

NOTES ON CHINESE MATERIA MEDICA

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Notes on chinese materia medica by Daniel Hanbury

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DANIEL HANBURY

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MATERIA MEDICA**

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CHINESE MATERIA MEDICA.

BY

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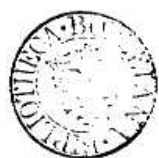
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PREFACE.

As originally published, the following *Notes on Chinese Materia Medica* are scattered through the pages of two volumes of the '*Pharmaceutical Journal*,' and therefore not conveniently accessible for reference. In the present pamphlet they are collected, paged continuously, and supplied with a title-page and index.

D. H.

*Plough Court, Lombard Street,
February, 1862.*



NOTES ON CHINESE MATERIA MEDICA.

BY DANIEL HANBURY, F.L.S.

To draw up a general description of Chinese Materia Medica is a task that in the present state of our knowledge of the natural history of China, it were almost vain to attempt. Opportunities for scientific investigations in that vast country have as yet been far too limited, its zoology, botany, and mineralogy too little explored to enable any one to describe other than in a very imperfect manner even a small number of the varied products derived from the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, which come under the general denomination of *drugs*. But although sources of information are scanty, they are not entirely wanting; and I have, consequently, been led to think that under the simple title of *Notes*, it might be both useful and interesting to place upon the pages of a scientific journal such remarks upon Chinese Materia Medica as have been suggested by the examination of a considerable number of specimens which I have received through the kindness of friends in China. That, therefore, which I propose to do in the following pages is to give a short descriptive catalogue, firstly, of some of the mineral substances employed in Chinese medicine, which I have had the opportunity of examining, and of most of which I possess specimens; and, secondly, of a small number of animal and vegetable products, which may, from their origin, uses, or affinities, be of interest to the pharmacologist. The imperfectness of the information I have collected will, I trust, induce further researches on the part of those who being residents in China have opportunities which I cannot command, but with whose labours I shall always be glad to co-operate.

Before commencing the task proposed, it is desirable briefly to review some sources of information upon Chinese Materia Medica, to which frequent reference will have to be made.

Of a considerable number of native works, the most important and well-known is, undoubtedly, the great herbal entitled *Pu-ssau-kang-mü*,* written by Le-shé-chin, in the middle of the sixteenth century. It was commenced in the reign and by command of the Emperor Kea-ting, and completed by the son of

* Like other Chinese names, it is written by Europeans in various manners, as, *Pou ssau kang mo*, *Pou ssau kang mou*, &c.

the author in the reign of Wan-leih, to whom it was presented in the year 1596. For some centuries previous to this period, works of the same character had appeared at intervals, some of them published by authority of the government, and others by private individuals. Of a few of these works, Du Halde has preserved slight notices, to which I would refer the reader who is desirous of further information.* According to this author, the Pun-tsaou of Le-she-chin was written with the design of obviating the difficulties and confusion arising from a multitude of authorities, by supplying in one work a compendium of all that was more valuable in its predecessors. This design it probably fulfils, as it is held in high estimation by the Chinese and is frequently reprinted; but, excepting a revision and enlargement which it underwent in the fourteenth year of the Emperor Shun-chi, A.D. 1657, no attempt appears to have been made for the verification of old, or the acquisition of new, information. The Pun-tsaou is divided into 52 chapters, usually bound into about 40 thin octavo volumes, the first three of which contain woodcuts of many of the minerals, plants, and animals referred to in the text. These woodcuts, four of which occur on a page, amount in number to more than 1100: the name is placed above each, and sometimes a synonym at the side. No general translation of the Pun-tsaou into any European language has been published, though small portions of the work to illustrate particular subjects have frequently been translated. These extracts show that among much that is interesting, there is a large admixture of the absurd and fabulous, so that it is questionable whether the labour of translating so voluminous a work in its integrity would be repaid by the value of the information acquired. It is much to be desired, however, that a list of the woodcuts should be drawn up and printed, together with the Latin names of such minerals, plants, or animals as can be identified: such a list would form a convenient key to the Pun-tsaou, and although but a comparatively small number of the names might at first be determined, a basis would be laid for future labours.

To give some idea of the subjects treated in the Pun-tsaou, and the manner in which they are arranged, I have drawn up the synoptical table of its contents printed on the opposite page, which Professor Stanislas Julien of Paris has favoured me by examining and correcting.†

With regard to European works touching upon Chinese Materia Medica, the first to be mentioned is one entitled *Specimen Medicinæ Sinicæ*, published in 4to, at Frankfort, in 1682. This work, which was edited by Andrew Cleyer, a physician and botanist in the service of the Dutch East India Company, is a collection of Latin treatises, some of them being translations from the Chinese. A list of these treatises (not, however, agreeing with the titles of the treatises themselves) is placed on the title-page. The author or translator of most, if not of all, of these works, was not Cleyer, but Michael Boym, a Polish Jesuit missionary, who went to China and India in 1643. After Boym's death in 1656, his MSS. were sent to Europe, where those constituting the work in question were published in 1682. Owing, however, to disagreements between the Dutch East India Company and the Jesuit missionaries, the name of Boym was suppressed, and the work appeared as edited by Dr. Cleyer, first physician to the

* *Description de l'Empire de la Chine*, Paris, 1785, fol. Tome iii., p. 441.

† I may also here acknowledge the information I have derived from Du Halde (*Op. cit.* iii., 437-9), as well as from Mr. S. Wells Williams, in the comprehensive account of the Pun-tsaou given in his *Middle Kingdoms*, vol. i., chap. vi. I have also to thank my friends Messrs. Lockhart and W. G. Stronach, who have kindly determined for me many points involving a knowledge of the Chinese language.

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* This series of numbers does not exist in the original. When added in MS. it affords a convenient and ready means of reference to any particular figure.