

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

THE HEART OF CHINA.

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HANKOW, China, April 27, 1894.



HIS is the Chicago of the Chinese empire. It is nearly 700 miles from the sea coast and there are at this point three cities which face each other, much as New York, Jersey City

and Brooklyn, which have an aggregate population of something like 2,000,000 of people. Standing on Pagoda Hill, behind the city of Hanyang, you look down in fact upon the homes of almost 3,000,000, and you see hundreds of villages, thousands of boats, in which families live and die, and have spread out before you the three great cities of Hankow, Hanyang and Wuchang. In front of you, facing the south, flows the broad Yangtse river, which is at this place still a mile wide, and which is so deep throughout its course that the biggest steamers that sail the ocean can come up here and anchor at its wharves. The city on the opposite side is Wuchang. It has, perhaps, three-quarters of a million people, and the high wall which runs around it is twelve miles in length. It is the home of one of the most progressive governors of China, and is the capital of the state of Hupeh, which is bigger than the whole of New England. Turn to your left and you see at your feet the city of Hanyang, with its vast iron works, for the making of steel rails. Beyond it across the river Han, which is so filled with boats that their masts make you think of a thicket of hoop poles, is the vast plain covered with her buildings of Hankow, which is even larger than Wuchang, and which is the commercial capital of this part of the empire. As you look over the landscape your eye meets as much water as land. The mighty Yangtse above and below you flows on like a great inland sea, its bosom loaded with a score of steamers and thousands of queer looking junks. There are boats before you which have come 2,000 miles down its waters through the deep gorges of Ichang, and mixed with them are ships from Canton, Amoy, Foo Chow and other great cities along the coast. There are tea junks from the big Poyang lake, and queer-looking crafts from a thousand different localities, each having a build and make peculiarly its own.

As you look you realize the force of the assertion that China has more boats than all of the rest of the world put together. The Yangtse is here cut into by canals and the great lagoons lying back in the country are spotted with sails. The river Han, which has flowed

1,300 miles in its winding course from its source to its mouth, has brought down hundreds of river junks and ships are being loaded at scores of these wharves for all parts of the empire and of the world. Today the trade of this place amounts to about \$37,000,000 a year and every dollar's worth of this has to be carried away by water. In the years to come a large part of it will go by land and railroads may make Hankow the greatest city of Asia, if not the biggest on the globe.

The probabilities are that this place will be some day one of the great manufacturing centers of the world. There is coal and iron near here in close proximity to one another and the water communication is such that coal can be shipped here from almost any part of the empire. Already a population of more than 100,000,000 are tributary to this point by rivers and canals, and the great trunk line of future China will probably run through Hankow from Peking to Canton, taking in more big cities and a greater number of people than any other railroad on the globe. Peking has a million of people, Tientsin has more than a million, and it would be on the line only eighty miles south of the imperial capital. From thence it would cut its way further south about 500 miles through one of the most thickly settled parts of the empire to Hankow, where it would strike these cities of two million. From here on to Canton it cannot be more than 500 miles and the land is rich in the extreme and it teems with millions. Canton is one of the great trading centers of the world, and it is said to have about three millions of a population. The whole length of the road would be less than 1,500 miles and there would not be a waste spot on it. It will take but little grading, and it would, I judge, be a comparatively cheap road to build. It would be a bee line from north to south China and would be largely patronized as soon as the Chinese discovered its value. There are no people on the globe quicker to make use of a good thing and a cheap thing than these Chinese.

As it is, they have the dearest of modes of travel, and though their wheelbarrows and boats carry goods for almost nothing in comparison with the labor spent in running them, they are dear in competition with steam. As it is, the steamers on the Yangtse are kept up by Chinese freight and passengers, and every steamboat I have seen has been crowded with them. They ride first and second class, and many of them take a sort of steerage passage, sleeping in bunks in a large compartment in the rear end of the steamers.

The first railroad in China was from Shanghai to Woosung, a distance of about twelve miles. Woosung is the bar at the mouth of the Whampoa river, and this road did a big business till some of the Chinese thought it was injuring their luck, and they complained to the authorities. The officials bought the road at a high price from the foreigners who owned it, and threw the locomotive, which they said contained a devil, into the river. Some of the rails

are still left, and it may be that the road will be again built in the future. One thing is very certain, and that is the moment the Chinese appreciate that they can make and run roads of their own their superstition will not stand in the way of making them, and many of the officials are experimenting to see what they can do. I saw a locomotive which had been recently built by the Chinese machinists at the Kiagnan arsenal, near Shanghai, and it runs as well as any of our engines. I was shown railroad iron—I mean steel rails—which they had made there with Chinese iron, and there seems to be no doubt but that they can manage a rolling mill very well. There is a vast deal of waste now, it is true, and this will continue as long as the work is done by the officials, who expect to get a big living out of their stealings; but it will be different when factories of this kind are started as private enterprises. Just now the chief movements in the direction of railroads are from the government, and the idea is to render China impregnable in case of war. This is the purpose of the viceroy here. He hates the foreigners, and he wants to drive them out of the country. He is using them to build factories, and he has a cotton mill run by steam and filled with modern machinery, which is one of the largest in the world. It contains a thousand looms, and it is located on the banks of the Yangtse, in the city of Wuchang. It is now making money, I am told, and it is profiting off the rise in foreign cottons through the fall in the value of silver.

Speaking of extravagance in railroad building, I doubt whether there has ever been erected a more costly plant than that which is now being put up here by this viceroy for the building of cars, the making of rails and the turning out of a full equipment for the line which is at some future time to run from here to Peking. The works are being put up by Belgians as foremen, and about fifty high-priced men are now employed here on salaries. I visited the works yesterday. They are located at the foot of a hill just above the mouth of the Han river and a short distance back from the Yangtse Kiang. Accompanied by the American consul and Mr. Burnett, an American who has lived for thirty years in the center of China, I rode in a long Chinese boat, sculled by a ragged-haired celestial, up the Yangtse banks under the shadow of the Hankow wharves. We passed thousands of boats loaded with all sorts of freight, from Standard oil cans and cotton bales to baskets of oil, boat loads of peanuts, rafts of poles with bamboo houses upon them, and through hundreds of great junks of white pine, sometimes oiled to a rich yellow and in other cases black with age. Every wharf was filled with workers, and the coolies, with great loads on their backs, swarmed up and down them like gigantic ants. The men on the boats and on shore grunted or sang as they worked and the air was filled with a noise as great and as indistinguishable as that of the tower of Babel at the time of the confusion of tongues. Passing Hankow, we reached the ship-building yards of Hanyang, where men perched in little bamboo huts, built upon four poles at least fifty feet above the ground, were twisting ropes of plaited bamboo. Each hut was