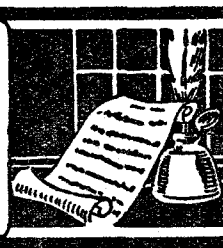




Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



The Author of "White Jade" Writes of Chinese Treasure

IN compiling the list of treasure found by Parker and Scott in the Yangtze, I have availed myself of poetic license and borrowed (for the purpose of authenticity in the description of the gems) from the will of the Dowager Empress, Tzu Hsi—"The Old Buddha"—leaning backward so as not to strain the credulity of the reader unacquainted with China.

The diary of a favorite eunuch, Li Lien-ying, says in part:

"Before the Empress was laid in the coffin the bottom was spread with a mattress of gold threads seven inches thick, in which was woven an embroidery of pearls. On top of the mattress was laid a silk coverlet strewn with a layer of pearls. In the pearl layer was a lace sheet of pearls into which was woven a figure of 'Old Buddha.' The head rested on jade lotus leaves, and the feet on jade lotus flowers. She was dressed in a ceremonial robe on which pearls were embroidered in gold thread, and over that an embroidery jacket with a rope of pearls; also a rope of pearls encircled her body nine times, and eighteen pearl images of Buddha were laid in her arms. A chaplet of pearls was placed on her head, and by her side were laid gold, jade and jeweled Buddhas to the number of one hundred and eight. On each side of the

feet were placed one watermelon of jade, two sweet melons of jade, and gems in the shape of peaches, pears, apricots, dates . . . to the number of two hundred. By the left side was placed a gem shaped like a lotus root, with leaves and flowers sprouting from the top. On the right was a coral tree. . . . The interstices were filled with scattered pearls and gems until the whole was level."

Li engaged an expert to evaluate the contents, and has left a list from which I quote some of the principal items, estimated in pounds sterling.

"The gold mattress, £10,500. The pearls, rubies, sapphires, jades and emeralds with which it was interwoven, £112,000. The jade lotus leaf ornament of which the leaves were green and the veins natural, £106,250. The emerald lotus flower, which weighed nearly 37 Chinese ounces, £93,750. The rope of pearls containing 420 large, 1,000 medium, and 4,500 small pearls, £1,500,000. Three court necklaces, £306,500. The chaplet of pearls on the head (one weighing 4 ounces), £1,350,000. The two jade watermelons placed by the feet (they had green rind, red fruit and white seeds), £275,000. The gem lotus root placed at the left was three sections long, and from the top sprouted green lotus leaves and a white flower with a black corolla, £125,000. Finally, on the body were laid 500 large pearls, 1,000 medium and 2,200 smaller, besides

2,200 sapphires, £228,750. A Manchu prince sent a gift of eight galloping horses and 18 Buddhist *lohan* made of jade, £100,000."

There is much more, which space and my conscience do not permit me

to include. In view of the above it is scarcely to be wondered that Chinese revolutions are frequently financed by the looting of a single newly found grave.

ALFRED BATSON.



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