

— PART 3 —

ABOUT THE TEXT



Contents of the Text

ALTHOUGH WRITTEN CIRCA 1858, THIS text was hand-copied and was not formally published for decades, therefore, there are several different versions. This translation uses a one-volume edition that was published in 1936. Here, I discuss the contents of this specific edition. In the next section I will discuss other editions further.

This edition of *Medical Cases from the Flower Charm Studio* is a collection of twenty-nine cases, most of them involving consecutive treatments. They range from one to fifteen treatments per case. Many are related to menstruation, pregnancy, miscarriage, and the postpartum period but this is not a gynecology casebook. There are also patients with vomiting, insomnia, diarrhea, palpitations, pain, stroke, etc. Some are critical cases involving malaria, summerheat, or warm disease.

These records give presenting symptoms, analysis, prescriptions, and modifications over a period of time. They frequently involve yīn and blood deficiency, liver issues, emotions, taxation, or spleen and middle jiāo dysfunction. Surprisingly for female patients, Doctor Gù rarely focused on blood stasis. Treatment was purely herbal, with self-care recommendations and occasional use of psychology.

She did not include acupuncture, moxibustion, bleeding, or cupping in any of these cases.

In this edition, the age or gender of the patient was not specified. Occasionally, Doctor Gù wrote that the patient was a child or an older person. In about half of the cases, the patient was certainly female, because reproductive disorders were involved, or the patient was named as Doctor Gù's mother or her aunt. While it is known that Doctor Gù treated males on occasion, none of the cases here hint that the patient was male. Therefore, I have assumed that all the patients were female and used feminine pronouns.

Dates of treatment were not given so it is hard to tell the interval between visits in many of the treatment series. However, in a few, there is some indication. For example, the text might mention a treatment that took place 'yesterday'. In the most critical case, she saw a patient more than once in the same day.

The Title of the Book: *Medical Cases from the Flower Charm Studio*

TRANSLATING 《花韻樓醫案》 Huāyùn Lóu Yī'àn into English presents some difficulty.

The last two characters (醫案 yī'àn) simply mean *medical cases*.

The first three characters are the name of the building where Doctor Gù wrote. It was common for authors to use the name of their workplace in the title of a book.⁵⁰

花 huā is a flower or blossom

韻 yùn has a number of meanings: agreement, accord; rhyme; attitude, manner, demeanor, charm.

⁵⁰ A famous example is 蒲松齡《聊齋誌異》 Liáozhāi Zhìyì by Pú Sōnglíng (1640-1715, Qīng). While the title is translated in different ways, its basic meaning is *Records of the Strange from the Idle-Time Studio*.

As a phrase, 花韻 huāyùn refers to the individual charming attributes of various types of flowers. For example, the four gentlemen of flowers⁵¹ are plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemum. They are often painted and mentioned in poetry. Each one is associated with a season and has its own characteristics.

- Plum blossoms (梅 méi) belong to winter. Since they defy cold weather, they symbolize perseverance.
- Orchids (蘭 lán) bloom in spring. Their flowers have light colors and a clean fragrance. They also grow in secluded places, so they represent modesty.
- While bamboo (竹 zhú) belongs to summer, it does not wither in winter. It is upright, but neither arrogant nor humble, and bends flexibly. Therefore, it represents an elegant person who is not constrained by society.
- Chrysanthemum (菊 jú) blooms in autumn. It is beautiful after the other flowers have withered so it does not compete with them. It is noble, calm, and unyielding.

A few other flower charms include:

- Narcissus (水仙 shuǐxiān) is tall, graceful, fragrant, beautiful, simple, and elegant.
- Lotus flowers (荷花 héhuā) are quiet, exquisitely beautiful, and elegant.
- Tree peonies (牡丹 mǔdān) are poised, stately, ornate, and elegant.

Doctor Gù was also a poet, so 韻 yùn may have carried the double meaning of both *rhyming*, and *charm*.

