

CHAPTER XI.

THE IMPERIAL GRAND CANAL—ARRIVAL AT SOO-CHOW—ENTRY OF THE CITY—CURIOSITY OF THE POPULACE—RECEPTION BY THE GOVERNOR—A COMPLIMENTARY DIALOGUE—A CHINESE OFFICIAL REPAST—POLITENESS OF OUR HOST—CHINESE ETIQUETTE—POLITICAL EFFECT OF OUR VISIT—REASONS AGAINST EXPLORING THE CITY—EXPLORATION OF THE WATER SUBURB—THE BOAT POPULATION—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE—A NOCTURNAL VISITATION—THE TAI-HOO LAKE—A GALE OF WIND—RESIDENCE AT SHANGHAI—A DINNER WITH THE TAOUTAI—AFTER-DINNER CONVERSATION—DEPARTURE FOR NINGPO—NINGPO—THE SHOPS AND JOSS-HOUSES—THE OLD PAGODA.

WHEN day broke on the morning of the 26th, it showed us the walls and pagodas of Soo-chow, distant about three miles. In order to deprive the Governor of the power of saying, at any future time, that we had taken him by surprise, and slipped into the town in an undignified manner, M. de Contades concurred with me in deeming it prudent to write a joint letter to his Excellency, informing him of our proximity to Soo-chow, which we followed in about two hours afterwards.

We had entered the Imperial Grand Canal during the night, and were now proceeding along that once celebrated channel of the internal commerce of the

Empire. Since the bursting of its banks by the Yellow River, and the destruction in consequence of a section of this canal, it has not been used for the last five years. The vast supplies of grain which were annually conveyed along it to the capital are now sent in sea-going junks from Shanghai, and other ports of the Yang-tse-Kiang, round the promontory of Shantung, and up the Peiho river. The expenses incidental to the rebellion have prevented the Government from spending any money in repairing this magnificent work. The consequence is, that the enormous imperial grain-junks formerly employed now line the bank in a rotting condition. They are singular specimens of naval architecture, of immense solidity, and capable of transporting from two to three hundred tons of rice each. They look like so many stranded arks going to decay: this is their inevitable destiny, as the profane vulgar are not allowed to touch imperial property. Their valuable timbers were crumbling and worm-eaten, and, in some instances, their decks grass-grown.

We lowered our tapering masts to pass under a very handsome stone bridge, which spanned the canal in a single arch, and shortly after reached the south-east angle of the city wall. The view from this point was very remarkable. The city is built in the shape of a perfect square, each side four miles in length. On two sides the grand canal washes the walls, and on the other sides two smaller canals complete the square. We were at the junction of one

of these with the grand canal, which extended before us, covered with boats and lined with houses ; but at right angles to the left no suburb interrupted our view of the four miles of canal and wall which stretched in one unbroken line over the vast plain. Here a messenger arrived, saying that the Governor was on his way to meet us, and suggesting that we should wait for him ; but, anxious to get inside the city walls, we pressed on, threading our way in line along the densely thronged canal, and attracting to its banks and the roofs of the houses crowds of eager spectators, not accustomed to see British, French, and American flags flaunting impudently under their very windows.

We appeared so suddenly before the water-gate called "Foomun," that the officials, had they wished it, would scarcely have had time to shut it. However, they contented themselves with making the most frantic gesticulations and expressive signs to us to turn back ; but we put on an air of the most obtuse stolidity, and pushed vehemently on ; my boat, which happened to be leading, carrying away in the hurry some of the grille which formed part of the gate. Once in the city, we did not venture on an exploration of the lanes of water, which, like those of Venice, opened up in divers directions, but moored at once in a retired spot under the walls. We were not long, however, left in quiet. Almost immediately a dense crowd collected on both sides of the canal, deeply interested in the proceedings of the barbarians.

Whenever any of us moved from one boat to another, a general titter of astonishment and curiosity was heard ; but they manifested no semblance of dislike or hostility towards us, and were infinitely more respectable in their behaviour than an English mob would have been under similar circumstances.

