

The Streets of a Chinese City

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PASSING through the streets of a capital city! Immediately such a phase calls to us, if they be residential streets, memories of broad, paved roadways, grassy boulevards well set with shady maples, sidewalks broad and clean, neat iron or trim hedge fences, broad, green lawns laid out in tennis courts, flower beds, drive ways, fountains, terraces leading up to some massive stone residence. Or, if they be business streets, then we think of the rattle and clang of the cars, carriages, carts, trucks, automobiles, threaded by scurrying bicycles, or sidewalks thronged with smartly dressed people hurrying up and down or in and out of many storied stores, through whose great windows are displayed temptingly merchandise from many lands.

When one speaks of Oriental street scenes the image called up must be widely different. Here purely residential streets are rare or not at all. The city is roughly, far from regularly, divided into blocks. Inside the squares are the straggling, one-story residences of officials and gentry, while on all sides lining the streets are rows of shops in which the tradespeople live, move and have their being.

THE RESIDENTIAL STREETS IN CHENTU.

When occasionally you do discover a semi-residential street it is to find what we would consider at home a blind alley of possibly eight feet width. This may have a single file of flagstones end to end up the centre, but more frequently is macadamized (minus the Scotch prefix) and is strained into a deliciously sloppy slime by squirting between the thousands of bootless toes during the long rainy season. On either side you have open ditches full of festering filth. Across this is a grey brick wall from fifteen to twenty-five feet, excluding both pilfering and public gaze. Even the big shiny black wooden gates, with their glaring, grinning gods, are further protected by walls frescoed with dozen tailed dragons to ward off men and monsters. On the other side is possibly a mud wall which, broken down in spots by frequent rains, gives you a glimpse of some luxuriant, well tended vegetable garden until a whiff of wind cuts your curiosity short.

A BUSINESS STREET.

The business streets have at least much more of variety. Here the single row of flags is bordered by stones laid sideways and frequently the whole street is flagged or has been. The ditches being covered the passage way seems wide, though they usually average from six to twelve feet, while our Great East Street seems spacious at twenty. Such conveniences as sidewalks are unthought of. The shops extend to the roadside and frequently overflow, for space is at a premium.

To call the mass of business stands stores would be to give a false impression. The term shop is more true, for usually the stock in trade is made and sold in the same room. They are one-storied, tile-covered structures with usually but two rooms. In the back the women exist, while in front the men work, trade, eat, sleep, smoke, gamble. These shops have neither doors nor windows. In the morning a long row of upright shutters is removed, leaving the whole front room open to the street. You simply step upon the curbstone anywhere and are inside some shop.

THE SHOPS OF CHENTU.

To describe the varieties of these would be endless. There are tea shops where, as you pass, scores of men with chop-

sticks are shovelling their mouths full of rice, vegetables, red peppers and pork, or having tided that stage are sipping tea from covered bowls while they retail to each other the events of the hour. Next door is a millinery establishment where are made and marketed the little flowered bands which form a woman's head dress. Such creations as ladies' bonnets are, of course, unknown to Chinese women, who must content themselves with a change of color, a napkin, or go bare-headed. Across the street is, with no suggestion of reason, for a coffin shop, the big shiny ends are arranged temptingly, for the purchaser may leave his order, for many a Chinaman could scarce have more satisfying thoughts for the future than to have the consciousness that his coffin was securely in his house for years before his demise. Then comes a rice shop, its bins brimming full of the white, wholesome food of the land. And now a medicine shop where you may purchase ground orange peels, roots, snake skins, deer horns or tigers' whiskers. Beside this, high up on blocks, men are punching millions of money on paper which you may purchase for a few cash and by burning remit fabulous fortunes to your once poverty stricken ancestors, or if you wish to provide them with a few servants, a house, a boat or wives, you can purchase these around the corner at some image shop and forward these also by fire. Near by, if you are concerned more about appetites than ancestors, is a grocery shop where, recently we counted some sixty different varieties of nuts, fruits and vegetables telling us what a wonderfully fertile land we live in. Prominently, next door is a tobacco shop, for nearly every Chinaman smokes, though none chew the weed.



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FURNITURE AND FURS.

Close beside is a furniture shop, in which great cumbersome square chairs, heavy, almost immovable, round tables, native sideboards and couches with tiers of drawers below are all jumbled together, painted a shiny black. Nowhere does one find any attempt at the dainty cosy pieces which make our habitations homes in Canada. Near here is a fur shop with skins from Thibet, the far North or the Pacific, for the people appreciate furs, only they, in their crudeness, turn the furs inside out to get the warmth, while we in our civilization turn it out that others may see how very pleasant it must be to wear. In China, like many other things that go contrary, men have much more variety in head dress than the women. Individual shops are found scattered about and whole blocks are given over to the cap industry. The most common kind