

Chinese Poor Folk-- Wages Seven Cents a Day

A rich Chinaman wears silk, a poor one cotton. Since the proportion of rich to poor is about one in a thousand, it follows that the growth and manufacture of cotton are vital necessities. It is thought that cotton culture was begun in the thirteenth century, the plant coming in from India, where it has been known for 2,000 years. In spite of its unequalled agriculture, China does not raise cotton for export, nor in fact enough for its own needs. In the growth and manufacture of it, as in everything else, the aim is not, as in these United States, save hand labor, but to use as much of it as possible. There are no power-gins for taking out the seed. Instead, the Chinese use the little hand-gins very like those still to be found in the homespun regions of the Appalachian chain. The gin is nothing more than a couple of small wooden rollers, made fast in uprights affixed to a bench. They are turned by a wooden crank, revolve one against the other and free the cotton of seed by drawing the lint through the narrow space between. The lint is fed to them by hand and it takes a long and steady day's work to gin five pounds of lint, which means twenty pounds of cotton in the seed.

The cotton is carded simultaneously with the ginning. A second man stands at the end of the bench beating the clean cotton with the tee-kung, or earth bow, into big, flaky "bats." These bats the women spin in various ways. Sometimes they use the



CARDING COTTON IN A CHINESE HOME.

of transportation and travel over these eighty miles that is engrossing the experts of Europe, America and Japan. Hannibal and Napoleon crossed the Alps, but I doubt if that was a feat which required better engineering or more endurance than would be required to transport an army from Tien Tsin to Peking during the months of

looked, but I know I was the most unattractive bridegroom that ever looked into a mirror. We arrived at Tien Tsin, however, after four days and were properly married in the presence of the consul.

The Journey by Dirt Road.

The Chinese have a saying that "men may travel by dirt road or by water road, but the water road is much the preferable." If what we have just described is the best method of travel in China any one can imagine the less desirable methods. However, to imagine them a little experience is necessary.

One of the Chinese ministers in Washington a few years ago in speaking of the various methods of travel said: "Yes, your floating palaces and Pullman cars are all right for rapid transit, but for real solid comfort give me a Peking cart."

The Peking cart is like a large Saratoga trunk on two wheels. The shafts extend out behind a foot and a half and form a platform on which to strap one's baggage. As the mule trots the cart is given a rocking motion backward and forward similar to the motion one gets in riding a camel. The cart is without springs and the wheels are made sufficiently strong to carry the weight if they were without tires. The tires are put on in sections eighteen inches in length and are only to keep the wheels from being worn out on the ground. Add to this the fact that the Chinese never "work on the roads," but that a road is wherever the carts happen to drive, and you get some idea of the "solid comfort of a Chinese cart." The passenger is bumped up and down until he wishes his brain were resting upon a patent air cushion; he is bumped backward and forward and from side to side until, if he is not careful, his head will be pounded into

and one's shoes are covered with a green mould over night, when they are compelled to carry with them their bedding and drag after them all the accoutrements of an army and be prepared to resist the attacks of a hostile army strongly entrenched and accustomed to all the surrounding conditions. Those who criticize the allied troops for saying it is impossible to go to Peking before September do not know the existing conditions in north China.

To Peking by Railroad.

The third method of going to Peking from Tien Tsin is by railroad. By rail we are able to make the trip in from three to four hours, with all the comforts attached to railroad traveling. Second class the fare is 75 cents, first class twice that amount, and in the postal car, which corresponds to our parlor or sleeping cars, the fare is \$2.75. And yet this is the method the conservative Chinese are fighting as compared with the other two I have just named. Their practice, however, is better than their theory, for when they wish to go from one place to the other they go by train and not by boat or cart, and the railroad as a consequence, in spite of all the cheating done, has been paying some 20 to 30 per cent on the investment.

Of course under the present conditions it is unnecessary to speak of this as one of the present methods, for the railroad is more or less destroyed, and will probably not be used until peace is restored and the railroad repaired. It is folly to talk about the Chinese having burned the large bridge at Yang Tsun, because it is made of iron and could not be burned. A few of the crosses might be burned, but otherwise it is fireproof. The smaller bridges over small streams and places where streams are allowed to pass



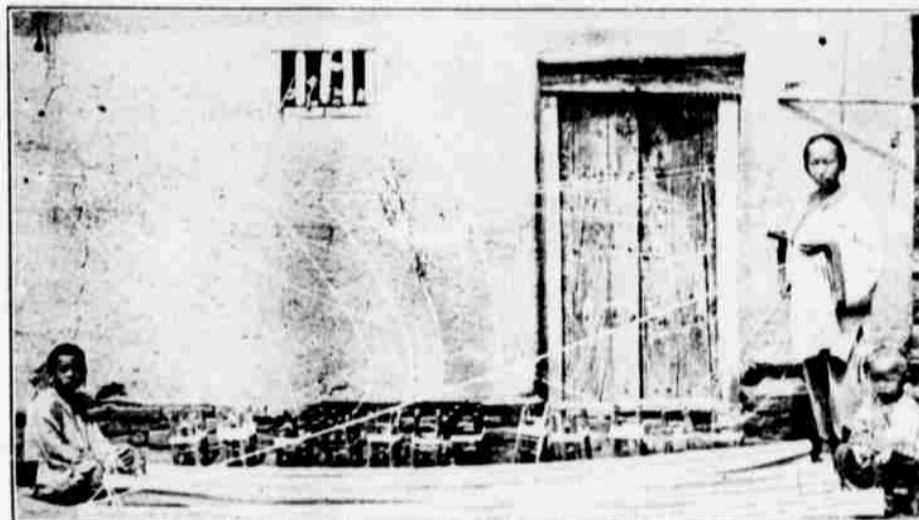
CHINESE MEN WHO EARN SEVEN CENTS A DAY.