We had not been long moored here before the " Foo," a blue-button mandarin, came with a message from the Governor to Mr Lay, who was an old acquaintance of his, requesting to see him at the west gate. In about two hours this gentleman returned with the welcome intelligence that the Governor would receive us at his yamun in the centre of the city, and would immediately send down chairs for us to a neighbouring wharf. Accordingly we proceeded, the same afternoon, to the appointed place, the whole party, with the exception of M. de Contades and myself, being in uniform. We were received at the wharf by a guard of soldiers, and were accompanied by them during our progress in chairs through the city. We thus traversed a distance of about two miles. The streets throughout were lined with spectators ; the windows, house-tops, and bridges were thronged with an eager and excited populace, who gazed with the most extraordinary earnestness at probably the first barbarians they had ever seen in their lives. So wrapt in contemplation of these unknown specimens of humanity were they, that I did not even see them criticising us to one another, much less did they manifest any signs of hostility or

contempt towards us. With mouths and eyes at utmost stretch, they stared in perfect silence. I observed many women among the crowd. Soo-chow is celebrated throughout China for the beauty of its women ; and certainly those I saw did not belie its reputation. In no other part of the empire have I seen such fair complexions or regular features. In Canton the women are absolutely hideous ; in the north they may be good-looking, but it is very difficult to catch a passing glimpse of them, so shy are they of barbarians ; but in Soo-chow they love both to see and be seen, and with good reason. The Chinese proverb surely lacks wisdom, which says, "To be happy on earth, one must be born in Soo-chow, live in Canton, and die in Liauchau ;" which they explain by saying that those born in Soochow are remarkable for personal beauty, those who live in Canton enjoy the richest luxuries of life, and those who die in Liauchau easily obtain superior coffins from the excellent forest trees which are there abundant.

We were received at the yamun by the usual Chinese salute of three guns, and passed through the several courts between rows of soldiers and attendants, drawn up in line and dressed in a species of livery. The Governor met us with great politeness, at the door of the audience-hall, and seated M. de Contades and myself on the raised estrade, which usually forms the centre of a semicircle of chairs on these occasions, and is considered the seat of honour. The

Governor himself took a seat to our right, which, in this land of ceremonies, was considered an additional compliment, inasmuch as the further you are to the left of your host the more highly honoured is your position. Then follows an elaborate interchange of compliments, when the visitor resigns himself entirely to the good offices of the interpreter, who in all probability throws them into somewhat the following shape.

English gentleman, who has never seen his Chinese host before, expresses his pleasure at meeting him.

Interpreter.—"His Excellency has long looked forward to this day."

Chinese Dignitary.—"I meet him now as an old friend, and request to know his honourable age."

Int.—"His Excellency has profitlessly passed — years."

Chin. Dig.—"The ears of his Excellency are long, and betoken great ability."

Int.—"Ah! oh! He is unworthy of the compliment."

Chin. Dig.—"You have had an arduous journey?"

Int.—"We deserved it."

Chin. Dig.—"I trust your honourable health is good."

Int.—"Relying on your happy auspices, his Excellency's health is still robust."

Int.—"The Great Emperor of your honourable nation, is he well?"

Chin. Dig.—"He is well. The Great Sovereign of your honourable nation, is she well?"

Int.—"She is well. Do the troublesome pests (rebels) still infest the country?"

Chin. Dig.—"The insects are being speedily exterminated."

Such, I have little doubt, was the tone of conversation which Mr Meadows and Chaou kept up for a few minutes, until we went on to inform his Excellency that we were the bearers of notes for the Prime Minister Yu, from the four Powers, which were of the utmost importance, and which, we trusted, he would lose no time in forwarding, as delay in their transmission might seriously compromise the interests of the Empire. The covering despatch to himself he opened and read, a crowd of attendants collecting round him and making themselves acquainted with its contents over his shoulder. As we desired that the whole proceeding should be invested with as much publicity as possible, this mode of conducting business, though rather unusual in western diplomácy, was quite in accordance with our wishes.

