by some equivalent in English Billingsgate, but it is left untranslated (for such a rendering cannot be called "translation") for the lovers of versions that "sound like Chinese."

The finale of the play is pointed with an elaborate satire on Buddhist priests. Weak and simple as A-lan is, he is deep enough to impose on the Monk, who cuts even a more ridiculous figure than the humpbacked husband. Nor is this peculiar to this one play; in Chinese novels and dramas the holy brotherhoods are, as a general rule, the butts for unceasing scorn and ridicule. In a few cases indeed they figure as hospitable hosts (as they are), jocular friends, and wise counsellors; but more often either as defeated villains, detestable pandars, or else the dopes of dupes and the fool of fools. It is remarkable that there is hardly an expression of contempt for Friars and Monks to be found in English books of the middle ages that may not be found almost verbatim in Chinese. A-lan's "Shaven Monk!" is an example. The priest's soliloquy too is a cutting satire against himself. Buddhists are under vows to abstain from flesh, and from the flesh; their reputed leaning towards both is a standing and inexhaustible joke as well as reproach. It is a popular belief that a Buddhist will eat dog rather than nothing, witness the common epithet "Dog-eating Monk." Our hunchbacked friend states that "on the first and the fifteenth" (the great fast-days of the month) he "stewed a young dog." At the sight of A-lan's wife his vows are quickly forgotten, and the only wonder is that the soi-disant injured husband does not pursue him with the common cry—"Hungry demon after beauty," often hooted at Priests in the streets of Canton.

Professors of the noble art of self-defence are not uncommon in China, they generally unite to their calling that of quack-doctor. Selecting some bumpkin in the crowd, the
professor will give him leave to aim a blow at him in any manner he likes, and proceed to demonstrate with what ease it may be parried. This is always done by catching the wrist of the attacking party in some unexpected way, and not improbably the return attack consists of a kick in the stomach, or a blow on the forehead from the sole of the professor's foot. Then the pugilist will thump himself on the ribs with an iron rod till the place grows black and blue, and the blows resound like strokes on a drum. He applies a plaster (his own specialty of course) for a few moments, and when he removes it, in some inscrutable way, bruises and discoloration have vanished, and given place to yellow and rather dirty skin!

The play is so badly printed that one of the jokes has had to be omitted as illegible and unintelligible, and the invocation with which the Buddhist comest on is (from the same cause) a mere shot at the intention of three indescribable characters which not improbably mean something else.

A-LAN'S PIG.

Dramatis Personae.

Ho A-Lan, an idle shiftless fellow, out of work, given to gambling, and a great fool.

His Wife.

First Gambler.

Second Gambler.

A Horsebacked Buddhist Priest.

The Stage is empty except for a chair.

Mus. Enter the Wife, carrying a rattan. She sits down.

Wife (Sings)

"Ah! Ah! we're very poor, We scarce can get along!"

My name is Wong and I married Ho A-Lan. To-day I gave him a few yards of cloth which I had woven, to take and sell in the market. What a time he is coming back! What a fidget he keeps me in! (Sings) I'll go home now and wait, 'Tis not far off this spot, To see if that A-Lan Is coming back or not.

(Exit)

Enter A-Lan, looking very disreputable.

A-Lan (Sings)

I'm a most unhappy beggar, I'm out of luck at play, Ten times I've bought a figure, Nine times I've lost to-day! I staked on one and two, There turned up three and four; I thought it must be "right," But "lift" came up before; The luck twice changed about, And so I'm quite cleaned out, And not a copper have I left (unless The buttons on my coat) myself to bless!

I say! I'm Mr. Ho A-Lan. Now I come to think of it, my wife gave me some yards of cloth to sell in the market. I sold 'em for a thousand cash, and I've lost every rap! How on earth am I to go home to her? Ah! don't mention it! Beat me if I go home? I should think she would! Can't help it though. Must go!

(Exit)

Sings" Home I run to find my dame, I shall catch it all the same!

Here we are, this is my house. Here wife, open the door I say!

Enter the Wife.

Wife. Oh! You've come back, have you?


Wife. Have you sold that cloth yet?


Wife. Well—the cash?

A-Lan. Lost 'em all!

Wife. What have you been playing at to lose them?

(Hitting him on the knuckles, as, during the rest of the conversation, she continues to do with each question.)


Wife. What did you stake on?

A-Lan. I'll tell you, my dear. I began with 1, and then I went on to 2 and 3. What do you think I ought to have staked on my dear?

Wife. On 4 of course!

A-Lan. My dear! Let me explain to you. I had just hedged on 8 and 4, but the confounded tortoise-egg, the croupier, had triplicate counters that could reckon either as one, two or three, and so he could make up four whenever he liked. And that was
THE CHINA REVIEW.