The third character, 樓 lóu, refers to a multi-story building. There is no appealing word for a multi-story building in English besides *tower*, but it is unlikely this structure was tall enough to be called a tower. It likely was the place

⁵¹ 花中四君子 huāzhōng sìjūnzǐ

where Doctor Gù wrote her medical cases and her poetry.⁵² Therefore, studio fits its function, even though *studio* is not a literal translation.

The *Flower Charm Studio* was probably a two-story outbuilding on the family property. Earlier generations might have named the building. As we saw, Doctor Gù's father was famous for growing plum blossoms.⁵³ Perhaps the plum flowers could be seen from the upper floor. Or maybe a flower garden surrounded the studio. One can imagine a library and writing desk upstairs. Doctor Gù might gaze at the flowers from the window while pondering a difficult case or a line of poetry. Perhaps Doctor Gù served tea to guests downstairs before checking their pulse. Or maybe she had poetry readings with her friends there. Of course, this is all speculation. We do not know who named the building, the reason for its name, or whether it was on her natal family's property or her husband's land.

Publishing History

HAND-WRITTEN COPIES OF *MEDICAL CASES FROM the Flower Charm Studio* were passed around for many years, but the book was not published in Doctor Gù's lifetime. In 1921, a local doctor, Zhāng Yuánruì,⁵⁴ sent a one-volume manuscript to Qiú Jíshēng (1873-1947). Qiú was an advocate of Chinese medicine and the founder of the Sānsān Medical Society (三三醫社). In 1936, he published *Flower Charm Studio* in his collection called the *Grand Compendium of Rare Medical Books* (Zhēnběn Yīshū Jíchéng).⁵⁵ This is the version of the text that is translated here. It was sourced from the twelfth volume of Qiú's *Grand Compendium*, which was published by the Shànghǎi World Publishing House. This version was scanned and made available by the Táiwān University Library.⁵⁶

⁵² Her book of poetry, now lost, was called *Huāyùnlóu Poetry Collection* (Huāyùnlóu Shījī) 《花韻樓詩集》.

⁵³ Elite males often cultivated flowers as a hobby. Flowers were not uniquely associated with women.

⁵⁴ 張元瑞 Zhāng Yuánruì was also known as 張玉田 Zhāng Yùtián.

⁵⁵ 裘吉生 《珍本醫書集成》

⁵⁶ 國立臺灣大學圖書館 Guólì Táiwān Dàxué Túshū Guǎn

There is no author's preface or date for the text in the *Grand Compendium* edition. The jicheng.tw webpage states that *Medical Cases from the Flower Charm Studio* was written in 1850, but Doctor Gù did not begin compiling her cases until 1853 and the project took a few years to complete.

In his Preface, Zhāng Yuánruì wrote that *Medical Cases from the Flower Charm Studio* was one volume. However, other editions have been located in a few rare books libraries and there are many differences between the versions:

- According to *Records of Famous Doctors in Wúzhōng* (Wúzhōng Míngyī Lù), Gù Déhuá's manuscript originally had four volumes but only one was published in the *Grand Compendium* edition. It says that a descendant named 顧為賢 Gù Wèixián has the other three volumes, but they are not available.
- There is a five-volume handwritten edition in The China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences Library, and Shànghǎi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine Library.⁵⁷ Since these are handwritten, there may be differences between them.
- An edition found in the Sūzhōu Municipal Hospital of Traditional Chinese Medicine Library⁵⁸ was published in 2023, edited by Ōuyáng, B. 歐陽八四, et al. This edition has six booklets (冊 cè); they are not called volumes (卷 juǎn). The first booklet has an author's preface, in which Doctor Gù tells her own story, portions of which are excerpted above. In this version, the cases often give the age of the patient and sometimes have more discussion of the case than the *Grand Compendium* edition. Many of the cases involve malaria, summerheat, and warm disease. The six-booklet edition also has a one-volume *Supplement to Medical Cases from the Flower Charm Studio*.⁵⁹ Its contents are quite similar to the one volume text found in the *Grand Compendium of Rare Medical Books* that was translated here.

