


Blue China

Old and New


By Marian
V. Dorsey.

THE love for fine old blue china is a love so old and enduring that we can scarcely reckon its beginning or imagine its extinction. It was known to the early Egyptians, the Persians, and the Chinese, and from these was passed on to Holland, England, and America when the port of Canton, the first in the Celestial Empire, was opened to trade by the Dutch East India Company late in the sixteenth century. There was a brief period, from about 1830 to within a very few years, when polychrome porcelains were suffered to eclipse it in popular estimation.

Once again, happily, it is not only emerging from its semi-obscurity, but so rapidly regaining its old-time favor that it bids fair to have no less a vogue than its early prototypes, the "Nankeen," the "blew and white Canton," and the Staffordshire ware; all of which were so dear, in turn, to our foremothers, on whose tables and pantry shelves the wooden trenchers and pewter platters gave way to the eye-pleasing azure crockery that came over seas.

Franklin loved the blue ware and sent quantities of it home to his family while he was in England, and Washington wrote to his friend and former aide-de-camp, Colonel Tench Tilghman, at Baltimore, where the ship *Pallas* was unloading a cargo of Nankin pottery in October, 1785, to buy him a lot of "Evening blue and white stone china cups and saucers; also blue and white stone china pint sneakers, as well as Wash Hand Guglets and Basons."

These pint "sneakers" were generous ale

or beer mugs, and the "guglets" no more nor less than small toilet pitchers.

Though a few of the early colonists had a piece or two of Delft, "blew and white ware" was scarce and not sold by Outery till 1737 and thereafter, this being mostly the English Delft; for we are told that the *Pallas* was the second ship to arrive in the United States from Canton.

Soon, however, many vessels were bringing the "blue Canton" into all our ports, much of it ordered by the colonial householders.

Until superseded by the cheaper Staffordshire ware it held sway and was, indeed, the model from which Thomas Turner adapted, in 1780, his blue-printed design known as the willow pattern, made first at the Caughley pottery, which was soon afterwards to be called the Salopian works.

The Chinese merchant from whom was bought the saucer here shown described it as depicting the pagoda of Buddha at the entrance of the gates of



THE STAFFORDSHIRE WILLOW PLATE.

Canton, put there to protect the city from evil spirits, it being usual to place such safeguards at the west and north entrances of cities; but the willow plate, the genesis of which is so apparent, though varying somewhat from the Canton in composition and detail, has always been said to illustrate the elopement of a princess.

On these willow plates that came over in such great numbers from the close of the Revolutionary War to about 1850, there is, as on their present-day reproductions made at the same old potteries, a pagoda shaded by a mulberry tree, while across an arched bridge, beneath an overhanging willow, the irate