We were now conducted to a recess, and invited to partake of an extensive display of fruits, pastry, and preserves, first, however, being invited to uncover our heads by our host, who says—"Will you elevate the cap?" On which he is answered,—“We are behaving in a scandalously outrageous manner, forgive our crime;” by which we mean elegantly to apologise for the liberty we are taking in sitting down bareheaded. Then we engage in general conversation, in the course of which Chaou makes sundry inquiries as to the con-

dition of Canton, wishes to know whether we are going to kill Yeh, and when the Ambassadors are coming north. He also, in true Chinese style, indulges in a little quiet irony at the expense of us all, though ostensibly directed at our worthy consul, Mr Robertson, who, he says, must be glad of having such a good opportunity of seeing the celebrated city of Soo-chow; but Mr Robertson protests that Chaou himself is the only sight worth looking at. Certainly a man who is governor of a province containing thirty-eight millions of inhabitants, with a power of life and death, is not an everyday individual, and yet he is only the subordinate of the Governor-General of the Two Kiangs, who, in his turn, is a responsible officer.

Chaou was the best specimen of a Chinese gentleman I had yet seen in China: nothing could be more dignified or courteous than his manner, and this at a time when a most disagreeable commission had been confided to him. But a Chinaman has wonderful command of feature; he generally looks most pleased when he has least reason to be so, and maintains an expression of imperturbable politeness and amiability, when he is secretly regretting devoutly that he cannot bastinado you to death. On this occasion our accomplished host overwhelmed us with civilities, constructed pyramids of delicacies on our plates, and insisted on our drinking a quantity of hot wine, obliging us to turn over our glasses each time as a security against heel-taps.

Chaou's yamun was a far handsomer residence

than any similar official abode at Canton. The interior was invested with an air of comfort unusual in China, the walls nicely papered, and the floor carpeted. The whole establishment had been recently put into good order, and was altogether a fit residence for so elevated a functionary.

At last we "begged to take our leave," and began violently to "tsing-tsing," a ceremony which consists in clasping your hands before your breast, and making a crouching baboon-like gesture. It is the equivalent of shaking hands, only one shakes one's own hands instead of another person's, which may or not have its advantages: in China the custom of the country is the preferable one. This is followed by a scene very like that which occurs on similar occasions among ourselves. Our host insists upon following us to our chairs. We remonstrate—"Stop, stop, stop, we are unworthy," say we. "What language is this?" he replies. "We really are unworthy" we reiterate. "You are in my house" he insists; and so we back to our chairs, perpetually imploring him not to trouble himself by accompanying us, which he vehemently resists, until at last, when we are in our chairs, he reluctantly consents to return, apologising to the last for being so rude as to leave us even then. It is just possible that, under the circumstances, his satisfaction at getting quit of us had as much to do with this "empressement" as his sense of politeness.

It was dark when we returned to our boats; and so much had happened to excite and interest, that

even had it not been, I was not in a humour to engage in the work of accurate observation. Our expedition had terminated, after a good deal of anxiety, in complete success. For the first time in its history, barbarians had made an official entry into Soo-chow, and we hoped that this result would not be without an important political effect. In a country where everything is established by precedent, a victory had been gained over Chinese exclusiveness, which, in the existing state of our relations with the Empire, might be significant of a disposition to yield at last to that Western pressure which for so many years had been successfully resisted. So wonderfully jealous are Chinese of foreigners entering their cities, that one of the first requests made to us by Chaou was, that we should leave the city immediately after the interview, which we agreed to do.

Although it was late before we reached our boats, we determined to keep our faith, and shifted our berth to a wharf outside the west gate, opposite a yamun, at which we had invited Chaou to breakfast with us on the following morning. This ceremony, and all the forms of etiquette which it involved, took place at the appointed hour; but there was an addition to the party in the person of the Taoutai of Shanghai, who had just returned from a fruitless expedition to Shanghai in search of us, by the short route, for the purpose of meeting us, and so preventing our reaching Soo-chow. We enjoyed a quiet laugh at his expense, and he no doubt was firmly convinced that we had designedly

effected a very clever strategic manoeuvre. We plied both our guests with quantities of champagne, in return for the hot wine we had imbibed, at the peril of our constitutions, on the previous evening.

