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Excerpt
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THE
LAND OF THE DRAGON.

CHAPTER I.

Shanghai—A Dismal Swamp—Early Days—The present Time—The Battle of Muddy Flat—Camping out—The Night Guard—Afternoon Parade—Bad Weather—Return to Shanghai—Chinese Debutants—Clubs and Societies—Our servants—A rascally Mafoo—Summary Punishment—The Chain Gang—The Cathedral—The first Railway in China.

SUMMER in Shanghai is a season that all Europeans would wish to avoid. From May to September, the depressing nature of the climate by day, and the hot, muggy, motionless atmosphere of the night, drive away all hopes of sleep or rest. You lie hour after hour rolling in a perfect bath of perspiration on your bed, impatiently waiting for daylight to appear and bring some little relief from this nightly infliction. And, when at last the smallest glimmer of dawn comes in the East, after a sleepless night, you drop off into a quiet doze,

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no sooner are your eyes closed, than a cloud of mosquitoes, and other nearly invisible flying pests that will not and can not be caught, and who appear to have no purpose in their short lives but that of torturing, worrying, and extracting profanity from their weary victims, settle upon your face, and all exposed parts, entirely driving away further hope of sleep. It is not surprising that all who can do so endeavour to escape this discomfort, though few succeed.

Five or six of such successive summers thin the blood, weaken the constitution, and bring on a chronic state of depression and unfitness for any kind of exertion. Thus, we and our troubles would soon be at an end, if no change of air and scene were possible.

I shall be told this is a pessimist view of our torrid season. Of course it is, yet unfortunately it is drawn from personal experience.

New arrivals—and we are all new for three summers—suffer most, both with regard to the attractions we offer to the little aerial fly, and also with regard to the ozoneless constitution of the native air, that brings not the refreshment congenial to our island nurtured lungs. Happily the weather everywhere is changeable; even here the gauges are not at high pressure all the four months at a stretch.

SUMMER WEATHER.

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From July to September, is, we consider, our typhoon season; and, disastrous and fearful as it is at sea, to us, landsmen, the black storm-clouds are hailed as messengers of the goddess of health, and the first burst of thunder as the announcement that the sceptre of summer is broken. For a month or six weeks, gales from every quarter sweep round us; it is usually later on in September that the thunder and rain-storms visit us in their strength.

After this, in November especially, clear, cool, glorious weather, with a touch or two of frost, runs on till the end of March.

Such were my feelings when, after a residence of eight years in Shanghai, I applied for and was granted leave of absence for twelve months. I at once took passage to England, the best and most complete of all changes, to say nothing about the pleasure of looking up old friends, of whom you may have heard little or nothing since leaving them years before.

While I was in England, many people sympathised with me in having to live in such a wretched place, as they had heard Shanghai described as nothing but a 'dismal swamp,' and they inquired in the most artless manner possible whether our houses were built or raised up upon piles, or whether the ground was sufficiently dry

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to admit of our occupying tents or log huts. Now, for the benefit of all such sympathising friends, let me tell them in a few lines what kind of a place this 'dismal swamp' actually is.

Many and numerous are the buildings in this far eastern port that would be a credit to the West-End of London. Our 'bund,' or river frontage, is the admiration of all visitors, and the extreme cleanliness of the entire settlement the delight of those who live here and enjoy it. Shanghai is entirely self-governed. Each year there is a general meeting of ratepayers, who propose and discuss ways and means of providing funds for the ensuing twelve months' municipal expenses. About ten or a dozen of the merchants and bankers are proposed annually to act as councillors for the ensuing year. They are then balloted for, nine of whom are elected. These nine gentlemen, with the assistance of a secretary and a general staff, manage and finance the funds provided, and look after the safety, comfort, and well-being of the community.

Early in the forties, when Shanghai was first fixed upon as a place of residence for merchant foreigners, it was unquestionably a 'dismal swamp.' No one ever thought of venturing out without first casing his feet in a pair of long sea-boots. The whole settlement, or rather the place where

the settlement was afterwards built (I have been so informed by those who were here at the time), was nothing but a large swamp, a plain of paddy, or rice-fields, teeming with the germs of cholera, ague, dysentery, and all the variety of diseases that undrained land so abundantly produces. A visit to the cemetery will show you line after line of tombstones, inscribed with the ages twenty-five, twenty-three, twenty-seven, twenty-two, twenty-four, and so on, inhabitants in the early days of this once benighted place.

Some years ago an improved system of drainage was proposed by the municipal surveyor, which, though extremely good, was, like all other good things, expensive. Nevertheless, means were provided, and every street in the place was drained on this plan. It has taken a few years to complete, but it is finished, and there is now no better drained city in Europe. The scavengers' carts go through and clean each street three times a day, and the watering-carts seem to be never idle. We have some excellent water-works built three miles lower down the river, which at a very low cost afford every householder an unlimited supply of clear, pure, and good water. There is no limit, the pressure is always on, and a most powerful pressure it is, as one soon discovers should a pipe unfortunately burst. The daily supply is about

two hundred thousand gallons for municipal purposes, and a million for private consumption. Every street is lit with gas, and all the more important ones with electricity. Police, European, Indian, and natives, patrol the settlement day and night, and mounted Sikhs all the outlying roads.

