

Canton, Metropolis of China, and Its Future



CHINESE DANDY AT HIS MIRROR.

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CANTON, China, Jan. 3.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Canton is the biggest city of the Asiatic continent. It is the industrial center of this side of the globe, and the day may come when it will surpass any city of the world in size. London has almost reached its maximum; New York is in its prime, but Canton, which is older than either, seems to be at its very beginning, for it has been born again. Throughout the ages it has grown into a city of 2,500,000 through a business of wheelbarrows, boats and manual work. It is now to have steam, electricity and all labor-saving inventions. It is to be the end of the great trunk line originated by the late Calvin S. Brice and other Americans which shall cross China from Peking to Hankow and thence come here, tapping the industries of hundreds of millions.

The Canton of today has not a railroad of any kind. In the future it will have as many tracks as Chicago, and the cars will shoot out from here to Tonking, Yunnan, Hurmah and all parts of the Chinese empire. It has thousands of little factories now. In the future it will have more steam mills than Philadelphia, more foundries than Pittsburg and more cotton mills than Massachusetts.

I have spent many weeks in Canton during my several visits to Asia. The immensity of the city grows upon me. It is a vast hive in which every human bee is at work. Chicago covers about the whole of Cook county. Canton proper is surrounded by walls only six miles in circumference. The walls are thirty feet high and are battered and worn. They now embrace only the older parts of the city. Modern Canton has long since overflowed them, and it now extends for miles up and down the Pearl river. It covers the banks, and it has even gone out and built houses on the water itself.

From the wharves I went on into the city. I moved slowly, for the streets were crowded with almond-eyed humanity, and I was jostled at every step. Now and then I stopped in a store to rest, and as I did so made notes of my surroundings that I might give you an idea of a pure Chinese city. I shall try to do it by comparing Canton with Chicago.

Canton is bigger than our great city on Lake Michigan, and it could not be more different if it were situated in the planet of Mars. The town is made up of one and two-story houses built along streets so narrow that you can often stand in the center and reach both walls by stretching out your hands. They are so narrow that two wheelbarrows can hardly pass, and when two sedan chairs meet one has to hug the walls to let the other go by. A Chicago dray could not get through them, and a big dry goods box carried on a pole by two coolies crowds the passersby to the wall.

The Chicago streets are well paved. So are those of Canton, but the pavements here are of flagstones worn smooth by the tramp, tramp, tramp of millions of bare feet through many generations. The streets are, in fact, little alleys paved with stones, so little that the only beasts of burden within them are men.

Suppose you could take out of Chicago every street car, every dray and wagon, buggy and cab; suppose you could remove the horses, the buses and the automobiles and take away the elevated roads and let the only means of conveyance be shank's mare and box-like sedan chairs two feet wide, slung between poles carried on the shoulders of men. Then you have the rapid transport of Canton.

Chinese Water Hats.

The boat population here is enormous. There are more people living on the water at Canton than at any single place in the world. You could take the floating population of Venice and lose it in the floating population of this city. China has more boats than all the rest of the world put together and Canton has more than any other

part of China. There are hundreds of thousands of people here who are born, live and die upon boats. There are thousands of babies who are always within six inches of drowning. I have visited many of the boat homes sculling along from one little floating house to another, creating consternation among both parents and children by pointing my camera at them. On some of the boats babies were playing, on some they were squalling and on some taking a meal from their mothers. Many of the small children had barrels or floats of wood tied to their backs.

These are life preservers to keep them from sinking when they fall in the water. Other little ones were tied by ropes to the boats, but as a rule the children sprawled about free. They dodged this way and that as my boat moved toward them, diving down into the hold or hiding behind a sail or mast to keep out of the way of the camera. This morning I pointed the instrument at four little boys playing on the wharf. Each had a barrel on his back. I was about to press the button when one of them spied me and gave a yell, whereupon the quartet scampered away crying, their barrels flying on behind them as they ran.

I find the Chinese here decidedly object to being photographed. When Hubbard T. Smith was in charge of our consulate he offered his chair bearers 20 cents apiece if they would hold him up in the consular chair while he had a photograph taken. They indignantly refused, one of them asking Hub Smith whether he thought him such a fool as to stand in that picture all the rest of his life lifting up the American consul for 20 cents. I had a similar photograph made the other day. It cost me \$1.

To carry out the illusion you must cut down Chicago's big buildings to ridge-roofed structures of blue brick of one and two stories, with here and there a pawnbroker's shop six or seven stories high rising above them. The buildings must be close to the streets and their overhanging roofs must almost shut out the sun. In the swell shopping sections you must roof the space between with oyster shells, shutting out the glare and giving an opalescent light to the crowd below.

Gorgeous Store Signs.

You would have to change all the signs. We Americans do not know what fine business signs are. If I could have one hundredth part of the gold which is plastered over such signs in Canton my prospective grandchildren might ride in their carriages. The signs are wonderfully carved. They are inlaid with gold leaf or enameled in brilliant colors, so that you see a blaze of red, white, green and gold as you look through the streets. Each sign is a board a foot or more wide and from four to ten feet long, upon which is cut the name of the firm doing business. Some advertise the excellence of the store within and others bear such names as "Lucky Profits," "Good Fortune" and "Cheap John."