After breakfast, we expressed ourselves satisfied with the receipts Chaou had sent us for the despatches we had delivered to him, and our guests got into their chairs amid a profusion of regrets and civil speeches.

Had we pressed the point, there can be little doubt that we should have been allowed to visit the principal objects in the city, under favourable circumstances ; but many reasons combined to render this inexpedient at the time, and among them, the justification which it would have afforded to the Governor's insinuation, that we had taken advantage of a political mission to gratify an idle curiosity ; so, to our great disappointment, we deemed it best to content ourselves with this transient glance of this interesting city, famed as the birthplace of beauty, and the cradle of all that is refined, elegant, and fashionable in the Empire. We were even unable, as we passed through the streets, to judge of the shops, so dense was the crowd ; and the only remarkable feature I could catch in passing was the numerous canals intersecting it in every direction, spanned, rialto fashion, by high single arches, and with houses rising out of the water as in Venice.

I observe that Mr Fortune has added as little to our previous limited knowledge of Soo-chow as I

have, but he is less excusable, as he seems to have resided there for some time in the disguise of a Chinaman. That there is much interesting information connected with this celebrated city may be inferred from the fact that a Chinese work, called the Soo-chow-foo-chi, in forty octavo volumes, is devoted to an account of its history, monuments, &c. Chaou told us that he estimated the population at about three millions.

As I was anxious to visit the large lake of Tai-hoo in the vicinity of Soo-chow, I parted from my companions shortly after breakfast. I regretted extremely that it was not in M. de Contades' power to accompany me, as I had found in that gentleman not only a most agreeable companion, but a colleague whose energy and tact largely contributed to the successful issue of our undertaking. He returned direct to Shanghai, while Mr Lay and I proceeded, in the first instance, to explore the principal water-suburb of the city. We followed the grand canal for about two miles. As far as I could judge, its average breadth was about 100 yards, but it is somewhat difficult to form a very accurate estimate on this subject, as the water is so concealed by boats, and the residences of the aquatic and terrestrial population so much resemble one another, that it is not always easy to tell where the water ends and the land begins. A narrow lane was kept clear for traffic, and along it passed innumerable craft of every description. There were as many different varieties of boats here as there are of

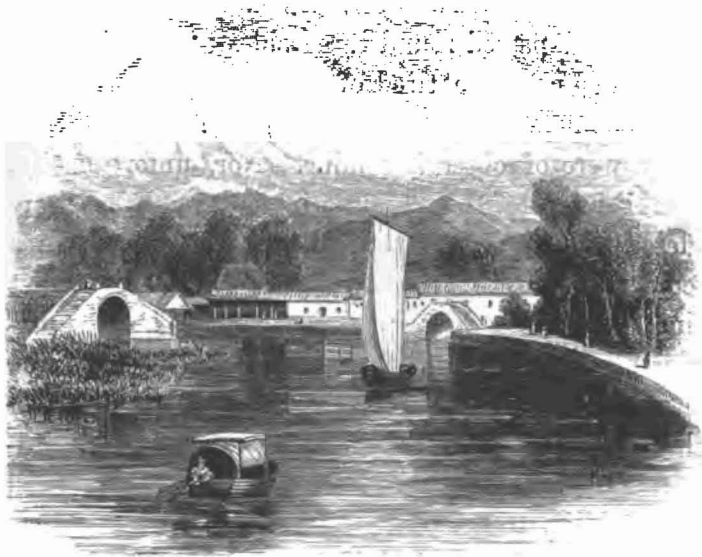
vehicles in Fleet Street, and the water-way was as inconveniently crowded as that celebrated thoroughfare usually is. Ferry-boats plied as briskly and were as heavily loaded as omnibuses; heavy cargo-boats lumbered along and got in everybody's way, just as brewers' drays do. Light tanka-boats, with one or two passengers, and deftly worked by a single oar astern, cut in and out like hansoms. And there were large passage-boats with accommodation for travellers on long journeys, that plied regularly between Soochow, Hang-chow, Chang-chow, and other distant cities, and that created the same sort of sensation as they passed as did the Brighton Age or Portsmouth Telegraph in days gone by. Gentlemen's private carriages were here represented by gorgeous mandarin-junks, with the huge umbrella on the top, and a gong at the entrance to the cabin, beaten at intervals by calfless flunkies. Other junks there were, more gaudily painted even than these, from whence issued shrill voices and sounds of noisy laughter and music. There was the costermonger in his humble substitute for a donkey-cart, a small covered canoe, which looked like a coffin, and in which he sat alone, forcing it speedily through the water with a pair of oars, one of which he worked astern with his hand, the other at the side with his feet. The race of scavengers lived in flat punts, and scooping up the mud and rubbish from the bottom of the canal, discharged it into them, where it was immediately examined by a number of ducks kept on board for the purpose, who picked out

