

## MISCELLANEOUS.

*Written for this Paper.*

## THE GRAND CANAL.

(Copyrighted by Frank G. Carpenter, 1894.)

CHINKIANG, China, May 9, 1894.



I WRITE this letter at Chinkiang, a walled city on the banks of the Yangtse river. It is just about 150 miles from the seacoast and is at the point where the Grand canal crosses the Yangtse.

This canal is one of the great wonders of the world. It is now in bad repair and a large part of it is going to ruin. But it has been one of the greatest waterways of the world, and it extends from Peking south to Hang Chow, some 200 odd miles below this point, running through the great plain from north to middle China, a distance about as great as that between New York and Chicago. It cuts its way through a territory containing 170,000,000 people, or nearly three times as many as the whole of the United States, and it taps some of the biggest cities in the world. Peking, where it finishes its course, not far from the American legation palace, is a city of more than a million people. Tientsin, below this about eighty miles, is still larger, and as it runs further south the canal is dotted with walled cities and great towns all along its course to the Yangtse river. Chinkiang is about as big as Minneapolis. Yangchow, the next big city on the canal south of here, contains, I am told, a half a million people, and Suchau and Hangchow each have something like three-quarters of a million souls. At every thirty miles along its course it is safe to say there is a walled city, containing many times ten thousand people, and the country back of it is a garden spotted with clumps of trees, each clump shading a Chinese village. The canal at Chinkiang cuts right around the city, forming the island upon which the main part of it is located. It runs from here northward for 380 miles without a lock, but above this, I am told, there are numerous sluices and locks, and in some places the water is carried through the country on great stone embankments, twenty and more feet high, and the stream at some of these places is fully 200 feet wide. It has stone flood gates managed by soldiers, and it is here and there led by creeks and rivers. At one point a river was conducted into it in times past, and the Chinese say that 300,000 men were employed for seven months in turning the waters of this single stream. It cuts the Yellow river, and it is below this that the stone embankments above spoken of are located. The parts which I have seen are those which run near here, through the Yangtse valley, and those about Tientsin and

Peking. Here the canal is more like a great ditch than anything else, and there is now a little army of men employed in keeping it in repair. It was in existence more than a thousand years ago, and Kublai Kahn laid out the line upon which it now runs.

The chief use for the canal in times past has been that of a trade artery from the north to south. It taps by its connecting canals and rivers every part of the great plain, and it is used for the transportation of the tribute rice to Peking.

The government taxes of China are to a large extent collected in kind, and every year the farmers send about 133,000,000 pounds of rice from here to Peking for the emperor and his officials. At Nanking I saw acres of great barns which were filled with this rice awaiting shipment, and every town along the canal has its government barns. Just now the rice is being taken to the north. Of late much of it goes by sea, but a vast deal is still sent by the Grand canal, and at every town there are hundreds of craft of every kind, and these government junks sometimes block the canal for days. Hundreds of men are employed in towing and pulling the boats, and at places they are dragged along by means of capstans. The canal winds about like a river in places, and navigation through it is so slow that some of these rice boats have started in April during the past few years and have arrived in Peking until September. Parts of the canal are closed to traffic except during the carrying of the tribute rice, and the condition of it today is such that it will hardly be used again as the great waterway which it has been in the past. Li Hung Chang has asked the emperor to allow him to build a railroad along it from Tientsin to Chinkiang, and this will eventually be done.

The boats along the canal are much like those I have described as lying at the mouths of the creeks of the Yangtse. In passing up it you are followed everywhere by crowds, who look with wonder on the foreign devils, and every here and there you meet boats containing begging Buddhist priests, who stick out long poles at you. These poles have bags fastened to their ends, and into these the Chinese drop cash or rice. This part of China is full of priests. There is in the Yangtse river, just opposite where I am now writing, an island which is just covered with Buddhist temples, and which has no inhabitants but priests. Massive granite terraces, decorated with stone lions, lead up from the water, and the temples shine out of green trees and flowery gardens. In Nanking I visited a temple which contained 10,000 images and golden statues of Buddha, and I have photographed a dozen or so of the priests. In the Nanking temple I got a priest to kneel and put his hands in the attitude of prayer while I took a time exposure of his devotions, and I am inclined to think there is much hypocrisy about the profession. The priests are fat fellows, in long gowns of gray or yellow linen, and they often have on three-cornered box-shaped hats of black. They shave their

heads and faces and are but little respected by the people. They are, I am told by the best of authorities here, ignorant, low and immoral. The most of them are opium smokers, and they are the contempt and ridicule of the better classes of the Chinese. Buddhism in China is, in fact, a religion gone to seed. It had its run in times past, and about a thousand odd years ago the greater portion of the Chinese were Buddhists. It was then the center of culture and learning, and now there are few so poor to do it reverence. The Chinese are full of superstitions, but their religion is more a system of morals than one of theology, and they have as many pure infidels and agnostics as any people in the world.

Speaking of Chinese morality, I believe there is as little crime here to the population as there is anywhere. I find the people, as a rule, well behaved, and I am surprised every day at the common decency with which they treat each other. These Chinese cities have many streets not over four feet wide. In those of Canton you can stand in the center and touch both walls with your two hands. There are no more thronged places in the world than these streets, and the crowd which moves through them is of all grades and of all occupations. There are mandarins in chairs, who are preceded by their servants, who carry boards in front of them bearing the titles of their masters. There are coolies wheeling great barrows, which almost fill the street from side to side. There are donkeys by the dozen, and men loaded with all sorts of heavy burdens, some of which they carry upon their backs and others which they have hung to the ends of poles. There must be necessarily much pushing and crowding, and such a scene in America would include a fight on every block. Here there is nothing of the kind. The scholar and the gentleman give way, as a rule, to the heavily loaded laborer, and the workingman's rights are generally respected. If they are not the trades unions are such that they bring the officials and people to time. A striking instance of this recently happened at Nanking. The Chinese, you know, have no such things as sewers, and all of the slops of each household are collected every day by men and carried out into the country to be stored in vats and afterward used as liquid manure. Not a drop nor a atom of anything of a fertilizing nature is allowed to go to waste, and slops have their fixed price in the market and are bought and sold. The collectors of these slops are the most offensive characters of a Chinese city. They go about with two four-gallon buckets fastened to the ends of a long bamboo pole, which rests upon their shoulders. Carrying with them a smell worse than that of a bonedust factory, they belong to the lowest classes of the people. The other day one of these men was rapidly walking through Nanking when he happened on turning a corner to run into a high mandarin and spattered him with the contents of his buckets. The mandarin ordered him to be arrested, and he was taken to prison. The head of the slop union objected and demanded that the man be freed. It was not done, and the slop carriers struck in a body. The five hundred thousand people of Nanking had no way to get rid of their slops, and the