Suppose we take one of Chicago's chief

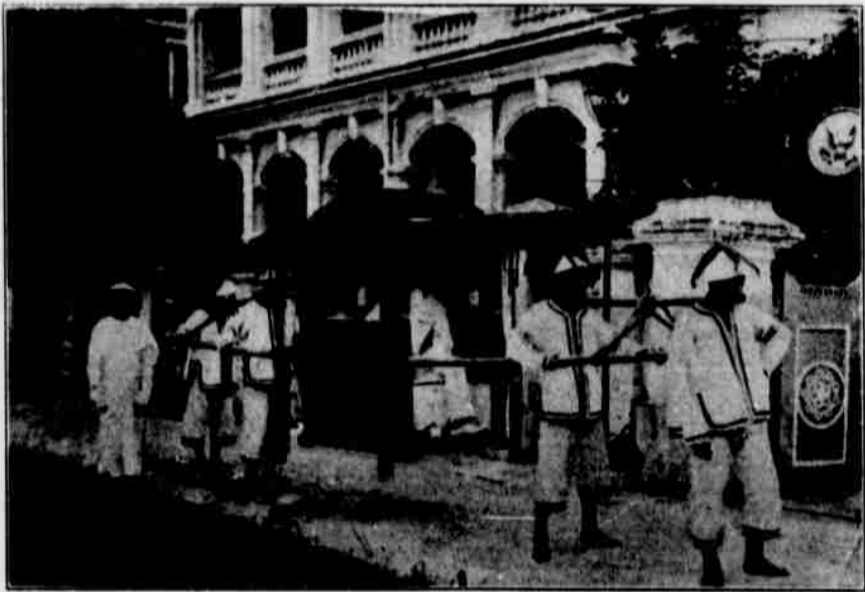


RICE MILL IN CANTON DRIVEN BY HUMAN MUSCLE.

ments. We ride for a mile through lines of silversmiths who work and sell side by side, and go by block after block devoted to embroidery and on into streets where there are nothing but pipes and tobacco.

You may have the idea that all the Chinese are poor and that most of them go barefooted. Come with me through one of the shoe streets of Canton. We shall visit hundreds of stores which sell nothing else. There are enough shoes in one of these streets to shoe all the girls of Chicago, but if the said girls came here to be fitted they would have to buy men's shoes, and not women's. This would be the case with any American girl, old or young, big or little. The Chinese have naturally very small feet. They are among nature's aristocrats as far as delicacy of form is concerned, and the girls who work in the fields have feet surpassing those of Venus in beauty. The ladies' shoes are so little that the smallest would hardly hold a Yankee girl's flat, much less her foot. They are made of the finest of satin and are often embroidered in gold.

The men's shoes are not unlike slippers with heavy soles. The commonest kinds are of black satin, with soles of white wood or cloth, half an inch thick. For full dress the most delicate reds and sky blues are worn by both men and women. The shoes have no strings and do not lace or button.



AMERICAN CONSUL AT CANTON IN HIS SEDAN CHAIR.

business streets and with the magic wand of the fairy make it Chinese. We have brought the walls close together; the plate glass windows have all disappeared; the big department stores have vanished and the clerks and merchants have multiplied a thousandfold. The complexions of the people have turned yellow; every man wears a pigtail, slant eyes and long gown and the yellow-faced women hobble along on small feet. The five-foot streets are lined with booth-like openings, each about fifteen feet wide, separated from one another by walls of blue brick. Each of the booths is a store and every one is filled with strange merchandise. Some have glass showcases at the front and all have counters. There are scores of bookkeepers and clerks, many of the latter bare to the waist. There are proprietors dressed in fine silks and purchasers of all classes embracing the vast variety of the Chinese world of today.

How Business is Classified.

Notice how business is classified as you push your way through the city, your chair-bearers shouting to the people to get out of the way. Here is an alley walled with furniture stores. There is one in which they sell nothing but silks, and on that side street is a section devoted to jade stones, earrings, bracelets and other such orna-

and blood of its citizens. In some mills I found fifty men going up and down like a dog in a churn, moving a belt communicating with a buzz saw. You would think steam would be cheaper. It is not. Wages are so low that the whole fifty do not earn more than \$5 a day, and the fuel for the steam and the wear and tear of the machinery would cost more than that. These human machines need no repairs. If a man gets sick he is dropped and another takes his place.

In this same connection many of the boats on the Pearl river are run by human weight. The paddle wheels at the stern are moved by men who walk up and down on the spokes of connecting wheels inside the boat, thus forcing the great wheel around and moving the boat through the water. Many foreigners have house boats operated in this way. Now and then they take the men from the wheels and harness them to a long rope which is tied to the mast of the boat, and, like so many horses or mules, they pull it along from the banks.

Fond of Jewelry.

