

THE DESERET WEEKLY.

Truth and Liberty.

No. 18.

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, APRIL 20, 1895.

VOL. L.

Written for this Paper.

A WALK THROUGH HANKOW.

(Copyrighted by Frank G. Carpenter, 1895.)



THE CLOSE OF the present war may bring about an era of travel and exploration in China. As it is, many great cities of the empire have never been visited by foreigners. There are certain provinces, containing more people than the whole United

States, in which it has always been unsafe to travel, and there are hundreds of curious tribes and clans which are practically unknown to the people of the western world. Take, for instance, the Hakkas. How many Americans have heard of them? The ordinary Chinese cannot understand them, and still they live here and there all over China and have villages and customs of their own. They do not bind the feet. They wear broad-brimmed hats instead of caps and the children wear rings of silver around their necks. There are clans in China who do nothing but beg, and there are other clans who are thieves from generation to generation. Who has ever written up the porcelain districts of China, and how little information we have about the provinces bordering on Burmah and Thibet? Numerous descriptions of Chinese cities have been published, but these are usually from travelers who have been carried rapidly through Shanghai and Canton. They will tell you that all Chinese cities are the same. Whereas, the fact is, the Chinese towns differ as much as our American cities, and every great center I have visited, I have found full of strange things, which I have found nowhere else.

A WALK THROUGH HANKOW.

Take a walk with me, for instance, through the great city of Hankow. It contains a million people. It is as big as Chicago. It is surrounded by a wall as high as a three-story house, and so wide that three railroad trains could run side by side upon it without touching. Inside these walls there is a mass of narrow streets, lined with one, two and three-storied houses. Cutting through these there are lanes and cross-streets, and most of the streets are six feet wide. The lanes are often not more than two feet wide, and both streets and alleys are covered with the

vilest of slime, and you pick your way through a mass of indescribable filth as you go through them. The widest of the streets are the great business thoroughfares, walled with stores and shops, and which are packed with a mass of Chinese humanity from sunrise until dark. This mass surges this way and that. It is worse than a jam at a country fair, and laborers carrying all kinds of wares, push their way through it. The narrower streets are little more than alleys walled with houses, comprising of factories, dwelling and business establishments. The entrances to many of these are merely holes in the walls. Others have wide doors leading to courts and others introduce you into the shops of mechanics, where you see half naked coolies doing the thousand and one things of a busy Chinese city. Walking through these lanes, the foreigner seems to be taking his life in his hands. The streets are so narrow that you can stand in the middle and press the opposite wall with your hands. Two men can hardly pass, and you instinctively squeeze yourself in your efforts to tighten your skin and keep out of collisions which appear imminent at every curve. Here comes a coolie bare-backed and bare-legged. He is one of the thousand sloop carriers of the town. A bar six feet long rests on his shoulder and from the ends of this hang two great buckets, each holding four gallons of the vilest of slop. He comes toward you on a swinging trot, and the buckets screw up and down, and the slop splashes to and fro as he passes you. You put your smelling bottle to your nose, draw your knees close together and hug the wall, to let him go by. Behind him come two scowling Chinamen carrying hides. They have a half ton of raw hides swung in the center of a pole, which rests upon their shoulders, and they grunt and grunt in a harmony of woe, as they rush towards you. Other laborers follow behind with other loads, and you note that every couple has its own peculiar grunt or sound. Some cry 'O ah, O-ah; E-he, E-he, O-ho; O-ho, E he.' The men on the wharves have their own grunt, and even men working alone make spasmodic noises of the most horrible kinds to help them in their work.

THE SONG OF THE WHEELBARROW.

But behind these laborers comes another machine, which has a screech of its own. It is the Hankow wheelbarrow, with a half a ton of freight strapped to its side. It almost scrapes the walls, and you would be ground up by it were there not an open doorway in which you could step. These wheelbarrows are all made so as to screech out their song of toil, and their larynx is a piece of bamboo, which is purposely fitted in so

that it presses against the wheel of the barrow. These barrows are unlike any other you see in China, and they are peculiar to the province of Hupeh. By the time you have jumped out of the way of one of them you find yourself rushing into something else. There are dirty Chinese hogs, black and ugly, spattered with mud, and there are yellow dogs covered with mange and fleas. The hogs try to run between your legs. The dogs snap at you, and while they will let the Chinese go by without barking they can recognize a foreigner three blocks away, and they will howl until he is out of sight.

HOW THE CHINESE DO BUSINESS.

But let us go into the business parts of the cities and take a look at the stores. There are tens of thousands of them and they are packed together like the booth of a fair. They are all opened to the streets and the most of them are filled with customers. They are walled with shelves, and twelve feet square makes a big store. Some of them have cement floors, some are boards and others no floors, but dirt. The signboards hang up and down the stores instead of across the top as with us. These signs are so many that they almost fill the streets. They nearly cover the fronts of some of the shops, and the drug stores advertise their patent medicines by such signboards. These signs are pushed this way and that by the crowds which continually move through them. What a curious crowd it is. Jump up on this stone and take a look up and down the street. A river of Chinese humanity is flowing both ways before you, mixing in and out in an everchanging stream of blues, whites, reds and browns. There are coolies by the hundreds carrying great burdens. There are coolies harnessed in big wheelbarrows which would load down a wagon; coolies carrying barrels of oil, boxes of tea, loads of brick, buckets of ducks, and in short, everything under the Chinese sun. There are men rushing along with the big chairs of mandarins and with the little chairs of women. There are dirty boys by the hundreds, who have greasy pigtails hanging down their dirty backs, and who look at you and yell out "baby kidnaper" or "foreign devil" as soon as your back is turned. There are women who seem almost to fall as they hobble along on their mutilated feet. There are old Chinamen in big spectacles, and young Chinamen in silk gowns. There are dandies and dudes, scholars and servants, merchants and mechanics, each in his own dress, pushing and shoving his way through the mass. There are queer Chinamen from the country with great straw hats turned up at the sides, who gawk along like a farmer boy during his first visit to