all that was worth eating, and what they rejected was then inspected by their owners for waifs and strays that had been lost from junks, and then taken to fatten the land. But the most curious appearance was presented by the boats which carried the fishing cormorants, solemnly perched in successive rows on stages projecting from the sides; they looked like a number of gentlemen in black on the platform at a meeting of a grave and serious character.

We had passed round three sides of the city, and yet I was no more tired of observing and watching the manners and customs of the inhabitants than they were of observing mine. Nor, unfortunately, can I be sure that I am giving a more accurate description of them than they would of me: in a country like China, the traveller can trust less to first impressions than in any other; when nothing is superficial, a superficial survey cannot be depended upon. Every minute detail in their manners and habits of life bears the stamp of antiquity, has had its origin in some excellent reason, and possesses a special adaptability to the purpose for which it is designed, which is not at first sight appreciable by an utter stranger. One gazes at a party of Chinamen at work very much as one would at beavers or bees. Their results are startling, and their mode of arriving at them defies imitation by an ordinary mortal.

Turning sharp out of the grand canal, we passed down a narrower one, under high bridges, between tall houses with turned-up eaves, and balconies full

of people, and quaint gates and archways, covered with moral inscriptions, and so into the open country, where our men jumped out upon the paved towing-path, and dragged us rapidly between interminable green fields, stretching to the horizon, except in the direction we were going, where a range of low hills, purpled by the setting sun, gave promise of an ap-



Canal Scene near Soochow

proach to the picturesque. We met numbers of other boats being tracked in like manner, and passed under high single-arched bridges, like those the pictures of which first imbued our infantine minds with notions of Chinese quaintness in the willow-pattern plate. I only observed one which was of a different construc-

tion in a town through which the canal passed ; it consisted of three arches, and on the middle one a building was erected with a twisted roof, and crowds of people gazed at us from beneath it. We observed here the commencement of those fields of mulberry trees, which, extending throughout the departments of Kiashing and Hoo-chow, render these the most celebrated silk-producing districts in the province.

Just as we were going to bed we were aroused by shouts which called us on deck to witness a most romantic sight : a full moon was lighting up the silent water-ways of a picturesque old town, full of bridges and gaunt houses ; the canal was so narrow that we had great difficulty in squeezing past the few boats already moored in it ; from its edge rose houses three stories high, completely shutting in dark mysterious lanes, which turned off in every direction, allowing only here and there a gleam of silvery light to play upon the surface of the water. The inhabitants, unused to so late a visitation, peered curiously at us from their latticed windows, and bright rays shot across our gloomy paths as one after the other these were opened. The stream was strong against us, the street was a long one, and as there was no towing-path, it was some time before we had punted through it, and were clear of the long shadows of its lofty houses. We reached the edge of the lake shortly after this, and anchored for the night.

