

**CHINESE MISCELLANIES:
A COLLECTION OF
ESSAYS AND NOTES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649547197

Chinese Miscellanies: A Collection of Essays and Notes by Sir John Francis Davis

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Cover @ 2017

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SIR JOHN FRANCIS DAVIS

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BY SIR JOHN FRANCIS DAVIS, BART., K.C.B.

Collectanea—Scripta que ex pluribus excerpta loca in unum lecta sunt.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.
1865.

246. f. 15.

P R E F A C E .

THE increased facility of access to China and Japan—the combined result of successful war and diplomacy—has augmented the interest which distance and difficulties had tended to keep down. Both countries may now be reached in little more than six weeks, English law is administered under a Royal Commission on the coast of China, and money coined with the Queen's image and superscription.

The few short Articles contained in this Volume may, from their variety, serve for the amusement or information of various readers. Some are printed for the first time, and the rest appear with the kind permission of the proprietors of the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviews, and others.

The fears formerly entertained of European nations in both China and Japan, from the idea that their principal object was territorial possession, must have been greatly allayed by the moderation which has attended our military successes. In the former country, we and our allies, the French, took Peking, the capital, and then (very unlike Oriental conquerors) left the city to its owners with only the indispensable guarantees

for treaty engagements ; in the latter, murderous acts of treachery and violence were fitly punished by allied armaments, which withdrew when atonement had been made. Thus both Governments, the one an absolute though weak sovereignty, the other a feudal oligarchy of discordant elements, have been compelled to yield to combined foreign pressure. The aim of the motto on our China medal—*armis exposcere pacem*—has been attained ; and now our best policy is to hope for the internal prosperity and efficiency of both Governments as the most desirable security for our treaty rights. With all their faults they are, in their integral character, better than the mock Christian¹ Taepings of China or the rebellious and assassin Daimios of Japan.

Great as have been our exertions and success, the result was influenced in no small measure by the friendly union and combined action of the Western nations—the coalition of civilization against barbarism. The following relates to the year 1844 :—“ So perfect and complete was the acknowledgement on every side, that each was negotiating for all, that we received officially certified copies of the French and American treaties from M. de Lagrené and Commodore Parker in China, while the Chinese copies were sent us in like manner by Keying. The whole of these negotiations had, however, been preceded by official communications from Hongkong to the respective ministers

¹ It has been plain, from the Christians than Mahomet was like first, that they were no more like a Jew.

of copies of our English treaties already concluded, with all collateral information relating to them."¹ Had the same weights been thrown into opposite scales—had jealousies and mutual counteraction been the rule—advantage would certainly have been taken of it; for the Chinese did their best at first to alienate the French from us, though they were speedily disabused by our honourable allies.

This cordial co-operation may be traced without difficulty to the generous and wise policy with which Great Britain extended the commercial and other rights, which she acquired by her original and *unaided* war, to all other nations.² Having been the first to inaugurate the freedom and community of trade at home, she followed up that wise policy abroad by the noble and generous (and no less wise) course of fighting and negotiating, not for herself only, but for the whole civilized world. It is thus that peace and mutual good offices are perpetuated for half a century between the most powerful nations; and that, for just fifty years, England and France, instead of wasting each other's strength only to end where they began, have combined their forces and fought side by side as close allies in all parts of the world.

¹ "China during the War and since the Peace," Vol. II., page 89.

² "La Grande Bretagne dans un esprit généreux, digne du caractère de la puissance qui la première a ouvert la Chine à l'Europe, stipule

aussi pour d'autres nations la liberté de faire le commerce dans les cinq ports, sous les mêmes conditions que celles qui furent accordées à la Grande Bretagne."—*Chevalier Bunsen*.



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CHINESE MISCELLANIES.

I.

CALCULATING MACHINE.

COMMON TARTAR CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSSIANS AND CHINESE.

WITH reference to the science of numbers, it has been observed of the Chinese arithmetic, as well as of their weights and measures, that they proceed universally on the decimal scale, and that decimal fractions are their *vulgar* fractions, or those in common use. It is remarkable that the single exception to this exists in their *kin*, or marketing pound-weight, which, like our own, is divided into sixteen parts; and it is most probable that both originated in the facilities afforded by the binary division into halves, quarters, eighths, and sixteenths, or eight, four, two, and one.

Their numbers are *generally* written in words at length, that is, unlike the Arabic system of numeration, where the powers or values of the numbers increase or diminish decimally, according to position. This inconvenience is got over in calculation, and the denary arithmetic adopted, by the assistance of a little apparatus called a *Suán-pán*, or calculating dish, having balls