But let us go into one of the jewelry sections. The Chinese are fond of fine things. They have luxurious tastes. The richer of them delight in silver plate and they wear jewelry of pure gold. The Chinese swell, woman or man, will have nothing but gold 22 karats fine. The women are decked with earrings, bracelets and anklets, and the children of the well-to-do wear many rings. Silver drinking cups are common. Most of the ladies use silver hairpins, and the gentlemen drink their wine out of silver cups. You can buy silver toilet articles everywhere. There are combs and brushes, toothpicks and earpicks, tongue scrapers and scratch-your-backs. There are silver saucers for cups of fine china and carved tea sets of solid silver. Many jewels are sold. The Chinese like diamonds and pearls. They are fond of jade, an opalescent stone, which is so popular that there are whole streets of jade stores. They also like coral, using it in different shapes. Coral beads are strung and wound into balls about as big as a walnut and used as buttons on the crown of the hat.

Nearly every American traveler talks of China's bad smells. I find that there are more good smells than bad ones, and there are many which I wish I could carry home with me. Much of Canton is a Dutch parlor compared with parts of New York, Philadelphia and Boston, and some of it is comparatively clean. Some sections are perfumed with sandalwood. There are streets which deal in nothing but sweet-smelling woods. Here you find men cutting the odoriferous logs into pieces for fans, work-boxes and other things.

Some are sawing them up into dust to mix with mud for the incense sticks used in every Chinese temple and house. Such sticks serve as cigarette and pipe lighters. They are burned in front of the stores under little altars to the God of Fortune hung upon the wall. Sometimes there are altars of this kind outside the stores. In this case the incense sticks are always lighted toward night, and they look quite weird as dusk comes on.

Night Business in Canton.
But the night life of a Chinese city is hardly worth mentioning. It is not to be seen on the streets. No business is done after dark. The stores are all closed as tight as a drum and the only lights are oil lamps.

It would be almost impossible to go through Canton late at night. In the daytime the city is a checkerboard of densely packed workshops; at night it is a catacomb with the passages walled up. Every narrow street has doors at the end of each block, and at every street crossing and alley there are gates provided with locks. There are also great doors at the holes in the walls, whether at the entrances of canals into the city or of streets. All such places are closed at a certain hour in the

evening, so that you could not walk a block without coming to a gate, and once inside you could not get out.

There are but few policemen, either day or night, and the order on the streets is excellent. The police call out the hours as they go their rounds after dark.

They make the night hideous by clapping sticks and gongs to show that they are awake, and, possibly, to warn thieves of their approach. The police stations are immense wooden boxes, not unlike coal storage boxes; they are placed along the sides of the streets and in them the policemen lie down to rest, not a few sleeping on their posts, as do our policemen at home.

Chinese of All Classes.

In fact, I find the Chinese decidedly human. They have about the same classes as in the United States, and they are moved by much the same springs of action. Canton is made up of rich and poor, of workers and loafers, of business men and idiotic dandies. The crowd through which I walk is of all classes, from the sweating coolie, who, bare to the waist, drips perspiration as he trots along with his burden, to the satin-gowned mandarin, whose long finger-nailed hands are as soft as the cheek of your baby. There are big-footed women who toil for 3 cents a day, and there are "golden-lilled" painted, powdered ladies who each spend \$1,000 a year on their clothes. There are Chinese scholars with spectacles as big around as silver dollars, politicians who lick their lips and look wise, story tellers and actors, solid bankers and brainless fools, and all the other classes you will find in our cities. Indeed, there are the same grades of society, the members of which have as many petty ambitions, as many fears and hopes, and I might almost say as many loves and hates. This Chinese human, although in our conceit we are prone to think differently, is about the same kind of a two-legged animal without feathers that you and I are, and our dear Lord gave him quite as good a body and as good an intellect, feelings and will.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

A Warning from Lo

Washington Star: "We are absolutely sure," said the western man, "that Germany thinks ever and ever so much of us, and wouldn't do a thing to harm us for the world."

"How do you know?" asked the Indian chief.

"Because Prince Henry is coming over here to present our leading citizens and officials with beautiful cigarette cases and sleeve buttons and other valuable souvenirs."

"Listen, oh, white man," said the Indian earnestly; "listen to the voice of sad experience. Do not be too trustful. When the Europeans first visited our country they made us beautiful presents of glass beads and jackknives. And now they are trying to make us cut our hair and wear suspenders!"

Healthy Indeed

"So this is a healthy town?" interrogated the new arrival.

"Healthy ain't no name for it, stranger," boasted the native. "Why, we have only three patients in the hospital."

"Who are they?"

"Why, the doctor, the undertaker and the tombstone man. They are there for lack of nourishment."

His Gentle Hint

Chicago Post: "How much of a salary do you get?" asked the inquisitive diner.

"Oh, I don't get any salary," replied the obsequious waiter. "The gentlemen that dine here are such perfect gentlemen that I don't need any regular salary or wages."

As the diner reached down into his pocket for a tip he was heard to mutter something about curiosity always being costly.