V. F. Hong Kong.

HONGKÓNG

15

Street vendor of lichee nuts

HONGKONG

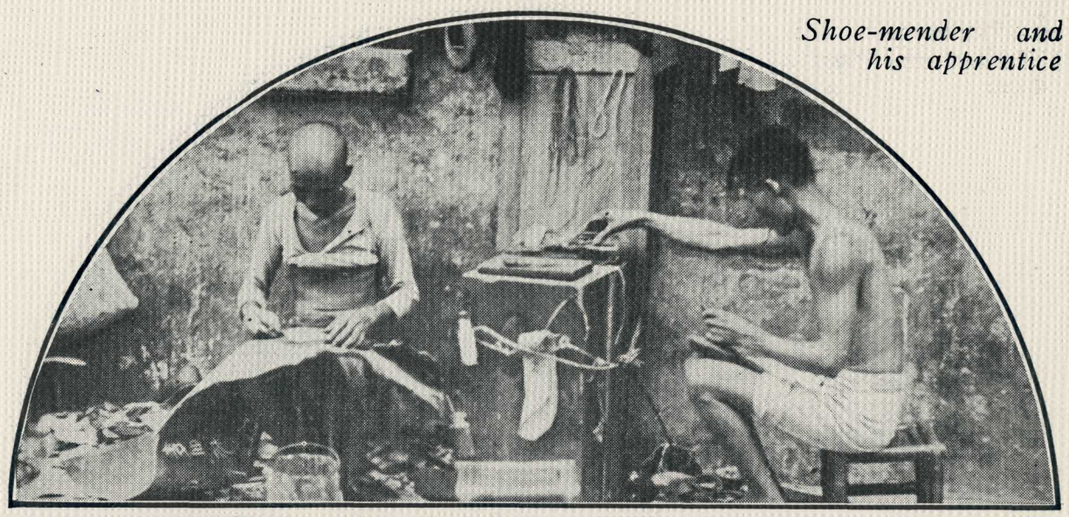
IT sheers up out of the water—a huge rock, green to the top, where it isn't stone-grey with streets and houses. Great Britain's other Rock, Gibraltar, may be more impressive, but Hongkong stands at the crossroads of the East, and the trade that flows in and out of this marvellous harbor at its feet would turn Gibraltar dizzy. For at one time (not so long ago), it was the greatest port in the world in point of in and out tonnage. And that day may easily come again, if the East wakes.

It didn't have an easy time growing, this settlement off the South China coast, for when it was born, eighty-two years ago, there wasn't a more turbulent corner of the world. But, just as its houses filled the lower level and then rose, tier on hillside tier till they climbed six hundred feet above the water, so, through peril and piracy, through fights with the Cantonese on shore and with the Colonial Secretary in England, through fires and plagues, intrigues and strikes, under wise Governors and others not so wise, the Crown Colony pushed its way stubbornly ahead, developing not only a city and a harbor, but a financial system that stretched out all over the East, great business interests that changed the face of lands and rivers, and educational institutions that are still doing their part in influencing the packed millions of the most conservative country on earth.

November, December, January and early February are the

Maslan
Mar. 15/86

Palanquin in the streets of Hongkong



Shoe-mender and his apprentice

best months in Hongkong. Before that, it's a bit too hot; afterward, the rains begin. But during that time, one couldn't ask a better climate in which to do anything outdoors.

The best golf in the East is to be found at Fan-ling—about eighteen miles away—two perfect inland courses of eighteen holes; and there are other courses at Deep Water Bay and Happy Valley. The "Jockey" Club is at Happy Valley, too, and the race course, with hills on three sides of it. If you're there in February, you'll see three days of excitement that envelops everybody from the most august *taipan* (which is Hongkongese for money baron) to his humblest clerk. It has even been suggested that there is an attendance from across the valley—a cosmopolitan gathering, truly—where the Mohammedan, the Catholic, the Protestant and the Parsee cemeteries stand side by side in the middle of their flowers.

