

# An Australian in China

BEING THE NARRATIVE OF  
A QUIET JOURNEY ACROSS  
CHINA TO BURMA



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# AN AUSTRALIAN IN CHINA

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY—MAINLY ABOUT MISSIONARIES AND THE CITY OF HANKOW.

IN the first week of February, 1894, I returned to Shanghai from Japan. It was my intention to go up the Yangtse River as far as Chungking, and then, dressed as a Chinese, to cross quietly over Western China, the Chinese Shan States, and Kachin Hills to the frontier of Burma. The ensuing narrative will tell how easily and pleasantly this journey, which a few years ago would have been regarded as a formidable undertaking, can now be done.

The journey was, of course, in no sense one of exploration; it consisted simply of a voyage of 1500 miles up the Yangtse River, followed by a quiet, though extended, excursion of another 1500 miles along the great overland highway into Burma, taken by one who spoke no Chinese, who had no interpreter or companion, who was unarmed, but who trusted implicitly in the good faith of the Chinese. Anyone in the world can cross over to Burma in the way I did, provided he be willing to exercise for a certain number of weeks or months some endurance—for he will have to travel many miles on foot over a mountainous country—and much forbearance.

I went to China possessed with the strong racial antipathy to the Chinese common to my countrymen, but that feeling has long since given way to one of lively sympathy and gratitude,

and I shall always look back with pleasure to this journey, during which I experienced, while traversing provinces as wide as European kingdoms, uniform kindness and hospitality, and the most charming courtesy. In my case, at least, the Chinese did not forget their precept, "deal gently with strangers from afar."

I left Shanghai on Sunday, February 11th, by the Jardine Matheson's steamer *Taiwo*. One kind friend, a merchant captain who had seen life in every important seaport in the world, came down, though it was past midnight, to bid me farewell. We shook hands on the wharf, and for the last time. Already he had been promised the first vacancy in Jardine Matheson's. Some time after my departure, when I was in Western China, he was appointed one of the officers of the ill-fated *Kowshing*, and when this unarmed transport before the declaration of war was destroyed by a Japanese gunboat, he was among the slain—struck, I believe, by a Japanese bullet while struggling for life in the water.

I travelled as a Chinese, dressed in warm Chinese winter clothing, with a pigtail attached to the inside of my hat. I could not have been more comfortable. I had a small cabin to myself. I had of course my own bedding, and by paying a Mexican dollar a day to the Chinese steward, "foreign chow" was brought me from the saloon. The traveller who cares to travel in this way, to put his pride in his pocket and a pigtail down his back, need pay only one-fourth of what it would cost him to travel as a European in European dress.

But I was, I found, unwittingly travelling under false pretences. When the smart chief officer came for my fare he charged me, I thought, too little. I expressed my surprise, and said that I thought the fare was seven dollars. "So it is," he replied "but we only charge missionaries five dollars, and I knew you were a missionary even before they told me." How different was his acuteness from that of the Chinese compradore who received me on the China Merchants' steamer *Hsin Chi*, in which I once made a voyage from Shanghai to Tientsin, also in Chinese dress! The conversation was short, sharp, and emphatic. The compradore

looked at me searchingly. "What pidgin belong you?" he asked—meaning what is your business? Humbly I answered, "My belong Jesus Christ pidgin"; that is, I am a missionary, to which he instantly and with some scorn replied, "No dam fear!"

We called at the river ports and reached Hankow on the 14th. Hankow, the Chinese say, is the mart of eight provinces and the centre of the earth. It is the chief distributing centre of the Yangtse valley, the capital city of the centre of China. The trade in tea, its staple export, is declining rapidly, particularly since 1886. Indian opium goes no higher up the river than this point; its importation into Hankow is now insignificant amounting to only 738 piculs (44 tons) per annum. Hankow is on the left bank of the Yangtse, separated only by the width of the Han river from Hanyang, and by the width of the Yangtse from Wuchang; these three divisions really form one large city, with more inhabitants than the entire population of the colony of Victoria.