Wife. Get along with you! you've lost your poor old woman's money; you wait till I whoop you, won't I just!

(Sings) Confound you, Sir, you're cool indeed, To come and tell me what you've lost! A thrashing sound is what you need, I'll kill you, that'll please me most.

(Beat him)

A-lan. Oh! Wife! Oh! I say!

(Sings) My dear, don't thump me so; For if you break my head, No other man, you know, Will bury you when you are dead.

Oh! Wife! I say! Stop! I won't do it again. This time I really will give it up. I'm thinking of opening a shop.

Wife. You open a shop! What shop?


Wife. Idiot! you haven't money enough to buy paper for the pawn-tickets!

A-lan. You don't say so? Then I'll set up a big trading junk, will that do?

Wife. No it won't. You haven't a cent to buy even a rope.

A-lan. Deary me, no! Well, then, I'll open a bean-curd shop.

Wife. No capital for that either!

A-lan. No? Well, let's think it over, you and me. I have it! We have got a pig. We can sell him for eighteen hundred cash. That'll be enough to open a bean-curd shop my dear?

Wife. Oh! You're after your poor wife's pig, are you! Well, you'll have to swear a solemn oath not to gamble away the money, d'ye hear?

A-lan. Well I never! Man and wife want some money, and one's got to swear! All right, here goes; I have'nt got any sacred paper or candles though.—

"Great Heaven grant me fortune! Heaven and Earth and Illustrious Spirits! Sun and Moon, you lost lights."—

Wife. Stupid! What are you talking about? "Lost" lights! Say, "Sun, Moon and Stars, you three lights."

A-lan. All right! "Sun, Moon and Stars, you three Lights, if A-lan goes gambling, I pray you do to death the third daughter of my mother-in-law!"

Wife. (Beat him.) What? What? You have said you wished me dead! Th' won't do. Begin over again, say it again!

A-lan. Very good. Say it again if it is—"Heaven and Earth, etc., if A-lan goes gambling may there be no tos growing on his heels, and no novel in the middle of his back; may corns grow on the top of his scull, and a boil as big as your head on the end of his hair!" There, how do you like that, my dear?

Wife. Won't do. Say it properly.

A-lan. Oh! You want it again do you? Well then, "If A-lan goes gambling, may he have never a Coffin when he's dead. Is that right?"

Wife. That's right, that'll do.

A-lan. Produce the animal! Ugh! Ugh! (Grants to encourage the Pig.)

Wife. Here's the Pig, catch hold and go sell him. Now, look here; you may take a thousand cash, but don't go so low as eight hundred.

A-lan. I see. If I can get eight hundred I'm to sell him, but not if I can get a thousand.

Wife. No! A thousand you may, eight hundred you'd better not.

A-lan. Ah, well. More or less, I'll take what I can get, and then come back here, that's the way. Go in and wait for me till I come back.

(Exit wife.)

(Sings) Through the Market I will roam, To sell my pig, and then go home. Buy a pig! Pig for sale! Buy a pig! (Exit with the pig, bawling like a bawler.)

Enter 1st Gambler and 2nd Gambler.

First G. (Sings) About the street my pal and I Prowl still to fleece the passers-by.

I say, old chap.

Second G. What?

First G. Look here. We two have been quite cleaned out. We must hit on some
plan to get three or four taels and try our luck again, what do you say?

Second G. Good. Let's lay our heads together, that's the way. I think we ought to go into the public places, and if we see anybody about, we can, perhaps, do him out of a tael or two. Will that do, think you?

First G. Excellently. Off we go.

(Duet) Let's roam about the streets to see What pigeon we can pick; And having got his cash, once more We'll try our little luck.

Enter A-lan, bowling.

A-lan. Pig for sale! Pig for sale!

First G. I say, what luck! There's that tortoise-egg, A-lan, hawking a pig. I must go and ask him what he wants for it.

Second G. Go on, you'd better go first.

First G. Wait for me then. (To A-lan) Hello A-lan, is that you hawking the pig? What do you want for him?

A-lan. My pig is to be sold for a thousand cash.

First G. All right. I'll give you a thousand for him.

A-lan. No. I've made a mistake, I can't take it, I mustn't take it. Wait till I think a minute, and then I'll tell you. (Aside) Let's see, my wife said I was to take a thousand cash if I could get it. Well, but isn't eight hundred more than a thousand? Let's see, this finger stands for a thousand. Well then, these eight fingers stand for eight hundred. What an ass I am, I must have eight hundred, of course. (To the Gamblers,) I say, you fellows, I must have eight hundred cash for the pig.

First G. Eight hundred it is then. My dear brother, catch hold of the pig.