Motoring, too, is something that everyone does. Today it may mean taking the twenty-five mile trip around the island, passing beautiful bays and picturesque villages and stopping for tea at the Repulse Bay Hotel, where one will undoubtedly return later drawn by the promise of swimming, yachting, golf and aviation. Tomorrow, it may mean that one crosses in the Kowloon ferry over to the mainland for the sixty-mile drive in what is known as the "New Territory," which doesn't belong to Great Britain but is held on a ninety-nine year lease. But as one may imagine, those amusements that have to do with the water are perhaps the most popular in Hongkong. One goes to Deep Water Bay, let us say, for a picnic, and to swim. Some people motor over, but others prefer a launch with an hour and a half of blue and gold and green background to life under the awnings. In the summer, the water

is so warm that the swimmers stay in for hours, but even in the winter, the tropical sea is never what a North American would call less than pleasantly warm. There are row boats to be had, too, and yachts of various sizes and kinds, though these are, in the main, privately owned and appear before the public only at regatta time—which is one of the gayest events of the year. Launches, however, are always to be had for hire, and the limit of exploration in the seas around is only the limit of one's stay.

Walking is another thing one does in Hongkong. There are, of course, in addition to the motors, plenty of rickshas on the lower levels of the city and sedan chairs on the hill, but one walks for sport and to keep fit. There are all sorts of pleasant little forestry paths made and maintained for one's accommodation, but the most popular walk concerns itself with the Peak and the sunset, though it is only fair to say that the lazy will see just as much if they let the funicular railway do the 1825-foot exercise for them.

When the flag staff is finally reached, the whole harbor lies spread out below—a great polished tinted map, many-armed, backed with blue hills, covered with wonderful islands and a still more wonderful and miscellaneous collection of shipping from all over the world. Beyond those hills, in the quiet Shatin Valley, they used to grow special white rice for the Royal Palace in Peking. In the Tide Cove that looks like a thirty-mile lake all banked with mountains, the pirates used to take shelter in days gone by. Tigers were found in that neighborhood—sometimes they are today! But, eighty-two years ago, the whole settlement at one's feet, with its hum of world politics, was nothing but a native fishing village for

Macao, the Monte Carlo of the East

which the scornful old Viceroy over in Canton wouldn't have given his second best fan! And *now* look at the flags of all nations, on Hongkong's blue-harbor doorstep! . . . Yet even while one looks, the sunset goes, and the quick tropic dark drops like a bird, and lights spring up on sea and land so that there are two skies, at peace with each other, full of stars. . . .

No wonder one learns to love the view so much that one takes a room at the Peak Hotel for a while, where such views are always to be had from the roof garden, and tea is also to be had—like tea in an aeroplane!

Another thing one must do is to go over to Macao, that rocky peninsula which has been a stronghold of the Portuguese in the East since 1557. The houses are so gaily painted, the uphill roads so clean and bright, the gardens so pretty, the whole place so quiet and so quaint that the little city of seventy-five thousand would be well worth the pleasant three-hour sail among the islands even if one didn't go to it for the purpose of playing fantan, as most of the visitors do.

The foreigner isn't wanted around the table where the Chinese stake their money—a circle of yellow faces that never show when they win, or show when they lose—a circle of eyes that look just the same when the mandarin gambles away his ancestral home and wins it back, and loses it again. But the management doesn't wish to miss anyone's patronage, so the foreigner is invited to go upstairs to a sort of gallery that overlooks the table. There are quick and smiling attendants at the foreign elbow—there are little baskets that go up and down by hand to carry money. And so one plays, in the game and yet not of it, marvelling at the hold it takes on so apparently unemotional a race—unless, indeed, one is a born gam-