July and August and a part of September. Winter's cold stimulates to greater exertion; summer's heat only enervates. Climbing mountains in winter fills men's blood with fire, wading through mud and water and miasmatic swamps in the heat of summer fills men's blood with malaria and saps away their lives. Food can be kept for a whole army in the cold of the Alps, but it soon spoils on an August day in the heat of a Chinese plain.

The trip from Tien Tsin to Peking under ordinary circumstances may be made in three ways—first, by boat; second, by dirt road; third, by railroad—and, as we have made the trip in all three ways and at all seasons of the year, a description of how we made it may not prove uninteresting.

The Trip by Boat.

An American in Peking who wishes to be married must either import the United States consul from Tien Tsin or himself go to Tien Tsin to be married. We chose the latter method and started from Tung Chou on a bright day in the early part of June. It was in the evening when we weighed anchor, which we did by unhooking the anchor from the shore, the women of the party in one boat and the men in another. The wind was not quite fair and so our boatmen concluded to row rather than hoist the sails. We traveled until about 10 o'clock, when we dropped anchor by hooking ourselves to the bank out in the open country. The next morning the wind was blowing so strong as to make it almost impossible to travel, but we insisted upon moving and offered extra money for extra work. About 10 o'clock, however, the wind was so strong as to make it impossible for us to round a particularly sharp curve and we were blown against the bank, where we remained three days and nights, the wind blowing a gale and the air filled with clouds of dust so that we could not see a distance of a hundred feet. We shut our boat up tight and concluded to wait for the storm to pass over. All day it blew and the boats being full of cracks and holes the dust and dirt sifted in on us from every side. We went to bed and in the morning when we awoke we could not open our eyes; the eyelids were glued together with mud. I cannot tell how my wife



SHOWING HOW A CHINESE WOMAN USES HER DISTAFF.

old-fashioned spinning wheel. Much oftener it is something approximating the ancient distaff. The spinner twirls it steadily, walking around and around as she twirls, thus winding the lengthening thread into very long hanks. If it is spun and run into broaches, or quilts, they are often reeled with a hand reel. Chinese industry indeed is as inveterate as Chinese economy. Women usually work at such reeling while they stand at gossip in the alleyways between their houses. If there is no reel handy they will be stitching upon a shoe sole, always a salable article. Bare feet are unknown in China. Even a beggar wears shoes, though he may have no other clothing than the head bowl, which serves both as a hat and to hold out when there is a chance of alms.

Nothing Wasted in China.

Nothing is wasted in China. Even grass and wheat roots are pulled up, washed, dried and used for fuel. Scraps of paper and cloth are pasted together to make the in-soles of shoes. Bits of wood are glued to build up either a board or a post. Women spinners and straw-plaiters earn 2 cents a day. The spinning, though, is most commonly like the weaving at the hand looms, only a part of unpaid household labor. Machine-made cloth and thread have of late come to bear heavily upon the cotton workers, but that fact is in a degree offset by the growing importation of raw cotton. Still some of the light yellow hand-made fabric known the world over as nankeen, from the city of export, Nankin, is shipped abroad. It is made from a peculiar yellow staple cotton, hence not dyed. The same yellow staple cotton is grown and manufactured by Arcadians in Louisiana, but the fabric is so coarse it does not compete with the Chinese one.

Five dollars a year will clothe a Chinese husband and wife something more than decently. Underwear is unknown, so is fitting a garment. The only measures taken are from the hip to the ground and from the middle of the breast to the finger tips. Fashions do not change. Winter garments and bedding are wadded with cotton. Once a year they must be ripped apart and washed, padding and all.

How needful is economy may be judged from a few figures. Unskilled laborers are paid upon an average 7 cents a day.

Masons, carpenters and stonecutters, here as elsewhere the aristocracy of labor, get from 25 to 30 cents a day. Work begins at sunrise and keeps up until dark, notwithstanding all which strikes are virtually unknown, and the Chinese laborer is the happiest and most contented in all the world.

Three Routes to Peking

(Copyright, 1900, by I. T. Headland.)
There are no eighty miles in the world today which are attracting so much attention as the eighty miles of space between Tien Tsin and Peking and it is the problem



SPINNING BY MISSION WOMEN IN CHINA.

under the railroad during the rainy season might easily be burned if they could get other fuel to pile up around them. But this is not an easy matter in a country where one may walk miles without finding a piece of wood large enough for a walking stick. However, it is certain that both the railroad and some of the bridges are destroyed and that when the allies wish to go to Peking they will have to go by dirt road, which is the worst of bad methods of travel in China.

as though it had come in contact with John L. Somebody's strong right arm.

For three days you must bump over these roads, breathing in the clouds of alkali dust which is kicked up by your two mules, or perhaps by the mules of a cart or two just ahead of you, so that when you come into the inn you are covered from head to foot with dust in a way that would make a coal digger, as compared with yourself, a respectable looking guest.

There are two other methods of making the trip from Tien Tsin to Peking by dirt road. The one is by horse, mule or donkey back and the other is afoot. However, I have known members of our university in Peking who, when going from the city to the western hills on horseback, had to dismount, strip and tie their clothing to their horse's head and swim with their horse across the roads which had turned into rivers. In such a condition of affairs it is easy to understand what would be the difficulties of making a trip to Peking in the heat of August by soldiers who are unaccustomed to the climate, where a drenching rain comes up in half an hour

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