The morning was still and foggy, and the shores of the lake were concealed from us in almost every

direction ; we were five hours sailing slowly across to a high projecting promontory, called Tung-ting-shan. Ascending the hill,—for the day had cleared,—we had an extensive view : not far distant a high-wooded island seemed to float on the still surface of the lake, and beyond it the blue outline of the mountains that formed the opposite shore were dimly visible. At our feet, skirting the bay, lay the secluded little village at which we had landed, embowered in trees, above which curled wreaths of smoke ; a spur of the promontory separated it from another village which seemed the twin brother of the first, so exactly did it resemble it in situation and extent. We descended into it, and were of course immediately surrounded by the whole population. They were perfectly good-humoured in manner, and when we threw handfuls of copper cash amongst them, the juvenile community indulged in a universal scramble, in which some of the elders even condescended to join. I would gladly have spent another day on the Tai-hoo, but was afraid of missing the mail from Shanghai ; so we returned in time to pass through our old town of the night before, by moonlight again, and here diverged from our former route.

In the middle of the night I was disturbed by a violent shock, to which I was indebted for a view of a famous bridge across an expansion of the grand canal, mentioned by Mr Ellis, in his account of Lord Amherst's Embassy, as having ninety arches. I only counted fifty-three, and the moonlight was so bright

that I do not think I was mistaken in the number. The next day we entered the Meaou Lake again, and crossed it with a fair wind, in company with a large and picturesque fleet, which must have been composed of some hundreds of junks. This breeze freshened into a gale the day after, and involved a tough beat down the river to Shanghai. My canal boat, so delightful in calm weather, was by no means adapted for such an emergency: having no keel, she was extremely crank, and whenever she went about, everything loose in the cabin fetched way; and, to crown all, when they were jumbled in picturesque confusion on the floor, my stove upset, and shot its contents of glowing coals into the middle of them. As this was close to Shanghai, I narrowly escaped signalling my return to that place by a grand conflagration.

I remained for ten days at Shanghai, enjoying the hospitality of its merchant princes, and the invigorating effects of its bracing winter climate. Of all the spots upon the coast of the Celestial Empire at which Europeans have established themselves, it is certainly the pleasantest as a residence. With a society almost as numerous as Hong-Kong, there is much agreeable social intercourse, owing, no doubt, in a great measure to the fact that it is the Ultima Thule of civilisation, and has not yet been forced into exclusiveness by miscellaneous hordes making it a house of call; while, as a foreign community in a distant land, it is not subject to those political dis-

sensions which so often distract our own colonies. There is, moreover, an air of substantial prosperity about Shanghai, which occasionally expands into magnificence, and displays itself in palatial residences, and an expensive style of living ; but there is also, unhappily, a gloomy side to the picture, and there are years when an unfortunately heavy venture in silk, on the part of the community, results in a corresponding reduction of crinoline.

Situated on the flat bank of the river, Shanghai owes none of its charms to the picturesque ; but the handsome houses which line the shore for a distance of two miles, give it an imposing appearance as approached from the sea. The English section of the town, though not confined exclusively to British subjects, is the largest. It lies between the French and American. Each of these different quarters is inhabited by subjects of other countries. The boundary of the French concession is the city wall. The city is about three miles in circumference, and contains a population of about 300,000. As all Chinese towns of its class are so like each other as to be almost undistinguishable, and have been repeatedly described, I will only say of Shanghai that it is chiefly celebrated for old China, inlaid copper, and other objects of "vertu," which it imports from Soo-chow to meet the European demand. It has suffered a good deal from the occupation of the rebels, and its once famous tea-gardens are now a mass of grotesque rock-work and debris, but little frequented,

and which in their best days must have been rather quaint than pretty.