A bit of Portugal in Oriental setting

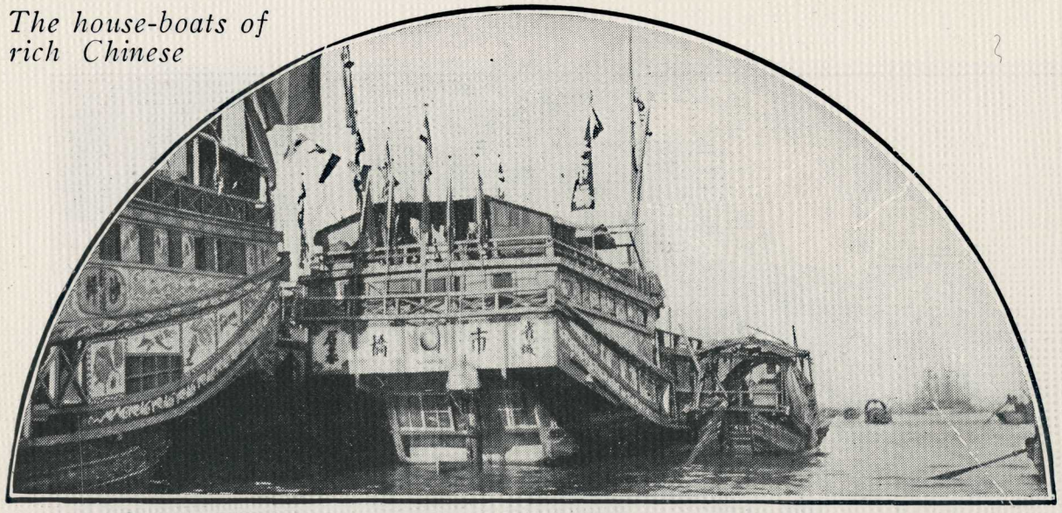
bler oneself, in which case the marvelling is all on the Celestial side. And so to bed in the old Portuguese hotel,—or home to Hongkong.

But even should one chance to be the serious-minded husband of a frivolous lady given to travel, there would be plenty of interesting things to fill up one's visit. Take the Hongkong University, for example, founded by an Englishman, largely financed by a Parsee, and later showered with benefits by a sort of Chinese Carnegie who made his money in tin and died worth five million pounds sterling, despite his enormous gifts to charity. To this university come men from all over China to meet their first impact with the West, and many a future trade connection may hang on the relative impressions that some young engineer forms of this or that country, this or that method, in his student years.

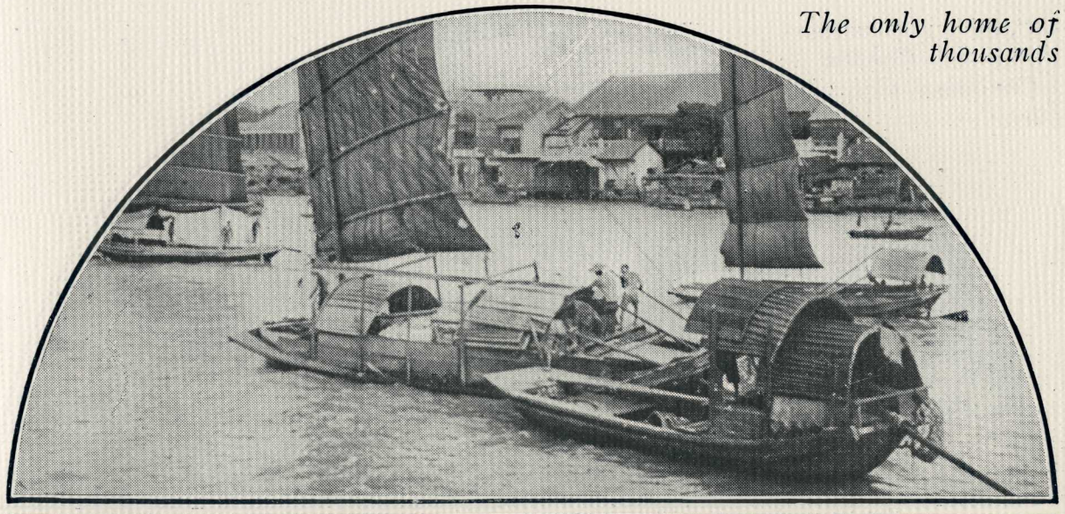
Then—if a man has letters of introduction—he is sure to meet important officers in those great institutions that took over the Orient where the British East India Company left off —the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, familiarly called "the Bank" for thousands of miles, ruler of exchange rates, deposit box of vast secrets—Jardine Matheson and Company, whose activities in the East are more easily explained by saying what they don't do than by attempting to make a list of them, since everything from cotton cloth to steamships carries the mystic name of the "Ewo Hong"—Butterfield and Swire, who build ships at their own dockyard, refine sugar, and carry everything to everybody everywhere between Singapore and Vladivostok—and many another old but no less active "hong" whose network of interests ties the East closer and closer to the West.

