

A RESIDENCE
AMONG
THE CHINESE

INLAND, ON THE COAST, AND AT SEA.

BEING A NARRATIVE OF SCENES AND ADVENTURES DURING A
THIRD VISIT TO CHINA, FROM 1853 TO 1856.

INCLUDING NOTICES OF MANY NATURAL PRODUCTIONS AND WORKS OF ART,
THE CULTURE OF SILK, &c.;

WITH SUGGESTIONS ON THE PRESENT WAR.

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"THREE YEARS' WANDERINGS IN CHINA," "A JOURNEY TO THE TEA COUNTRIES," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1857.

PREFACE.

It is now nearly fourteen years since I landed in China for the first time, in the capacity of Botanical Collector to the Horticultural Society of London. From 1848 to the beginning of 1851 I was engaged by the Honourable Court of Directors of the East India Company in procuring supplies of tea-plants, seeds, implements, and green-tea makers, for the government plantations in the Himalayas. In the end of 1852 I was deputed a second time by the East India Company for the purpose of adding to the collections already formed, and particularly of procuring some first-rate black-tea makers for the experimental tea-farms in India.

The present volume gives an account of my last travels amongst the Chinese—from 1852 to 1856—which it is hoped will be found as interesting as my former ‘Three Years’ Wanderings,’ and ‘Journey to the Tea Countries.’

During my first visit my investigations were chiefly confined to the coast near the five ports at which foreigners are permitted to trade. In my second book I described some long journeys to the green and black tea countries; and in this one I have endeavoured to give the reader a minute account of some extensive districts of country

which lie between the coast-line and the points formerly reached. For the talented sketches which illustrate the work I am indebted to my friend Mr. Scarth.

In keeping a journal of the ever-varying scenes which passed daily in review before me, I have not been unmindful of a friendly hint which I received from some reviewers of my former works. I have, therefore, endeavoured to describe more minutely the characters, manners, and customs of the Chinese in those districts in which I lived for a length of time almost like one of themselves. And with regard to this part of the performance I can only say that the figures on my canvas are such as I daily met with in the course of my travels, and are true to nature. The reader is left to draw his own conclusions; but it is hoped that those who have been inclined to form their estimate of the Chinese character from what has been written about the low rabble of Canton, will, after the perusal of these pages, look with a more favourable eye upon the inhabitants of China when seen from other points of view.

The natural productions of the country which came under my notice, whether simply ornamental in their character, or articles of commercial value, have been fully described. During a sojourn of some months in the heart of the great silk country I had an opportunity of seeing the cultivation of the mulberry, the feeding and rearing of the silkworms, and the reeling of the silk; and these in-

teresting operations are now described, I believe, for the first time by an English eye-witness.

The concluding chapter gives the author's views upon the late disturbances at Canton. It shows how these might have been avoided, and suggests a line of policy by which our future relations with the Chinese may be placed on a more firm and satisfactory basis. These suggestions are of importance, not to England only, but to all civilized nations in the West who trade with China, or who may be interested in her future welfare and progress.

The remarks on the climate of China, with reference to the health of our troops, are the results of long experience, and, in the event of our going to war with that country, ought to be carefully considered by those who have the direction of the expedition.

Having thus given a general idea of the scope of the work, I have only to express a hope that, while it may add to our knowledge of the people and productions of China, it may, at the same time, enable us to look with more kindly feelings on a large portion of the human family, far more ancient as a nation, and as industrious, if not so civilized, as ourselves.

Brompton, April, 1857.

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THE CHINESE:

INLAND, ON THE COAST, AND AT SEA.

CHAPTER I.

Arrival at Shanghae — Kindness of Mr. Beale — An earthquake — Chinese superstitions — Hairs said to come out of the ground — An examination and the result — Reports of a sunken village — Preparations to visit it — Contradictory statements — The truth at last! — The Chinese rebellion — Its rise and progress — Taking of Nanking — Alarm at Shanghae — Means taken for protection — Taoutai's request for foreign aid — Sir George Bonham proceeds to Nanking — Arrogance of the insurgents — War-vessels of America and France visit them — The religion of the insurgents fanaticism — An extraordinary official statement — Future prospects as regards Christianity.

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On the 14th of March, 1853, the Peninsular and Oriental steam-ship "Ganges," in which I was a passenger, sailed from Hong-kong for the port of Shanghae—the most northerly of the five at which foreigners are permitted to trade. The wind for the most part of the way was "right a-head," and sometimes it blew almost a gale; but the good ship, being powerful for her size, and well found in everything, ploughed the ocean "like a thing of life," and notwithstanding head winds and heavy seas we anchored in the Shanghae river four days

after leaving Hong-kong, having run in that time somewhere about nine hundred miles.

As on former occasions, I determined to make this port my head-quarters during my travels in the interior owing to the facilities it afforded for the despatch of my collections to India or to England. I was lucky enough to find my friend Mr. Beale, to whom I was so much indebted during my former "journey to the tea districts," still in Shanghae, and as kind and hospitable as ever. He again invited me to make his house my home whenever I should visit this port, an invitation of which I availed myself frequently during the three years I have been in the country. His large and interesting garden I found of the greatest value, as in it I could store my various collections until an opportunity occurred of having them shipped for their destination.