Wuchang is the capital city of the two provinces of Hunan and Hupeh; it is here that the Viceroy, Chang Chi Tung, resides in his official yamen and dispenses injustice from a building almost as handsome as the American mission-houses which overlook it. Chang Chi Tung is the most anti-foreign of all the Viceroys of China; yet no Viceroy in the Empire has ever had so many foreigners in his employ as he. "Within the four seas," he says, "all men are brothers"; yet the two provinces he rules over are closed against foreigners, and the missionaries are compelled to remain under the shelter of the foreign Concession in Hankow. With a public spirit unusual among Chinese Viceroys he has devoted the immense revenues of his office to the modern development of the resources of his vice-kingdom. He has erected a gigantic cotton-mill at Wuchang with thirty-five thousand spindles, covering six acres and lit with the electric light, and with a reservoir of three acres and a half. He has built a large mint. At Hanyang he has erected magnificent iron-works and blast furnaces which cover many acres and are provided with all the latest machinery. He has iron and coal mines, with

a railway seventeen miles long from the mines to the river, and specially constructed river-steamers and special hoisting machinery at the river-banks. Money he has poured out like water; he is probably the only important official in China who will leave office a poor man.

Acting as private secretary to the Viceroy is a clever Chinese named Kaw Hong Beng, the author of *Defensio Populi*, that often-quoted attack upon missionary methods which appeared first in *The North China Daily News*. A linguist of unusual ability, who publishes in *The Daily News* translations from Heine in English verse, Kaw is gifted with a rare command over the resources of English. He is a Master of Arts of the University of Edinburgh. Yet, strange paradox, notwithstanding that he had the privilege of being trained in the most pious and earnest community in the United Kingdom, under the lights of the United Presbyterian Kirk, Free Kirk, Episcopalian Church, and *The Kirk*, not to mention a large and varied assortment of Dissenting Churches of more or less dubious orthodoxy, he is openly hostile to the introduction of Christianity into China. And nowhere in China is the opposition to the introduction of Christianity more intense than in the Yangtse valley. In this intensity many thoughtful missionaries see the greater hope of the ultimate conversion of this portion of China; opposition they say is a better aid to missionary success than mere apathy.

During the time I was in China, I met large numbers of missionaries of all classes, in many cities from Peking to Canton, and they unanimously expressed satisfaction at the progress they are making in China. Expressed succinctly, their harvest may be described as amounting to a fraction more than two Chinamen per missionary per annum. If, however, the paid ordained and unordained native helpers be added to the number of missionaries, you find that the aggregate body converts nine-tenths of a Chinaman per worker per annum; but the missionaries deprecate their work being judged by statistics. There are 1511 Protestant missionaries labouring in the Empire; and, estimating their

results from the statistics of previous years as published in the *Chinese Recorder*, we find that they gathered last year (1893) into the fold 3127 Chinese—not all of whom it is feared are genuine Christians—at a cost of £350,000, a sum equal to the combined incomes of the ten chief London hospitals.

Hankow itself swarms with missionaries, "who are unhappily divided into so many sects, that even a foreigner is bewildered by their number, let alone the heathen to whom they are accredited." (Medhurst.)

Dwelling in well-deserved comfort in and around the foreign settlement, there are members of the London Missionary Society, of the Tract Society, of the Local Tract Society, of the British and Foreign Bible Society, of the National Bible Society of Scotland, of the American Bible Society; there are Quaker missionaries, Baptist, Wesleyan, and Independent missionaries of private means; there are members of the Church Missionary Society, of the American Board of Missions, and of the American High Church Episcopal Mission; there is a Medical Mission in connection with the London Missionary Society, there is a flourishing French Mission under a bishop, the "*Missions étrangères de Paris*," a Mission of Franciscan Fathers, most of whom are Italian, and a Spanish Mission of the Order of St. Augustine.

The China Inland Mission has its chief central distributing station at Hankow, and here also are the headquarters of a Scandinavian Mission, of a Danish Mission, and of an unattached mission, most of the members of which are also Danish. Where there are so many missions, of so many different sects, and holding such widely divergent views, it is, I suppose, inevitable that each mission should look with some disfavour upon the work done by its neighbours, should have some doubts as to the expediency of their methods, and some reasonable misgivings as to the genuineness of their conversions.

