

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written for this Paper.

THE YANGTSE KIANG.

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ON BOARD A CHINESE STEAMER 600 MILES FROM THE MOUTH OF THE YANGTSE KIANG, March 27, 1894.



HAVE been riding for days upon the great Yangtse river, and I write this letter in almost the center of the Chinese empire. I am within less than a hundred miles of the Chicago of the celestial land, the vast

city of Hankow, and am passing through the country where the Chinese mobbed the foreigners a year or so ago, burning down the houses of the missionaries, and killing some of the English officers of the Chinese customs. Last night I left Kiukiang, a big trading center at the mouth of the Poyang lake, and during the past two weeks I have passed a half dozen cities of the size of Cleveland or Washington, and have traveled through about the same number of great states, having an aggregate population of something like one hundred and fifty millions of people. All the towns I have visited I have found packed with a throng busier than you find on lower Broadway at noonday, and I am amazed at the immensity of this great Chinese empire and its enormous population. I entered the Yangtse at its mouth, where it flows through the Chinese province or state of Kiangsu. This is in the center of the east coast, and it has an area about as big as that of Pennsylvania. It contains more than half as many people as the whole United States, and its population is equal to that of the British Isles. The state of Ganhui, which I next entered, is no bigger than Kansas, but it supports twenty-seven million people, and the state of Hupeh, in which I am now traveling, has over twenty millions. This great river itself has millions who are born, live and die upon its waters, and at every landing I see a thicket of poles, each of which springs from the home of one of the millions of families which make up China's boat population. I am amazed at the wonderful resources of the country.

My eyes bulge out at the muscle and industry of its people, and my head buzzes in trying to understand the curious sights which are crowded upon me.

China's great rivers are among the wonders of the world, and the Yangtse Kiang is the king of its kind. It has a greater volume of water than the Nile or the Amazon, and it has built up a greater country than Egypt along the low lands of China. In approaching it from the ocean I found the waters dis-

colored by its muddy fluid many miles out at sea, and it turns the salty brine yellow for sixty miles from its mouth. Here it is about as thick as pea soup. You draw up a bucket and in a moment its bottom will have a thick sediment of mud. I had been warned not to use the spigot which runs from the bottom of the boat into my bath, but this morning the boy had made it too hot and I tried to cool the barrel of filtered water in the tub with about a gallon from the Yangtse. I thought the amount was so little that it could not affect the rest. The result was that the clear water became the color of mud and my bare foot left an impression on the bottom as marked as that of the savage which so scared Robinson Crusoe on the desert island. It is a sort of a gritty silt, but I am told that there is no river on earth which brings down a sediment more fertile. The whole of the great plain of north and central China has been made by it. This plain is seven hundred miles long, and it supports more than a hundred millions of people. The Yellow river runs through it a hundred miles north of this point, and this river, in combination with the Yangtse, has built the foundations of one-fourth of the Chinese empire. Today it is estimated that the amount of dirt they carry down from the highlands of Thibet and of China is so great that it forms every two months an island a mile square in the sea and at the mouth of the Yangtse. I sailed by the Tsung Ming Island, which is thirty-two miles long and about ten broad. It has been built up within a hundred years or so, and now has cities and villages and supports more than a million people. The sea at the mouth of the Yangtse is filled with little islands, many of which have grown up within the memory of men now living, and along the low banks of the river I can see the strata of soil which it has brought down from year to year. At some points these lines of sediment are from one to two feet thick, and they are of as marked colors as strata of rock. The river has a vast volume of water. A line of freight water-tight cars reaching from New York to Chicago and carrying twenty tons each could not hold its one day's discharge into the sea, and its rise and fall at the city of Hankow, about six hundred and fifty miles from its mouth, ranges during the year from forty to fifty feet. Within the past ten days the river has risen thirteen feet and it is now going up at the rate of a foot a day.

The rise in the Yangtse Kiang is so great that embankments have to be built along its course for more than 1,000 miles. All of the country I have passed through is diked, and this, not only as to the river, but also as to every creek and canal connected with it. Central China is more cut up by waterways than Holland, and there are more dikes here to the square mile than you will find in the Netherlands. Sailing along the Yangtse you see these dikes in every direction. They are about twenty feet high and from thirty to forty feet wide at the base and their tops form the roads and paths of the country. Along them you see all sorts of Chinese characters trudging along, their figures sil-

houetted against the blue sky. Here goes the great freight car of China. It is a wheelbarrow and a native coolie pushes it. Behind him comes another species of the same, a man carrying two great loads fastened to the ends of the bow-like pole which rests upon his shoulders. Next you see a brightly dressed girl, wearing red pantaloons and a blue sack, carrying a parasol of paper and looking very gay as she hobbles up the bank. You note mandarines riding in blue chairs carried between two bare-legged coolies, who trot along in front and behind, and among the nobles, the common people on foot.

Here and there you may see a sheep or a hog, but the horses are comparatively few, and the only cattle are the half hog half cow known as the water buffalo. You see these working in the fields pulling rude ploughs or turning the wooden water wheels, which are used in some parts of China for irrigation. They are for all the world like the Sakiyehs of Egypt, and there are many things about you which remind you of the land of the Pharaohs. You see no cattle or horses dragging burdens upon the embankments, and the canals and rivers, in fact, take the place of roads. In all this part of China, it is said, you can go to every man's house in a boat. There are numerous creeks that empty into the Yangtse. The mouths of these are filled with junks, and on them and the canals, which cut up the land like a net, you see the masts and sails of boats walking, as it were, rapidly over the green fields. Often there will be several lines of these boats running parallel with the river, their white sails growing smaller in the distance, until they form white specks upon the dim line of the horizon. The cost of making and keeping up this series of embankments must be enormous. The Yangtse changes its course every now and then; it cuts away the soil and new dikes have to be built. In many places there are several rows of earth, one behind the other, and the remains of discarded embankments are everywhere visible. In the summer the river rises and floods everything not so diked. Houses are often swept away, villages are destroyed and the land becomes a great inland sea. All along the course are the vestiges of past floods, and here and there you see graveyards that the river has eaten into, and you note the gaping holes left by the coffins. At one point, about 100 miles from where I now am, I saw a coffin extending half way out of the bank. It undoubtedly contained a skeleton, and the wood was rotten with age. The water was then within a foot of it, and by this time it must have been washed out to sea. Here and there we could see men irrigating the soil by tread-mill pumps, worked by half-naked celestials, and everywhere man seemed to be waging a brave fight with nature and getting the best of it.

Speaking of coffins, I could see them now and again lying on the river banks. They were generally covered with a thatch of straw, and this is a common way for the people to dispose of their dead. They have not enough money to give their friends a decent burial, and they lay the coffins out until they can earn the funeral expenses. Near Shanghai I saw houses for the storing of dead babies. They were little one story huts,