⁵⁷ 中國中醫科學院圖書館 Zhōngguó Zhōngyī Kēxuéyuàn Túshū Guǎn, 上海中醫藥大學圖書館 Shànghǎi Zhōng Yīyào Dàxué Túshū Guǎn.

⁵⁸ 蘇州市中醫醫院圖書館 Sūzhōu Shì Zhōngyī Yīyuàn Túshū Guǎn.

⁵⁹ 《花韻樓醫案補遺》 Huāyùnlóu Yī'àn Bùyí

The Publisher

裘吉生 Qiú Jíshēng (1873-1947) was also known as 裘慶元 Qiú Qīngyuán. He was from Shàoxīng in Zhèjiāng province. When he was young, Qiú studied medicine to help himself recover from tuberculosis. He was able to cure himself after others had said it was a hopeless case.

Qiú became a revolutionary and worked to end the Qīng dynasty. For a while, he was wanted for his anti-Qīng activities.

In 1923, Qiú moved to Hángzhōu. There, he established the Sānsān Medical Society (三三醫社) and published the *Sānsān Medical Journal* (三三醫報). At the time, Western medicine was gaining in popularity and many intellectuals wanted to abolish Chinese medicine. Qiú wrote:

醫書乃活人之書，何忍令其湮沒，何可令其秘而不傳。

Medical books are books for the living. How can we bear to let them become lost, and how can we keep them like secrets, failing to pass them on?!

He published advertisements and asked members of his medical society to contribute rare books. Qiú obtained more than a thousand texts from all over China. He selected from them and compiled his *Grand Compendium*. Many or most of the ninety books in this collection would have otherwise been lost. *Medical Cases from the Flower Charm Studio* is found in the twelfth volume. The whole collection was republished in 2016.

Qiú also published many other books and was involved in quite a few other endeavors, not all related to medicine.

I did not discover the existence of the six-booklet edition until this translation was nearly complete. I did read through much of it, and, as I said, took much of the biographical information regarding Gù Déhuá from her preface found in that edition. I chose not to translate further cases or material from the larger edition as I felt that this earlier publication gave a good representation of Doctor Gù's thinking and the variety of conditions that she treated. Perhaps someday the larger edition will be translated and published in English. It is also

my hope that more works written by historical female doctors will be located and translated so that we can have access to their stories, knowledge, and experience.

4. 張 ZHĀNG (RETENTION OF LOCHIA, FEVER)

新產兩朝，瘀不下行，發熱神蒙，肢麻汗多，脈芤舌紅。酷暑外迫，陰氣鬱冒，血隨氣逆，時有昏暈，變險可危。急扶產母端坐椅中，敞軒牕以湘簾護風，切勿聽信嫗輩，膠執吃熱苦草湯也。急囑，急囑。

Two mornings after giving birth, blood stasis failed to move downward. She was feverish,¹⁰² with confused shén, numb limbs, profuse sweating, scallion-stalk pulse, and red tongue. Intense summerheat forced its way in from the outside, constraining and encroaching upon yīn qì, resulting in dizziness. Blood followed qì and counterflowed, making her confused and dizzy at times. This was becoming dangerous. I quickly helped the new mother sit upright in a chair. I opened the windows, using a bamboo curtain to protect her from wind. I absolutely did not believe the old women who wanted to stubbornly force her to drink soups made with hot bitter herbs. I urgently and emphatically advised them [to follow my advice]!

NOTES: It is important for lochia (惡露 èlù, literally, loathsome dew) to flow freely after giving birth. Lochia is the postpartum discharge from the uterus, similar to menstrual flow but with more mucus in it. If lochia does not flow, it could bring future health problems. Fù Qīngzhǔ Nǚkē¹⁰³ says:

¹⁰² Wiseman and Yè translate 發熱 as effusing heat.

¹⁰³ Fù Shān. *Fù Qīngzhǔ's Gynecology* (Fù Qīngzhǔ Nǚkē) 傅山《傳青主女科》(1673, Qīng).

