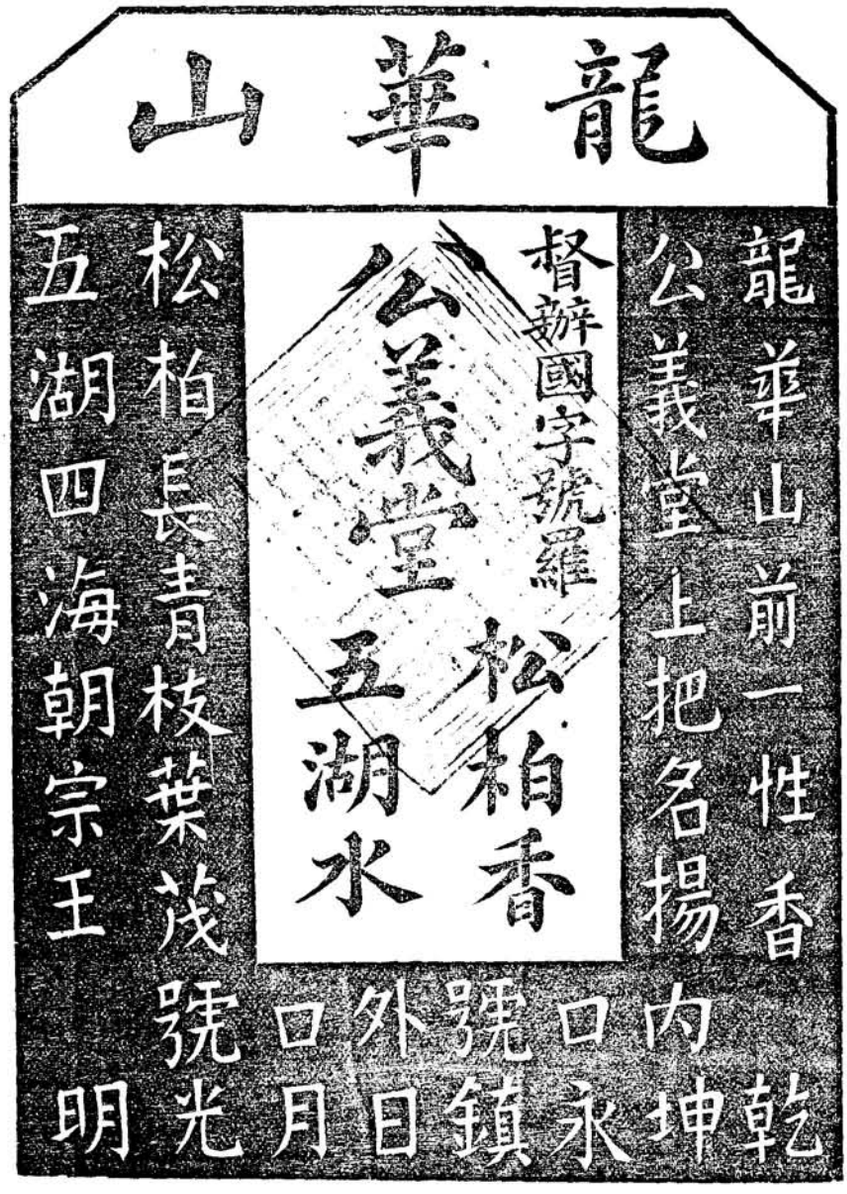
THE KOLAO 哥老 SECRET SOCIETY.—At the end of August two men were arrested by the Shanghai Police and brought before the Mixed Court charged with attempting to extort money from shopkeepers. So far the case was in no way unusual. The extraordinary feature of it was that, when arrested, one of the prisoners attempted to swallow some documents he had concealed on his person, and these turned out to be three tickets of membership in the well-known Kolao Secret Society. I availed myself of my position as Assessor to secure one of the tickets and the following is a description of it.



The material is linen and the stamp is a parallelogram measuring about 3' × 6', the top corners truncated. The upper segment, about ¾ inch deep, bears an inscription, black on a white ground, which I will designate A. There is a central parallelogram measuring 1½' × 4', also containing an inscription in black on a white ground (B). The remainder of the ticket consists of a strip an inch wide running round three sides of the central parallelogram; the right side I shall refer to as C, the left side as D and the portion at foot E.

A. Horizontally in large characters 龍華山, Lung-hua Shan. I have not been able to localise this hill, but it is probably in the Hukuang provinces.

B. In the centre of the upper portion written vertically in large characters, 公義堂, which might be translated Hall of Patriotism.

To the right of the upper portion in smaller characters, written vertically, 督辦國羅 Lo, controller of the section distinguished by the character Kuo. This does not form part of the original ticket but is affixed from a separate stamp.

To the right of the lower portion, in medium sized vertical characters, 松柏香 Perfume of fir and cypress.

To the left, similarly, 五湖水 Water of the Five Lakes.

On the upper portion of B is impressed obliquely a red seal bearing in seal-character the inscription 都統龍華 The Superintendent of Lung Hua.

C and D contain each two lines of a rhyming quatrain, written vertically in small characters.

C. 龍華山前一性香
公義堂上把名揚
D. 松柏長青枝葉茂
五湖四海朝宗王

(The 6th character in the first line 性 is a misprint for 炷)

Before the Lung-hua mountain set a stick of incense flame; within the Kung-yi Hall go win yourself an honoured name; the cypress and the fir o'erhead their leaves in green luxuriance spread; the five lakes and four seas one universal lord proclaim.

E Contains two lines written horizontally and may be divided into two sections, right and left.

Right 內口號 Inner password;
乾坤永鎮 Heaven and Earth keep watch continually.

Left 外口號 Outer password;
日月光明 The Sun and Moon shine clear.

It may be added that the Kolao Society resembles Freemasonry and is not essentially seditious. Its members have, however, so often used the organisation for evil purposes, that membership is forbidden by Government under severe penalties.

G. M. H. PLAYFAIR.

A FRENCH MILITARY SINOLOGUE.—In the 'Journal of a Staff officer in Paris during the events of 1870 and 1871' (London: Remington & Co., 1885) the Comte d'Herisson, the writer, prefaces his work by an extract from a document by Jules Favre containing the following passage, 'Gifted with a special aptitude for languages he [the Comte d'Herisson] spoke English perfectly and German with facility, not to mention Chinese, which he had rapidly acquired while serving with the brilliant expedition under General de Montauban [the march of the Allies to Peking].'

That the knowledge thus rapidly acquired was by no means so superficial as might be anticipated, is proved by an adventure recounted on page 251. The Comte, who was staff officer to General Trochu, was despatched on one occasion to his chief with the information that the army of the Loire hoped to be encamped in the Forest of Fontainebleau on December 6th. The envoy proposed to commit the information to paper