

Political and General Miscellany.

RIVER AND CITY OF CANTON.

When the English guns have once more startled the subject of the "Celestial Empire," and when those remarkable specimens of humanity known as "British tars" have taught the "children of the Sun and Moon" that we are not to be trifled with, China and its cities and inhabitants again assume, in the minds of the people of this country, something like the importance which they possessed previous to the Peace of 1842.

Canton may be said to derive from commerce the consideration which it enjoys in the eyes of the civilized world. Situated on the Pearl river, seventy miles from its mouth, in the China sea, the city ranks as the greatest emporium of Asia, and boasts of a teeming population, estimated at a million. Along both sides of the river the city stretches; and the suburbs extending along the banks are almost as large as the city itself. The most important part of Canton, situated on the left bank, is built on a hill, crowned by a fine tall pagoda.

This great commercial city, which has long been recognized as "one of the richest and most important in the celestial empire," is enclosed by a brick wall, on a foundation of red sandstone, some seven miles in circumference, mounted in several places with cannon, and entered by twelve gates. Another wall, with four gates, divided the city into the old and new towns; the former of which contains the public arsenals, and the residences of the great officers.

The city and suburbs of Canton are built and laid out after the same fashion. The narrow and crooked streets are paved and flagged; all of them are closed by gates; and each of the thoroughfares is appropriated to a trade. The city is intersected by several canals, which are crossed by stone bridges.

The temples in Canton are numerous. Upwards of a hundred and twenty are mentioned in and about the city. Of these the principal is the celebrated Buddhist Temple of Ho-nan, on a large island hard by the city. Within "the old town" are two other considerable temples, and a Mahometan mosque, with a dome, and minaret a hundred and sixty feet in height. Canton boasts of a grand hall for examination of candidates for literary honors, fourteen high schools, and about thirty colleges, three of which have in all six hundred students.

The aspect which Canton presents to strangers is one of considerable gaiety and animation.—The houses, generally speaking, have only one story, the windows of which, in many cases, open on elegant balconies and sometimes on terraces adorned with flowers. Many of the houses have sentences—no doubt of an oracular character—inscribed on their entablature or on a stone placed between two of the windows; and many of the balconies have columns and trellises painted in a variety of colors. It has been remarked, that "there results from this diversity of colors a certain gaiety which gives to the Chinese towns much more animation than ours."

The houses of the wealthy inhabitants are built within a walled court, and richly furnished.—Those of the middle classes—stated as one-third of the population—have no courts, and are less magnificent. Those of the poorest class, which are numerous along the banks of the canals, and in the suburbs, are the most wretched of hovels; and a score of human beings are frequently crowded into one apartment. A very considerable part of the population have their residences on the water, and for miles,

opposite the city, both above and below, the river is crowded with vessels and rafts of every description.

On landing at Canton, the stranger is forcibly struck by the singular effect which the building of the "hongs," or European factories, in the midst of Chinese houses, produce on the eye. The space allotted to the factories, consists of a strip of land reclaimed from the river; and in front of each is displayed the national flag. There are thirteen "hongs," including English, American, Dutch, French, Austrian, and other merchants. Each consists of four or five houses ranged round a closed court. The English "hong" far surpasses the others in elegance and extent. These buildings, which front the south, are built upon a flat raised on piles, and separated from the river by a quay called "Respendentia" walk. They have stairs by which the merchandize is shipped. Immense numbers of boats are moored all along the shore hard by.

About a mile from the European factories, on a small rocky island, in the centre of the river which, from its situation, presents a formidable barrier to an enemy approaching from the sea, appears that fort which the Chinese call "The Dutch Folly." This is an oval enclosure, with embattled walls, above which are seen dragons and dolphins, which surmount the roofs of houses standing under some fine trees.

The fort owes its name to an attempt made by the Dutch to establish themselves on the Chinese territory. At a period when they carried on extensive trade with China, they requested and obtained possession of this little island. The suspicions of the natives were aroused by the landing of a number of boxes, and one being opened, was found to contain warlike stores. The Chinese immediately retracted the permission they had given; and the Dutch were compelled to abandon the island in mortification.

The "Dutch Folly" was stormed and taken on the 24th of October, by a party of seamen and marines, during Admiral Seymour's operations against Canton. During the bombardment, it was set apart for the reception of the wounded.

Two miles lower down the river than the "Dutch Folly," a little fort has the reputation of looking wonderfully picturesque, from whatever side it is viewed. Though not erected by a Frenchman, this is called the "French Folly," and like the Dutch, it is oval and embattled, with some buildings, and a square tower in the middle.

Leaving the far-famed city of Canton, making our way through the junks, and descending the noble river, with its numerous ramifications, in the midst of most picturesque scenery, we arrive at the Bogue Forts, which command the entrance of the river, and mostly occupy steep hills rising from the banks, particularly on the north side.

These Bogue Forts form an extensive fortification, running along the shore, and up the sides of the steep hills. Since 1841, when they were taken by the English, they have been fortified, and now mount such heavy guns, that in the hands of an enemy versed in military science, they would prove most formidable. During the recent affair, they were manned by the Chinese, and intended to destroy the fleet of Admiral Seymour; before a few days passed, the whole of them were in possession of the English, who lost one man in making the capture!

It is inside the Bogue that the Canton river widens so as to present the appearance of an inland sea. At this point, the view is described as beautiful and peculiarly picturesque, the flat cultivated plan near the shore forming a striking contrast to the barren hills on the outside of the forts; the mountains in the