惡露即繫裹兒汚血，產時惡露隨下，則腹不痛而產自安。若腹欠溫暖，或傷冷物，以致惡露凝塊，日久不散，則虛症百出。

Lochia means the foul blood bound around the child. When lochia follows the child down at the time of birth, there will be no abdominal pain, and the laboring woman will be at ease without further intervention. If the abdomen lacks warmth or is damaged by cold food, lochia will congeal into clots. When it does not disperse after many days, a hundred deficiency conditions can appear.

Along with the retention of lochia, Ms. Zhāng was feverish and obviously in serious condition. The situation was made worse by the hot and humid weather.

In China at the time, postpartum practices, called *sitting out the month* (坐月子 zuòyuèzǐ), varied from region to region and family to family, but the need for these practices was universal. Certain foods were mandatory for a new mother. Wind and cold were to be avoided at all costs. Doctor Gù felt strongly that some of these practices were harmful for Ms. Zhāng. She needed to sit upright to help the blood and lochia flow downward. The screens would protect her from wind, but she still needed fresh air. Since she was feverish, she should not drink the soups with hot herbs.

At the time this text was written, modern (generally meaning Western) ideas had already started to affect healthcare. For example, Wáng Qīngrèn (1763-1831) published his criticism of Chinese medicine, *Yílín Gǎicuò*,¹⁰⁴ in 1830. Perhaps this modernization trend influenced Doctor Gù to open the windows and ignore some of the traditional postpartum practices.

¹⁰⁴ Wáng Qīngrèn. *Correcting the Errors in Medicine* (Yílín Gǎicuò) 王清任《醫林改錯》(1830, Qīng).

細生地 shēngdì	thin
廣鬱金 guǎngyùjīn	
懷牛膝 huáiniúxī	
歸身 dāngguīshēn	
川貝母 chuānbèimǔ	
白蒺藜 báijílí	
西琥珀 xī hǔpò	western
赤芍 chisháo	
丹皮 mǔdānpí	
白薇 báiwēi	
鮮藕肉 ǒuròu	fresh
童便 tóngbiàn (child's urine)	

NOTES: 童便 tóngbiàn (child's urine) is the urine of a boy who is ten years old or younger. It is salty and cold in nature. Child's urine nourishes yīn, descends fire, cools blood, and scatters stasis. In the past it was used to treat cough, vomiting blood, nosebleeds, postpartum dizziness, and so forth. The best quality is the first urine of the day taken on the morning of the day before the full moon. It is unlikely that we would use it today!

張（又診）ZHĀNG (NEXT ENCOUNTER)

熱退神清，氣火平降，瘀亦下行，兩臂尚麻，少腹痠楚。仍從養血通瘀，即是治風先治血之意也。

The fever abated and her shén cleared. Qì and fire calmed and descended. Her stasis also moved downward. Both arms were still numb, and her lower abdomen ached. I continued nourishing blood and freeing stasis. This is the idea of treating wind by first treating blood.

NOTES: The principle of “treating wind by first treating blood” has been used for dermatology and bì-obstruction¹⁰⁵ for a long time. Here, Doctor Gù is applying it to treat numbness. This saying goes back at least as far as the Southern Sòng dynasty when Fùrén Dàquán Lángfāng¹⁰⁶ was published:

蓋謂船漏水入，體漏風傷。古人有云：醫風先醫血，血行風自滅是也。治之先宜養血，然後驅風，無不愈者。

Water enters a leaky boat as wind damages a leaky body. The ancients said: To treat wind, first treat blood; when blood moves, the wind will extinguish itself. To treat it, one should first nourish blood, then drive out the wind. Everyone will recover, without exception.

When blood fills the vessels, there is no empty space for wind to move; the heaviness of blood weighs down and stabilizes the lightness of wind. Doctor Gù also used this principle for a lung condition in case 25.