The Chinese "Rice Christians," those spurious Christians who become converted in return for being provided with rice, are just those who profit by these differences of opinion, and who, with

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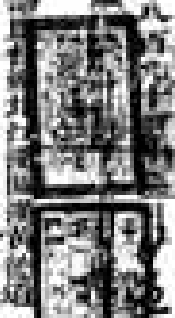
給發護照事照得天津條約第九款內載英國人民在華通商口岸  
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地方如歸交出執照應可隨時呈驗無礙放行倘船中人與船  
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大清各處地方文武員弁驗照放行務須隨時保衛均應相持嚴緝  
津局卡守勿得藉端阻礙此給與通商員等照  
一千八百五十七年七月十八日  
光緒三年六月十八日

大清欽命

駐劄漢口管理本國通商事務領事官

加印

光緒三年六月十八日



timely lapses from grace, are said to succeed in being converted in turn by all the missions from the Augustins to the Quakers.

Every visitor to Hankow and to all other open ports, who is a supporter of missionary effort, is pleased to find that his preconceived notions as to the hardships and discomforts of the open port missionary in China are entirely false. Comfort and pleasures of life are there as great as in any other country. Among the most comfortable residences in Hankow are the quarters of the missionaries; and it is but right that the missionaries should be separated as far as possible from all discomfort—missionaries who are sacrificing all for China, and who are prepared to undergo any reasonable hardship to bring enlightenment to this land of darkness.

I called at the headquarters of the Spanish mission of Padres Agustinos and smoked a cigarette with two of the Padres, and exchanged reminiscences of Valladolid and Barcelona. And I can well conceive, having seen the extreme dirtiness of the mission premises, how little the Spaniard has to alter his ways in order to make them conform to the more ancient civilisation of the Chinese.

In Hankow there is a large foreign concession with a handsome embankment lined by large buildings. There is a rise and fall in the river between summer and winter levels of nearly sixty feet. In the summer the river laps the edge of the embankment and may overflow into the concession; in the winter, broad steps lead down to the edge of the water which, even when shrunk into its bed, is still more than half a mile in width. Our handsome consulate is at one end of the embankment; at the other there is a remarkable municipal building which was designed by a former City constable, who was, I hope, more expert with the handcuffs than he was with the pencil.

Our interests in Hankow are protected by Mr Pelham Warren, the Consul, one of the ablest men in the Service. I registered at the Consulate as a British subject and obtained a Chinese passport in terms of the Treaty of Tientsin for the four provinces

Hupeh, Szechuen, Kweichou, and Yunnan, available for one year from the date of issue.

I had no servant. An English-speaking "boy," hearing that I was in need of one, came to me to recommend "his number one flend," who, he assured me, spoke English "all the same Englishman." But when the "flend" came I found that he spoke English all the same as I spoke Chinese. He was not abashed, but turned away wrath by saying to me, through an interpreter, "It is true that I cannot speak the foreign language, but the foreign gentleman is so clever that in one month he will speak Chinese beautifully." We did not come to terms.

At Hankow I embarked on the China Merchants' steamer *Kweili*, the only triple-screw steamer on the River, and four days later, on February 21st, I landed at Ichang, the most inland port on the Yangtse yet reached by steam. Ichang is an open port; it is the scene of the anti-foreign riot of September 2nd, 1891, when the foreign settlement was pillaged and burnt by the mob, aided by soldiers of the Chentai Loh-Ta-Jen, the head military official in charge at Ichang, "who gave the outbreak the benefit of his connivance." Pleasant zest is given to life here in the anticipation of another outbreak; it is the only excitement.

From Ichang to Chungking—a distance of 412 miles—the river Yangtse, in a great part of its course, is a series of rapids which no steamer has yet attempted to ascend, though it is contended that the difficulties of navigation would not be insuperable to a specially constructed steamer of elevated horse-power. Some idea of the speed of the current at this part of the river may be given by the fact that a junk, taking thirty to thirty-five days to do the upward journey, hauled most of the way by gangs of trackers, has been known to do the down-river journey in two days and a half.

Believing that I could thus save some days on the journey, I decided to go to Chungking on foot, and engaged a coolie to accompany me. We were to start on the Thursday afternoon; but about midnight on Wednesday I met Dr. Aldridge, of the Cus-