Queens Road in Hongkong proves that the East and the West can meet and interpenetrate—to the advantage of both. The rickshas themselves are descended from a missionary baby carriage; the buildings are stone and as un-Chinese as roast beef; the business that goes on in them spreads to the four corners of an earth that the old Celestial Emperors refused to have anything to do with. But the signs and the sounds, the hats and the fans, the silks and the jades in the shops, the food the common people eat and the thoughts the common people think, are as Chinese as Confucius' grandmother—and always will be. Likable? Eminently. Understandable? . . . . Never.

The house-boats of rich Chinese



The only home of thousands



But when one thinks of trade and its golden romance on the South China coast, one doesn't stop at Hongkong; one sees also—ninety miles away on its great river in the middle of the delta country—Canton with its impressive bund in front, its wide boulevard where the ancient walls have just been taken down, and its tangled miles of eight-foot rabbit-warren inner streets, the first of which was put there some four thousand years ago. There are two hundred thousand boat-dwellers in this strange city who have never lived on shore mainly because there is no room for them; the total population is estimated at two million; and the whole place is ringed in by cemeteries where the dead lie in millions upon millions more—those who died in Canton itself, and those who came back across half a world, tossed in their coffins. Largely owing to the impossibility of expanding either through or beyond these cemeteries, desirable real estate, they tell us, is almost as expensive as it is in New York, and if a man expects to vacate his business premises in twenty years, he can sell now!

Provided this difficulty of expansion can be met, Canton has all the elements of one of the world's most important trading centers—all the elements but one—the one that Hongkong has. For Canton experiences periodical political shifts, and stability of government seems to be something that simply won't grow. But this, of course, doesn't affect the visitor who hires a sedan chair and two bearers and plunges into the middle of a life lived closer together than anything else to be found, even in China.

"When young, don't go to Canton," is a Chinese proverb. And one can quite understand it, riding down Jade Stone Street, with the coins fairly climbing out of one's purse—or down Ivory Street, where the carving is done under one's fascinated eyes—or through the street where the blackwood furniture lives and sells itself so cheaply if one is a good bargainer. No matter what had been the strength of one's Confucian teaching, grandfather's to-be-revered patrimony would be easily wasted by anybody still young enough to be tempted—but—alas, at what advanced age would immunity to such seduction be achieved? Never—if one were a woman—never.

Many of the streets are roofed with matting (though the sun filters through in fat gold bars), but some are so narrow that they don't need such protection. The stone pavements are cool, in these dark, strangely-scented canyons, and everywhere somebody is making or selling—making, by hand—selling, in shops no bigger than a hall bedroom. One sees the silk weavers at work with their handlooms, like those in use a thousand years ago; young boys and old men, making crêpes, making brocades with tinted flowers, making silk gauze for summertime; the matting weavers, too, twisting the dried fibres, full of dust, full of the smell of the fields. One sees the fan shop with its carved and gilded, feathered and embroidered bits of color; one watches the silver being twisted into bracelets and pins for the hair, and strange little ornaments for tourists to buy; the shoes being made and set with bright flower-patterns, some to be worn on Canton floors, and some to go to America, for sale in New York's Chinatown!

