

CORRESPONDENCE.

Written for this Paper.

CHINA'S UNEMPLOYED.

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NANKING, China, May 24, 1894.

I UNDERSTAND that many Americans are patting themselves on the back at their success in economizing during the present hard times. They don't know what economy is. They should take a trip to

China and learn something of the science of saving. The expense of living is here reduced to a minimum, and these Chinese millions would grow fat on what the thrifty French and Germans waste. The food for a poor man in Nanking costs him no more than two cents a day, and at \$4 a month a man will support a family and lay up money. I met a fat, jolly looking Chinaman this morning, who told me he had a wife and five children, and his income was sufficient for all his wants. He earned about two gold dollars a month as a carpenter, and his wife makes one dollar more by going out to work. It costs five cents a day to feed a patient in the Methodist Hospital here, and a farmer may be hired for from ten to twelve dollars a year, provided he has his rice, his head shaving and his tobacco. It costs about \$5 a year to buy the wardrobe of a common laborer, and a Chinaman will put on flesh on a dollar a month. The majority of the people of this part of China are well fed and well dressed. They have good faces, and they are, I believe, far happier than the average American laborers. They seem to enjoy their lives and their families, and they are far above the average of the world in their manners and culture. I have mixed indiscriminately among them and find them polite and kindly. They crowd about me wherever I go. They finger my clothes, and when I take a photograph or stop to write a note, they almost block the street in their anxiety to see what the foreign barbarian is doing. Their curiosity, however, is free from malice, and they are not the fierce foreign devil-haters whom I met with further up the river. I find much in them to admire, and I wonder every day at their wonderful economies.

Let me mention a few of them.

In the first place in the way of fuel. Nearly all of the fires in Nanking are made of straw and reeds. Every whip of dry grass is cut and saved. There are thousands of people who do nothing else but reap the reeds which grow along the banks of the Yangtse Kiang and bring them into the cities to sell. These reeds are as thick as the base of a walking stick and are often fifteen feet

long. They are cut and stacked up along the banks and from thence are carried up and down the river in flat-bottomed boats. Such wood as is used is tied up in little bunches and is sold by weight. Charcoal is sometimes found, and I see here and there little balls of coal dust of about the size of a base ball. The powdered coal is mixed with mud and dried in this shape. No one in China, however, either rich or poor, thinks of keeping warm by means of fuel. There are no furnaces nor base-burners, and wadded clothing among the poor and fur garments among the rich keep out the cold. A fire is never built by a poor man except when it is absolutely necessary, and the hot water used for the tea and rice in the early morning is sold by hot water stores. You can get a bucket of boiling water for one-tenth of a cent, and there is one such store in Shanghai to every twenty families. A large amount of rice is cooked at one time, and the breakfast rice is warmed by the pouring of hot water or hot tea over it.

Speaking of tea, there are tea shops or restaurants all over China, and you get very fair meals in these for small prices. The cooking ovens are at the entrance of the tea house, and you have often to pass the cook in going in to your meal. The tea is put into cups and hot water poured over it. After you have swallowed half of the contents the cup is again filled with hot water, and one drawing of tea is supposed to last one customer for a meal. After he leaves the tea grounds are gathered up and dried. They are sold later on to poorer restaurants or to families, and nothing about the cook shop goes to waste. Even the water in which the potatoes are boiled and the other vegetables cooked is saved and sold for the feeding of hogs, and the bones of the meat are bought by the makers of chop sticks. Mr. Ferguson, the president of the Nanking University, told me that he had for a long time trouble in getting any meat brought to his house with the bones in it, and he found that butchers always cut out the bones and sold them separately from the meat itself. You see no empty cans or bottles lying about the houses of the foreigners of Nanking. The Chinese take them. They sell the bottles, and the tin of the cans is used by the tinnners. A large part of the tin used in China comes from the petroleum cans of the Standard Oil Company, and every bit of iron is worked up by the blacksmiths into knives and farming implements. A large part of the razors of China are made of old horse shoes, and these are brought here by the ship load from Europe, and are carried to all parts of the empire. After the Franco-Prussian war they were torn from the feet of the horses killed in battle and were brought here by the thousands of barrels.

The old clothes man of China does a bigger business than his brothers of other parts of the world. There are streets of second-hand clothiers in every Chinese city, and clothes are sold over and over again, until they get down to the beggars. By this time they are shreds of rags, but their end is not yet.

After the beggars find them too poor for even their use they are sold as old rags and are bought by the makers of shoes. The shoes of the men and boys of China have soles nearly an inch thick, and these soles are made of rags, which have been washed and dried and then pasted layer upon layer, until they reach the thickness required. They are cut then into shape and are so polished along the edges that you would think them made of leather or wood. The uppers are made of different qualities of silk or fine cloth, and the Chinaman's shoes, if manufactured in America, would cost more than the kind we use ourselves. In the making of the rain boots for muddy weather and hard traveling, soles of iron are often added, and the itinerant shoemaker, who sits in nearly every block of a Chinese town, has big-headed iron shoe tacks to drive into the soles to save wear and tear, and there are places where you can have your Chinese cap renovated and made equal to new. Even the rich, who have thousands of dollars invested in their fur garments, do not throw them away when they get dirty. They will wear a coat of silk lined with lamb's wool till the lining is as black as your hat. But some day the coat will disappear. It will be ripped apart and a preparation of lime and other material will be used which will make it a white and as pure as when it was first bought. The clothing of the poor is patched and repatched, and there are women by the score in every Chinese city who go about doing mending. I see them sitting in the narrow streets outside the houses working away under the hot sun, and they go from house to house and do the patching of the families for a few cash per patch. It is the same with menders of crockery and broken china. These are so skilled that they will take a cup or teapot of the finest and thinnest of porcelain after it has been broken into pieces and by means of wire rivets, which are fastened only to the outside of the cup or pot, put it together so that you could not tell if you saw only the inside that it had ever been broken. They will mend a half a dozen pieces in this way for from two to three cents. The work is marvelous. It could not be done by the watchmakers of America, but it is one of the specialties of the Chinese itinerant tinker.

I might go on for a column describing others of the wonderful economies I see all about me. I could tell you how these people will take a buffalo's horn of about the size of a cow's horn and by boiling and pressing it out make it so thin that it becomes a lantern and forms a transparent globe as big as a two-gallon crock. I could show you them sitting in their shops handling old cotton wadding which has been worn by several different owners till it has almost dropped to pieces. They will pull it apart, take out the cotton, half clean it and mix it with fresh cotton for sale. Take a look at the barbers who stand on every street shaving the heads of all males from old men to babies. They receive from less than a cent to 5 cents a shave according to the rank and wealth of their customer, but you note that they save the scrapings of the head, and these bits of hair are sold by them to furniture dealers for the making of cushions. It is the same with eatables. All sorts of greens are eaten, cooked and raw, and