During the few days of my stay in Shanghae I experienced for the first time in my life the shock of an earthquake, a phenomenon which is not unusual in this part of the world. It was about eleven o'clock at night, one of those beautiful nights which one finds only in the sunny lands of the East. The stars were shining brightly in the sky, but a slight haze seemed to spread itself over the ground and the river; and the atmosphere, although perfectly calm, was warmer than is usual at this early period of the spring. I had been dining out, and had just returned home, and was sitting with Mr. Beale at the drawing-room fire.

In an instant I experienced an extraordinary and unaccountable sensation, which was perfectly new, and which I could neither understand nor explain. At the same moment the pheasants in the aviary began to scream, and the chandelier which hung from the ceiling swung slowly from side to side. "It is an earthquake," said Mr. Beale; "let us go out on the lawn in front of the house." I confess I did not require a second bidding, but rushed out of the house forthwith. Mr. Beale, who seemed to have become accustomed to such things, quietly went to look for his hat in the lobby and then followed me. In the mean time his Excellency Sir George Bonham, her Majesty's Plenipotentiary and Governor of Hong-kong, who was staying at this time with Mr. Beale, came down stairs, and all the other gentlemen in the house made their appearance also, most of them in their night-dresses, as they had retired to rest before the occurrence took place. All this happened in much less time than I take to write it. When we reached the lawn the ground seemed moving and swaying to and fro under our feet, and I experienced a slight sickening sensation not unlike sea-sickness. At the same time the whole scene was rendered more striking by the ringing of bells in the adjoining houses, the screams of birds, and the crash of a falling house as we thought, but which turned out afterwards to be a slimly-built wall. The first shock lasted for a few minutes only, but several were felt afterwards, although less severe than the first.

When daylight dawned on the following morning it was found that the damage done was not very great. The wall I have already noticed had fallen, some beams in one of the houses had come through the ceiling, and a quantity of goods had tumbled down in one of the godowns. Most of the clocks had stopped, and some few lamps and glasses were broken, but upon the whole the damage done was very inconsiderable. Groups of Chinese were seen in the gardens, road-sides, and fields, engaged in gathering hairs which are said to make their appearance on the surface of the ground after an earthquake takes place. This proceeding attracted a great deal of attention from some of the foreign residents in Shanghai, and the Chinese were closely examined upon the subject. Most of them fully believed that these hairs made their appearance only after an earthquake had occurred, but could give no satisfactory explanation of the phenomenon, while some more wise than their neighbours did not hesitate to affirm that they belonged to some huge subterranean animal whose slightest shake was sufficient to move the world.

I must confess, at the risk of being laughed at, that I was one of those who took an interest in this curious subject, and that I joined several groups who were searching for these hairs. In the course of my travels I have ever found it unwise to laugh at what I conceived to be the prejudices of a people simply because I could not understand them. In this instance, however, I must confess the

results were not worth the trouble I took. The hairs, such as I picked up, and such as were shown me by the Chinese, had certainly been produced above the earth and not below it. In some instances they might readily be traced to horses, dogs, and cats, while in others they were evidently of vegetable origin. The north-eastern part of China produces a very valuable tree known by the name of the hemp-palm, from the quantity of fibrous bracts it produces on the stem just under its blossoms. Many of these fibres were shown to me by the Chinese as a portion of the hairs in question; and when I pointed out the source from which such had come, and which it was impossible to dispute, my friends laughed, and with true Chinese politeness acknowledged I was right, and yet I have no doubt they still held their former opinions concerning the origin of such hairs. The whole matter simply resolves itself into this,—if the hairs pointed out to me were the *true* ones, then such things may be gathered not only after earthquakes but at any other time. But if, after all, these were not the real things, and if some vegetable (I shall not say animal) production was formed, owing to the peculiar condition of the atmosphere and from other causes, I can only say that such production did not come under my observation.*

* During a recent visit to the north-west provinces of India, where earthquakes are not unfrequent, I could find no traditions such as that I have alluded to.

A day or two after the earthquake took place a report was current amongst the natives that a large tract of ground, on which a populous village stood, had sunk down into the bowels of the earth, carrying with it the whole of the people, and that the spot was now marked by a large pool of water. This report was repeated to me in the country at a considerable distance from Shanghae, and seemed to be generally believed by the inhabitants. An old nursery-gardener, from whom I was in the habit of purchasing plants, informed me the village in question had been full of bad people, and that this was no doubt a judgment from heaven on account of their sins. I hinted that there might be some danger to his own property and to the city of Shanghae; but the old man told me my fears were groundless.

Being anxious to verify the reports of the Chinese by a personal examination of the place, I determined to pay it a visit. Mr. Forbes, American Consul at Canton, and Mr. Shortrede, editor of the 'China Mail,' agreed to accompany me. I had been told the spot was distant from Shanghae some thirty miles up the river, and in a south-westerly direction, but the more minute my inquiries were the greater difficulty I had in finding out the exact locality. In the mean time all our arrangements had been made except the hiring of boats, and we had agreed to start on the following morning. I had an excellent servant, a man who had travelled with me for several years, and whose