We have a fine public garden laid out along the river bank, in which the municipal band of thirty musicians performs three nights each week during the summer months from nine to half-past eleven p.m., and each afternoon during the winter. On these soft tropical evenings nearly the entire foreign fraternity lie about in groups, on long reclining chairs, or promenade the smooth-made paths, wiling away the time with conversation and cigars.

The constant passing and re-passing of boats in the clear and bright moonlight, reflected brilliantly on the surface of the river, which is more than two thousand feet wide, gives much interest and animation to these most popular gardens, planted as they are with many choice flowers and shrubs, and decorated with fountains and rockwork.

There is a most excellent yacht club, and also a boating club, both well supported. During the spring, summer, and autumn there is a yacht-race every Saturday, and the rowing club gives

us considerable amusement with spring and autumn regattas, two days each season, when all Shanghai makes holiday, and everyone goes to see the Scotch, German and English crews pulling for their laurels.

The cricket club possesses one of the best grounds east of the Suez Canal. The grass is beautifully kept, smooth and level as constant rolling and weeding can make it. There are frequent matches during the season, not only among the members themselves, but also, as we frequently see notified, 'The Navy *v.* The Cricket Club.' 'The Peninsular and Oriental *v.* The Cricket Club,' etc. The members, in a most liberal manner, provide a large and comfortable tent, with a superfluity of refreshments for their visitors.

The Fine Arts Society gives an open exhibition once a month, during the winter, and once a year a general collection of all the works is shown at an evening *conversazione*. Prizes also are awarded (by ballot) for the best works in landscape, figures, sea-pieces, etc.

The amateur dramatic company favour us with from six to eight performances during the cool weather. The theatre was built by subscription, and cost five thousand pounds. It is most elegantly and tastefully decorated, and will comfortably seat about nine hundred persons.

There are three lawn-tennis clubs, and most of the private houses have beautifully kept lawns attached, with from two to four nets, and three small boys to each net, for running after the balls.

The volunteer fire brigade is an exceedingly popular society, and well supported by all the young and active members of our community. Before the building and completion of the water-works, a fire *was*—a fire! It meant the destruction of anything between twenty and one hundred houses before it was extinguished. One fire a few years ago consumed more than two hundred houses. But now, since the water company have carried their mains and hydrants all over the place, a fire has no chance at all. The supply of water is so abundant, and the pressure so overpowering, that, in a few minutes after the fire-bell has sounded the alarm, a perfect deluge is pouring over the flames.

The race club is another of these very popular institutions. The course, one mile and a quarter round, is a fine grass course, well cared-for and well attended to. The training course is a distinct piece of ground, and the steeple-chase course separate again. There are four continuous days' racing in the spring, and four in the autumn, when Shanghai again makes holiday, and nearly everyone is found on the 'stand.'

THE RACING SEASON.

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The training of the ponies is carried on in the early morning for about six weeks before each season. A small entrance-fee, six dollars for the four days, is charged for admission to the course and stand; but for this the stewards provide a most sumptuous tiffin for all comers, and abundance of all kinds, liquids *ad lib.*, from 'Heidsieck' down to clear filtered water. No professional jockeys are permitted to ride at these races, only gentleman 'jocks,' each in the owner's colours. The time made by the ponies is very good, considering their size, and the weight they have to carry. Their height runs between twelve-and-a-half and thirteen and three-quarter hands. Here is a table of their usual racing time, on good going ground, but of course it differs according to the state of the turf:

2 miles	4 min. 27 sec.
$1\frac{3}{4}$,,	3 ,, 52 ,,
$1\frac{1}{2}$,,	3 ,, 16 ,,
$1\frac{1}{4}$,,	2 ,, 41 ,,
1 ,,	2 ,, 6 ,,
$\frac{3}{4}$,,	1 ,, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$,,
$\frac{1}{2}$,,	58 ,,

The volunteers, another popular society, consists of cavalry, artillery, and infantry, about three hundred men in all, but would turn out in far greater numbers were occasion for their services to arise. I think there is hardly a

man in the settlement who has not served his three or four years, or more, in the ranks. About four years ago there was every prospect of a local disturbance among the Chinese, and the volunteers were called out. There were then only about three hundred on the roll, but four hundred and fifty put in an appearance at the Main Guard.

For the past few years, during the early spring, the municipal council have addressed the Commissioner of Her Majesty's Forces in Hongkong, requesting him to send a suitable officer to inspect the Shanghai volunteers, a request which is always most politely acceded to. The result of these inspections has been so favourably reported upon by the different inspecting officers, that Her Majesty's Government has liberally presented to the volunteers a serviceable battery of four nine-pounder breech-loading guns—good handy tools that would be most useful in case of a row.

The cavalry are armed with sword and carbine, the infantry with the latest Martini-Henry rifle, with the triangular bayonet. The old sword-bayonet was discarded some years ago, on account of its weight.

The rifle-butts are more than a mile outside the settlement. Nine hundred yards is the longest range that can be made, and, if no matches are on hand, practice goes on merrily every morning,