細生地 shēngdì	thin
淨歸身 dāngguīshēn	clean
芫蔚子 chōngwèizǐ	
赤芍 chìsháo	
炒山藥 shānyào	stir-fried
白蒺藜 báijílí	
懷牛膝 huáiniúxī	
丹皮 mǔdānpí	
白薇 báiwēi	
楂炭 shānzhā	charred
琥珀 hǔpò	

¹⁰⁵ Wiseman and Yè translate 痺 as impediment.

¹⁰⁶ Chén Zímíng, *Great Collection of Good Formulae for Women* (Fùrén Dàquán Liángfāng) 陳自明《婦人大全良方》(1237, Southern Sòng).

11. 李 Lǐ (SUMMERHEAT WIND DAMP DYSENTERY)

交秋肅降，暑風濕熱，壅迫二腸，發為赤白二痢。起經四月，先有寒熱，脘腹大痛，汗泄如注，見谷漾漾欲嘔。邪勢壅遏三焦，高年深恐不能支持。經云：病有急當救里救表者。今里重表輕，當從疏為急。每見里滯充斥者，誤用敗毒散，多變噤口。

At the beginning of autumn's seasonal cleansing and downbearing, summerheat, wind, damp, and heat obstructed and forced their way into her two intestines; she had episodes of both red and white dysentery. This started four months ago, first with sensations of cold and heat, intense pain in the epigastrium and abdomen, and sweat pouring out. The sight of food roiled her stomach and made her want to vomit. These evil influences obstructed and suppressed her three jiāo. She was older, so we were deeply concerned that she could not hold out. The Classic says. "In some acute diseases, one must rescue the interior; in others, one must rescue the exterior." Here, the interior was serious while the exterior was mild. We should urgently course [the interior]. Every time someone sees stagnation flooding the interior and mistakenly uses Bàidú Sǎn (Toxin-Vanquishing Powder), many of these patients will become silent [die].

NOTES: "Autumn's cleansing and downbearing": The qì of autumn moves downward, like tree sap descending into the roots. Doctor Gù associated the descent of evils into the intestines with the movement of seasonal qì.

"Her two intestines": Red dysentery correlates with the small intestine because blood is red, the color of the fire phase. The heart governs blood and is paired with the small intestine, both fire organs. White dysentery has a similar relationship with metal. The white color refers to pus, mucus, or phlegm in the stool.

“In some acute diseases, one must rescue the interior; in others, one must rescue the exterior” is not a direct quotation, but the idea comes from *Shānghán Lùn*.¹²⁷

Bàidú Sǎn (Toxin-Vanquishing Powder) may refer to several formulae. The ingredients and functions for two of the formulae in this family are listed in the formula appendix. 人參敗毒散 *Rénshēn Bàidú Sǎn* is the most well-known, but it is for treating cold conditions. In fact, all these formulae are fairly warming. That certainly does not seem right for this patient. Were people misusing Bàidú Sǎn formulae this badly? Or perhaps, she was criticizing a colleague but did not want to identify them. In any case, Doctor Gù's point is that internal issues seemed more important. The patient was older. She was sweating and suffering diarrhea. She was also nauseated, so she was not drinking or eating much. Doctor Gù felt they needed to focus on internal obstruction.

川朴 hòupò	五分 five fēn	from Sīchuān
枳實 zhǐshí	七分 seven fēn	
丹皮 mǔdānpí	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
赤芍 chìsháo	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
川連 huánglián	四分 four fēn	from Sīchuān
霍梗 huòxiāng stems	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
青蒿 qīnghāo	一錢 one qián	
青皮 qīngpí	一錢 one qián	
秦艽 qínjiāo	一錢 one qián	
紅曲 hóngqū	三錢 three qián	
楂炭末 shānzhā	七分 seven fēn	charred, powder

¹²⁷ Zhāng Zhòngjǐng. *Discussion of Cold Damage* (*Shānghán Lùn*) 張仲景《傷寒論》 (Eastern Hàn).