Second G. I'll go and find a piece of grass to string the cash on.

(Exit, with the pig.)

A-lan. Here! Hello! Stop! Come back you! You haven't paid the money, what are you bolting like that for?

First G. I'll soon tell you what he's bolting like that for. In April of last year, in the Shing-wong Temple, you borrowed eight hundred cash of me. Principal and interest together come to over a thousand by this time, and have you the impudence to ask for money? Why, you tortoise-egg, I could stab you!

(Menacing him with a knife.)

A-lan. Oh no, no, no! I don't want any money, I don't indeed. But just put me up to a little boxing, do now.

First G. Very well. Stand like this.

(They spar, A-lan is knocked down.)

A-lan. What do you call that posture?

First G. Its name is "Speedy promotion."

Now, try this.

(Teaches him a new attitude, and again knocks him down.)

A-lan. What is that called?

First G. It is called "Kwan Ping presenting the seal."

A-lan. Are there any more?

First G. Oh yes, "The three hands," or this, "The bright arrow."

(Leaves him various postures, then makes an attack upon him as he suppose his wife will, and allows A-lan to knock him down several times.)

Good, good! Well, those are quite enough for you to beat your wife. (Exit.)

A-lan. Very many thanks. Good-bye, good-bye. I'll be off home, and give my wife a drubbing.

(Stage) I'll go back home to find my wife, And thrash her soundly on my life! Wife! Wife! Open the door!

Enter the Wife.

Wife. Oh, you've come back, have you?

A-lan. I've come back.

Wife. Have you sold the pig?

A-lan. Sold him.

Wife. Where's the money?

A-lan. Spent it learning to box.

Wife. What on earth do you want to learn to box for?

A-lan. To larrup you, female dog that you are!

Wife. Oh! You've been learning to box, and come back to beat me, have you? Well, just try it on, that's all.
A-lan. Come on! (They fight.) Wait till I give it you, this is the way. (He tries the method he has been taught.) That's it! No, it isn't, neither. Why, I've tried them all! (Wife knocks him down.)

Wife. There. Now I'll just tie you up to the door-post, here, and give you your deserts by-and-bye. There, that'll do. Now I'm going to have some supper, and when I've finished I'll come and unloose you. (Exit, having first thrown a petticoat over A-lan's head and tied him up to the door-post.)

Enter the hunchbacked Buddhist Priest.

Priest. Saint Lo-pak! Saint Lo-pak! On the first day of this month, and on the fifteenth, I stewed a young dog. Ah, ha! I'm a great hand at beef and pork, I am. And I can carve fish too—(starts at seeing A-lan.) What sort of thing is this? I say you, are you a man or a demon?

A-lan. I'm a man. Just let me loose and I'll tell you all about it.

Priest. Oh, very well. Wait till I unloose you. (Looses him.) Why, I declare it's A-lan!

A-lan. Ugh! (Aside.) Ah, ha! Shaven priest! Shaven priest!

Priest. What were you grovelling like a crab there for?

A-lan. Can't say, mustn't tell you. Look here, I can cure hunchbacks, I can.

Priest. You can? What'll you charge for curing mine?

A-lan. Eight hundred cash and eight paks of rice.

Priest. Well now, I haven't got any money, but I'll tell you what—here is a subscription list for buying oil for our Monastery lamps, I'll give you that, if you like, and you can go and collect the subscriptions. There are several names down. (Reads)

Mr. Raganuflin, Mr. Lightfingers, Mr. Never-give-a-fagot—

A-lan. Come along! Let me tie you up. You wait patiently here, and a fairy will come presently. (Ties him up as he himself had been, and exits, muttering.)

My wife tied me up and gave me blows enough, now you shall have it; I'm going home myself.

Enter the Wife.

Wife. Ah, ha! I've had a good supper. Oh, I'll let you loose fast enough. (Beats the priest and then unlooses him) He stares wildly about.)

Priest. Ha! This is indeed a fair damsel descended from the skies. I must really break my vows!

(He rushes at her to embrace her, she runs away. Enter A-lan from behind with a long bamboo.)

A-lan. Ah! Vile tortoise-egg! Would you violate my wife's rough and powder? Would you though? (Beating him.) Oh, I'll give it you, take that—and that (drives him out.) What! vile child of a female dog, would you marry a Buddhist? (To his wife.)

Wife. What did you tie him up here for, A-lan?

A-lan. I'll explain to you, my dear. By tying up the monk I've done him out of no end of money, quite enough to open a shop. (Shows the subscription book.)

Wife. Good good, indeed!

A-lan. (Aside.)

Wife. Now man and wife together we At home intend to stop. For we've got cash and we've got rice Enough to open shop.

Ful, lol, etc. (Exeunt.)