

**THE CANTON CHINESE:  
OR, THE  
AMERICAN'S SOJOURN IN  
THE CELESTIAL EMPIRE**

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The Canton Chinese: Or, The American's Sojourn in the Celestial Empire by Osmond Tiffany

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**OSMOND TIFFANY**

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BY  
OSMOND TIFFANY, JR.

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TO

MY BROTHER,

WILLIAM SHAW TIFFANY,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THIS book has not been written as a history of the Chinese, or as an elaborate essay on that great nation.

In May, 1844, I sailed in the barque Pioneer for Canton, and after a tedious passage arrived at Macao on the 22d of September following. It was uncertain how long we should remain, but thought at first that our stay would occupy a very few days. We at once went to Canton, and as I had little or nothing to do connected with the vessel, my time was my own, and I soon found that it was amply employed. Desirous of studying, as far as lay in my power, the aspect, manners, customs, habits, and ranks of Chinese life, I determined to come in actual contact with the people, instead of remaining in the hong and obtaining all my information from the numerous books which had been written on the Celestials. In this spirit, day after day, I went about the streets, into all kinds of shops, passed much time on the densely peopled river, and made acquaintance, as far as lay in my power, with the various ranks of the inhabitants.

I studied intently all that passed before me, and was rewarded for any trouble undertaken by the knowledge gained of the most extraordinary people, the only unchanged representatives of antiquity to be found among civilized beings. The observation of one day was carefully compared with that of the next, and the result of my researches submitted to the decision of gentlemen, who had lived years in China, with the best opportunities of becoming acquainted with the natives.

Finally, I referred to works of established merit, and adopted nothing until I was fully borne out by unquestionable authority. In this manner (our stay being protracted for several months) I became intimately acquainted with the inhabitants of Canton, who differ only in slight peculiarities from the great mass of their countrymen.

But as I visited no other great city in the empire, I have called my book the "Canton Chinese." I determined before engaging in this work to treat of nothing that did not come under my own observation, and so my range of subjects is limited. But the reader may rely on the truth of the volume. I had several reasons for adopting the course that I have pursued. I considered the Chinese so wonderful a people, and so unjustly underrated, that I was desirous of bringing them to the more intimate knowledge of my countrymen, as far as could be effected by my feeble efforts. Thus I preferred to work out carefully a cabinet picture, rather than attempt a great historical painting.

In the second place, my stay in China was limited, and

though ample time elapsed to glean all that is contained in the following pages, yet it was not sufficient to study Chinese history and polity. Therefore I have said nothing of dynasties, governments, laws, language or literature. Nothing that I could have written on these heads would have possessed the least interest or weight, and would have been mere plagiarisms.

Lastly, my utter ignorance of the Chinese language, without which no one can of himself study Chinese history, held me firm in the course I had chosen.

A few of the leading chapters were originally published in the *Baltimore American*, but they have been much enlarged, and are now presented to the public in an improved form.

I shall be happy if my humble efforts are the means of inducing my readers to turn a portion of their attention towards the Celestial Empire ; and the further they pursue their researches, the more will they find to praise in the peaceful energy, industry and ingenuity of the most enlightened of orientals.

BALTIMORE, MD., August, 1849.