I was glad to have an opportunity at Shanghai of renewing my acquaintance with the Taoutai, whom I found to be a person of considerable intelligence and enlightenment. One day I dined with him, and partook not of a flimsy refectation, such as those usually offered on such occasions, but of a good substantial repast, beginning with bird's-nest soup, followed by shark's fins, *bêche de mer*, and other indescribable delicacies, as *entrées*, then mutton and turkey, as *pièces de resistance*, carved at a side-table in a civilised manner, and handed round cut up into mouthfuls, so that the refined chopstick replaced throughout the rude knife and fork of the West. We may certainly adopt with advantage the more elegant custom of China in this respect; and as we have ceased to carve the joints in dishes, make the next step in advance, and no longer cut up slices of them in our plates. There, however, we might stop: the usage of stretching across the table, and collecting a heap of delicacies from every dish in your neighbour's plate, as a mark of politeness, is decidedly objectionable. Some of the dishes were so constructed as to admit of a small charcoal fire in the centre, so that the soup or viands surrounding it were kept constantly warm. There were wines of different qualities, but principally extracted from millet-seed, and always drunk warm; and after dinner some very strong but delicately flavoured tea called red, which

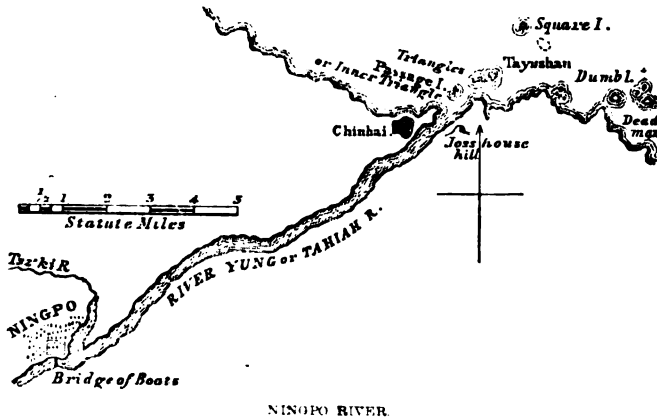
answers the purpose of coffee as a digestive, and simply differs from the green, in being subjected for a much longer time to the steaming process. The green tea, which is the least powerful and most refreshing, is a milder infusion, the leaf being slightly dried over a fire and still green. This was followed by some delicious almond tea. The guests upon the occasion were Mr Robertson, Mr John Meadows, and myself, the Haefan-ting or Prefect, and the principal military mandarin in Shanghai. The conversation turned chiefly on a comparison of the different administrative systems of England and China, interspersed with the most fulsome compliments, with now and then a feeler thrown out by the Taoutai on the subject of existing troubles, when his endeavours to conceal his desire to gain as much information as possible on our probable policy were highly diverting.

I did not venture to broach a subject to his Excellency on which I was no less anxious to be informed. Shanghai is the principal port for the export of the annual supply of rice to the north. Thousands of junks bound for the mouth of the Peiho, leave the river in successive fleets during the spring months, and it was important that we should know the intentions of the Taoutai for the ensuing year, and discover, if possible, the quantity of grain to be exported, and the different ports at which it was to be collected, as well as the date of the earliest departure. In the event of our finding it necessary to operate in the north, one of the most important means of pressure

which could be brought to bear upon the capital was by intercepting this supply, which it would be in our power to do, with a few gunboats in the Gulf of Pechelee. At this time the river opposite the town was covered with a dense forest of the masts of junks, all waiting for clearances to Tientsin. We were afterwards informed by the customhouse authorities, that the amount of rice to be sent to the north from Shanghai alone was about 300,000 piculs.

As Lord Elgin was expected at Ningpo from the south about this time, I proceeded thither in the despatch gun-vessel "Surprise," to meet him. At mid-day on the 14th March we reached the mouth of the Ningpo river, having run over in about twenty-four hours. After the dead level of the valley of the Yang-tse-Kiang, the approach to this river is sufficiently picturesque. To the right a bold promontory, about 200 feet in height, surmounted by a fort, overlooks the city of Chinhai, the walls of which extend along both the river-bank and sea-shore; numbers of junks block up the passage, and render great skill in steering necessary. Most of these are loaded with timber from Fokien, and their unsightly burdens extend on either side for some distance, almost concealing the junk itself, and giving it somewhat the appearance which a donkey presents when buried between two bundles of hay. Considerable ingenuity must have been exercised in loading these junks, by means, as I understood, of stays from the masts.