李（又診） Lǐ (NEXT ENCOUNTER)

痛減痢稀。伏邪尚盛，肝木乘胃虛上逆，為噁心悸惕，表熱退淨，略可安穀。病雖轉機，尚非坦途也。

The pain decreased and the dysentery became watery. Deep-lying evils were still vigorous. Liver wood took advantage of stomach deficiency, making it counterflow upward, so it became nausea and palpitations. Her exterior heat had completely abated. She could eat a little without vomiting. Even though the disease had taken a turn for the better, she still was not on the road to recovery.

人參鬚 rénshēnxū	五分 five fēn	
川朴 hòupò	七分 seven fēn	from Sīchuān
藿梗 huòxiāng stems	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
赤芍 chisháo	一錢 one qián	
淡吳萸 wúzhūyú	二分 two fēn	bland
川連 huánglián	五分 five fēn	from Sīchuān
楂炭末 shānzhā	一錢 one qián	charred, powder
青皮 qīngpí	五分 five fēn	
神麴 shénqū	三錢 three qián	
砂仁末 shārén	五分 five fēn	powder
鮮佛手 fóshǒu	一錢五分 1.5 qián	fresh

李（又診） Lǐ (NEXT ENCOUNTER)

表熱退淨，痛減過半，痢稀挾糞，噁心止而穀食加，洵稱佳兆。但痢傷腎陰，腎為胃關，舌心光紅，高年患痢，液涸生糜之風險，務宜預防。

The exterior heat had abated completely. Her pain had decreased by more than half. The watery dysentery now contained [some solid] stool. Her nausea stopped and her food intake increased. This was really a good omen. However, the dysentery had damaged kidney yīn. The kidneys are the gate of the stomach. The center of her tongue was bare and red. She suffered dysentery in her later years, and fluids were desiccated. There was the risk of engendering erosions [a type of ulcer in the mouth]. I strived to prevent this.

NOTE: “The kidneys are the gate of the stomach” comes from Sùwèn, chapter 61.¹²⁸ Here, Doctor Gù was connecting kidney yīn deficiency with the desiccated fluids of the stomach as reflected by the bare center of the tongue, the area that corresponds to the middle jiāo.

¹²⁸ Anonymous. *Elementary Questions* (Sùwèn, Shuǐrè Xué Lùn) 《素問水熱穴論》 (Pre-Hàn and Hàn).

人參 rénshēn	七分 seven fēn	
藿梗 huòxiāng stems	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
烏梅炭 wūméi	四分 four fēn	charred
炒米仁 yìyǐrén	三錢 three qián	stir-fried
川連 huánglián	三分 three fēn	from Sichuān
青皮 qīngpí	五分 five fēn	
焦白芍 báisháo	一錢五分 1.5 qián	burnt
炒楂炭 shānzhā	三錢 three qián	stir-fried charred
阿膠 ējiāo	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
薺菜花 jìcàihuā	三錢 three qián	
生甘草 gāncǎo	三分 three fēn	unprocessed

李（又診） Lǐ (NEXT ENCOUNTER)

病交一候，痢已全止。高年氣陰兩虧之體，邪達迅速，誠大幸也。納穀未旺，神脈尚弱，擬益氣生津以恢復之。

After being sick for five days, the dysentery had completely stopped. Her elderly body was depleted of both qì and yīn. It was quite fortunate that the evils were quickly thrust out. Her food intake was not optimal and her shén and pulse were still weak. I planned to boost qì and engender fluids to restore her health.

人參鬚 rénshēnxū	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
製首烏 héshǒuwū	四錢 four qián	processed
焦六曲 liùqū (shénqū)	三錢 three qián	burnt
歸身 dāngguīshēn	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
綿黃耆 huángqí	一錢五分 1.5 qián	a variant from Shānxī
五味子 wǔwèizǐ	五分 five fēn	
炒苡仁 yǐrén	三錢 three qián	stir-fried
白芍 báisháo	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
阿膠 ējiāo	一錢五分 1.5 qián	
薺菜花 jìcàihuā	三錢 three qián	
棗仁 zǎorén	三錢 three qián	