When we tire of life in the streets (if we ever do—that all depends on temperament), we'll want to "see the sights," perhaps, like regular tourists. If so, we'll climb "The Five-

Dogs of the war-god—at Canton Christian College

Storied House" which used to be a part of the wall, and look down on the city; or, better still, ascend the tower of Tai Sun Company's department store, the Woolworth Tower of Canton! Those ever-recurrent tall buildings that remind one vaguely of grain elevators in their general starkness and lack of windows are—pawn-shops! But in China, everyone stores things in them, whether one needs the money or not. That wide boulevard is where the wall ran—poor old worn-out wall that surrounded the "City of the Goat", founded by the five immortals who rode down here in prehistoric times on five goats of varied colors bearing miraculous stalks of grain with six heads. Another sight is the City of the Dead with its flowers and its paths and its little brick pavilions. In the back room of each pavilion, the body of some rich man waits in its coffin till the geomancers can decide on a propitious day for burial; in the front room an attendant sets out food and offerings for the spirit who is utterly dependent in his new life on what his relatives pay to have done for him.

Old residents, too, will help us if we want to charter a house-boat and go travelling through the delta country, meeting, in the larger streams, ocean going junks from Tientsin, foreign motor-driven launches or those copied from them and built right here in Canton, ancient paddle-wheel boats like those that used to churn the Mississippi, though the Chinese variants are gay with red and blue and gold, with great black sprawling Chinese characters at the stern and two hundred passengers jammed smilingly together inside.

But big boats, after all, are in the minority. Thousands of sampans creep like water beetles across every available inch of the river, little "three-board-boats" as their name signifies,

Each deity has a specialty — The Chinese are efficient

carrying wood, straw, fruit, vegetables, rice or, in the summer time, mulberry leaves for voracious silk worms those strange little beasts that form such a fascinating study for the business man (who thinks of them in dollars), the lady (who thinks of them in clothes), the scientist (who thinks of the diseases they get, and how to cure them), and the sociologist, who knows, of course, that four million people in South China live for no other purpose but to do something or other connected with silk.

Some of these servants of silk are the permanent dwellers on boats who fetch and carry—aquatic Chinese whose very babies have joints of bamboo strapped to their backs so that they'll be easy to pick out of the water should they fall in! But more are farmers who grow mulberry leaves in the rich black delta soil; or prepare silkworm eggs, or hatch these eggs out, feed the worms, and sell the cocoons. And some, again, (largely women) are those who work in the great silk "filatures" where the cocoon is unwound, and a skein of silk weighing two ounces is made from the frail little houses of from five to six thousand worms!

Speaking of silk makes us think of the Canton Christian College which has done and is doing so much for this greatest of South China industries. There are, of course, all sorts of other departments in this great University, with its 963 students, supported by American, British and Chinese contributions; but no department is more interesting than that devoted to improving the quality of the silkworm.

Those grown in the college are twenty-five per cent. larger than those grown by the farmer, and the cocoons are from two to three times as heavy with silk. Not only are eggs from

this improved and disease-free strain sold to the farmers at cost, but boys are given a six months' course and sent home to demonstrate to their villages. The next steps will be improving the silkworm's food, the mulberry, and seeing what can be done in persuading the "filatures" to adopt better methods of unwinding. By this means will Chinese silk be kept on a market that needs it—(85 per cent. of the world's raw silk, by the way, goes to America to be woven).

But while young China rises among the rice fields, there are monasteries in the hills, so archaic in their simplicity that it seems impossible that they could exist almost within sight of automobiles and trains and aeroplanes. Some of the serene old men who live in them have been abroad, though now they never say so—perhaps they traded in South America, or the Malay world; perhaps they cooked in South Africa, or washed in America. But now they've come back to the only land that really matters. They've paid in two hundred dollars. And the monastery will keep them safely till they die, and bury them, gravely, among their brothers who—wiser, perhaps—have never seen another province of China, let alone an alien world. But these places aren't easy to see. One needs an old resident as guide—a sympathetic old resident whose comments make one seriously to think. The West is more efficient, of course—and yet. . . . . That "yet" is half the reason for going to the East.

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