As we proceed up the river, the hills recede to some distance, and here and there picturesque valleys open up through them. The immediate banks are flat, and chiefly remarkable for a number of erections which look like enormous haystacks, but which are really ice-houses, for the preservation of fish. They are obliged by law to contain a three years' supply always in store. It is only about twelve miles to Ningpo, which we reached



NINGPO RIVER.

at sunset. The following day was dedicated to an inspection of the city, which decidedly ranks first among those at present open to Europeans. It is situated at the confluence of two rivers, contains a population of about a quarter of a million, and is five miles in circumference. A bridge of boats, 200 yards long, connects it with the principal suburb. But few Europeans reside here, and they live princi-

pally opposite the city, on the bank of the lesser of the two rivers. Ningpo is celebrated for having produced some of the ablest scholars in China, and numerous triumphal arches, in honour of those of her sons who have carried off the highest honours at competitive examinations, span the principal streets. They are constructed of granite, and ornamented with specimens of singularly clever carving: in some instances the slab has been cut through, and presents an open net-work of carving of the nicest delicacy. In others, the beauty of the workmanship is exhibited in the wonderful relief with which the most intricate patterns are made to stand out from the solid granite.

The book-shops of Ningpo are worthy its high literary reputation; and, indeed, the shops of every description were superior to those at any of the other ports. At that popularly known as Fortnum and Mason's, we used to sit down and drink exquisite tea, while various delicate conserves were being produced for trial, and smoke minute pipes full of mild tobacco at intervals.

In the best shops there is usually an outer and an inner shop, separated from each other by a glass-covered verandah. The inner room is generally a spacious apartment, fitted up with shelves and pigeon-holes and drawers, much as in England; and with extensive counters, behind which stand pale studious-looking men with intelligent countenances, who measure out yards of silk, or display crapes and

gauzes, with the same insinuating grace which distinguishes their brotherhood in our own country.

Ningpo is noted for the excellence of its wood-carving and inlaying. The embroidery in silk and satin is often beautiful. Occasionally old China may be picked up, but the supply in this article is not equal to the demand. Soap-stone carving is abundant, but may be procured more cheaply at Foo-chow.

The joss-house dedicated to the goddess Ma Tsupu, and maintained by the Shantung guild, a flourishing corporation, was the handsomest building of the kind I had seen in China. The verandahs and roofs were supported by freestone columns, carved into the forms of dragons and other unearthly monsters, whilst elaborate representations in gaudy colours and delicate tracery adorned the walls. Fishes standing on their tails, and dragons with their mouths open, ornamented the ridges of the roofs, and terminated in grotesque turrets the projecting eaves. The city is intersected at intervals of two or three hundred yards by fire-walls, so as to confine the ravages of that destructive element within narrow limits.

The visitor is amply repaid for the trouble of ascending the Old Pagoda, by the view which is obtained from the windy summit of its seven stories. The position of the city, and the direction of the rivers, lie mapped at his feet, with the blue mountains in the distance, which enclose the lakes and the snowy valley, and the picturesque sights of the neigh-

bourhood. This pagoda is 1100 years old, and 160 feet in height.

I was fortunate enough, one day, to witness a "sing-sing joss" in one of the principal temples. The disagreeable necessity of being obliged to form one of a dense crowd of very odoriferous Chinamen prevented my staying very long, nor was the plot of so refined a nature as to render the performance attractive ; but the acting was in some instances clever, and the female characters admirably sustained by men whose treble voices, and apparently distorted feet, rendered the disguise perfect. The audience seemed deeply interested ; and the comic episodes, in which a good deal of rather coarse humour was displayed, elicited shouts of laughter.

The neighbourhood of Ningpo was reported more worth seeing than the town itself ; and as the scenery I had already visited in China possessed but small merit in a picturesque point of view, I was glad to accede to the proposal of Captain Saumarez, of H.M.S. Cormorant, that we should occupy the interval until the arrival of Lord Elgin by an expedition to the Snowy Valley.