

**SKETCHES IN AND  
AROUND  
SHANGHAI, ETC.**

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Sketches in and Around Shanghai, Etc. by J. D. Clark

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# SHANGHAI,

ETC.

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SHANGHAI:

PRINTED AT THE "SHANGHAI MERCURY" AND "CELESTIAL EMPIRE" OFFICES.

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**CHINESE LIBRARY**

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THESE "Sketches," hasty limnings in printer's ink, have for the most part appeared at irregular intervals in the *Shanghai Mercury*, and in some cases have already been published in book form. They are now republished *in extenso*, in the hope that they may prove of some utility, or offer some amusement to that section of the great English-speaking public who take an interest in the peoples and manners of the Far East. They do not pretend to enter into abstruse questions of polity or science, but take up the more familiar matters of daily life, as they present themselves in the microcosm known as Shanghai. It may be said that the Chinaman is many-sided: the Chinese Question decidedly is,—but on that we do not propose to enter. However, the individual, if not many-sided,—for it is out of order to speak of sides in a figure whose complaisant roundness takes the place of European angularity,—to be understood, requires to be painted from many points of view. From one of them, that of the ordinary resident in one of the Treaty Ports, the present "Sketches" are taken. Withal, it is a by no means easy matter for the average European to evolve from his inner consciousness the native of the Middle Kingdom, as the Chinaman loves to call his home. The Willow Pattern is still the predominant image in our imaginations. Faces like the moon, moustaches drawn out and drooping at the ends, eyes set at strange angles with the horizon, long tails, and hats shaped like pagodas are, of course, his predominant features. His surroundings are equally quaint: a pagoda or two, impossible bridges spanning innumerable waterways, trees with blue fruit hanging in huge clusters; fair ladies, with long fantastic skirts gathered in huge folds about their feet and ankles, and bare-headed urchins fishing in ponds amidst lotus-flowers, and with one

foot chronically raised in mid-air. Such are the landscapes conjured up by nine Europeans out of ten when their attention is called to matters Chinese. To the resident, even for a few months, the Chinaman, on the other hand, seems a very ordinary individual,—vulgar, selfish, and by no means cleanly in person or mind. His manners are out of a book, bookish: for every occasion he has a code of etiquette, firm and immutable, but in the ordinary amenities of life he is too often utterly wanting in natural politeness. The fact of his having had laboriously to study his code of artificial propriety,—in fact, has weakened his natural instinct; and the most flagrant breaches of what even a savage learns to respect are openly committed, even by individuals of high rank. High rank is, in fact, no test of accomplished manners; the exact way of bowing or prostrating himself before an equal or superior are, indeed, matters of anxious study, as the least departure from rule would entail heavy penalties in one form or other; but of what we would call the ordinary politeness due from one gentleman to another few traces are left, and the possession of the most graceful manner counts little beside the slavish obedience to precedent in externals. That graceful polish and chivalrous attention to the feelings of others which the social usages of the West require, and more especially the refinement proceeding from the free association of woman and the social equality of the sexes, is in China utterly absent. Of Society as we understand it there is no trace, nor is it easy to convey the idea to a Chinese mind.

We do not, however, propose to enter on the introspective stage: our point of view is essentially an outside one; and our views of Chinese life are distant perspectives, where, we feel, too many of the details are hidden with the mist that the Oriental loves to evolve about him.

Shanghai is, however, in many respects a favourable field for these telescopic views, with which we hope to amuse and, perhaps, in a measure instruct our readers. It is essentially the "show" place of China, and thither resort not merely the eager merchant, but the *jeunesse dorée* of the Empire, who, in the abundance of its pleasures and the freedom of its institutions, seek some relief from that oppressive *ennui* which is the lot of all those in China not actually in office or engaged in the toils of business. Here we meet with the smug-faced and crafty Cantonese, the *beau idéal* of all that is objectionable in the Chinese character. Selfish

and ungrateful to a degree, he is to be found aiding and abetting every movement for the supercession of the Foreigner, to whom he owes everything in life. Hitler resorts the more decided Fuhkien-man, who, as a colonist in the Straits and elsewhere, has shown himself in many respects worthy of esteem. Here, in numbers, are to be found the more angular natives of Chehkiang, mostly born in Ningpo or Chusan, and who, clannish to a fault, jealous of all external influences, wary and unprogressive in business, may be looked upon as the Scotch of China. Here, too, we may meet with natives of Shansi, a larger race, fond of money for its own sake, enterprising and born financiers, to whom is often given the title of the "Jews of China." Here, too, from the Yangtze Provinces, come the small round-headed inhabitant of Human, the soul of China as he thinks himself, whose prowess saved the Empire from the Taipings, and now seeks, under the name of patriotism, to expel the hated Foreigner; who hounds missionaries to death, cuts down telegraph poles and produces such literature as the "Death Blow to Corrupt Doctrines." Hither, too, come the merchants from Tientsin and the North,—stalwart fellows, free and easy in their ways, and little troubled about the questions that agitate their fellows in the South: ready to trade and ready to fight, but withal a more generous race than their fellows in Mid-China.

Still, in spite of these marked differences between the provinces, the Chinese as a nation are wonderfully homogeneous. A common language, common cult, a common dress, a community of family and social institutions, and a common government, have tended to fuse into one the natives from the frontiers of Annam to the heart of Mongolia. The people think in the same grooves, and have the same social distinctions and national aspirations. Notwithstanding dialectic differences, the language as a whole is one, and the *lingua franca* at Shanghai, albeit founded on a jargon, barbarous to northern ears, is readily comprehensible by all, and forms a close bond of union. There is thus no inducement to form outside connections. The Chinese, here as elsewhere, are as distinct as if they belonged to a separate species, and take care to let this be felt. Above all other nations they excel in this particular; and none—not even the Irish in the United States—know so well how to bring into effect these combinations. This forms at once their strength and their weakness,—their strength, as practically giving them the