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Subject: MISCONCEPTIONS OF CHINA AND THE CHINESE IN MOTION PICTURE FILMS

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Some years ago there was staged in America a play, "The Son Daughter" with the scenes set in China, and depicting certain phases of Chinese life. The play was well-written, with a Chinese theme, and was well-acted. However, there were some glaring discrepancies in certain features which evoked severe criticism from Chinese who had witnessed it.

In keeping with the traditional American idea of things Chinese, the tottering stop and fluttering fan were very much in evidence. Furthermore, Chinese merchants appeared dressed in so-called Mandarin robes such as tourists purchase as womens' opera coats. This ridiculously erroneous portrayal of Chinese customs and costumes would be analogous to a Chinese production of an American play featuring George Washington or Abraham Lincoln with red hair and red whiskers, and wearing a sun helmet as the traditional idea of the Occidental among many Chinese is that they have red hair and go about wearing sun helmets. Some years ago a modern play was staged in Peiping in which Napoleon and Josephine appeared with red hair, Napoleon also being adorned with red whiskers. It is equally ridiculous to feature a Chinese gentleman going about wearing a so-called Mandarin robe and moving about with a tottering stop and fluttering fan. Some Occidentals still insist on ornamenting the Chinese with queues, apparently oblivious of the fact that with the revolution of 1911 the queue was discarded.

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queues are almost as scarce in China as are snakes in Alaska. Similarly the Chinese are rapidly getting away from the idea of bound feet, so that seldom now does one see bound-footed women except those whose feet were bound in young womanhood and as adults are unable to overcome the crippled condition of their feet, but the feet of girls are not being bound and within a few years the institution will be a thing of the past.

Another misconception regarding the Chinese is that their costumes are fixed and that styles do not change. As for women's wearing apparel, Shanghai is the Paris of China, and it is here that each season's new styles are created, and in Shanghai hotels, cabarets and other scenes of social activity, one will find marked differences between the styles of one season and those of another. Even in men's wearing apparel changes are noted from one year to another. Naturally in scenes depicting the Chinese in certain stages of their history, it is necessary to consult the records of those days to ascertain the prevailing costumes and customs of that time, but it is a mistake to presume that styles do not change in this country and to adhere to old traditional ideas of Chinese dress.

Another misconception in connection with people of this country is in setting up a social caste. There is no fixed aristocracy in China. In decades gone by, the scholar and the official occupied the highest position in the social scale, but there was nothing militating against the ordinary individual becoming a scholar and through this medium an official, except that soldiers, butchers, actors, and barbers were prohibited the privilege of taking the civil service examinations. Under conditions in present-day

China, the soldier is becoming a man of recognized status in the social scale. But on the whole we may consider that Chinese society is very democratic with no fixed castes.

In connection with the production of sound pictures, it is highly essential that pidgin English be not introduced into the dialogue. No educated person in this country speaks pidgin English. It is the language of household servants and small shop keepers, as well as certain other uneducated Chinese who may have occasion to carry on conversation in English, and even among these it is not so general as it was years ago. To educated Chinese it is considered as distinctly objectionable, and no Board of Censors of China would pass a film featuring China or things Chinese in which the dialect was in pidgin English.

The Chinese object to the use of the word "Chinaman" and insist that the proper English designation for a citizen of this country is a "Chinese."

In some sections of the United States a considerable number of the American population seem to look upon the Chinese as either laundrymen, vegetable vendors, or chop suey restaurant keepers. They fail to realize that the Chinese people possess an heritage of a very rich civilization. They seem to be oblivious of the fact that there are in China today millions of wealthy individuals and tens of millions of well-educated people who possess a culture comparable with that of many Occidental countries.

There are also many mistaken ideas abroad in regard to Chinese menus. It is true that the Chinese eat many dishes which are strange to the people of the west, but it is also probably true that the Chinese are the greatest

epicures on the face of the earth. They have spent over four thousand years developing a menu, and have a greater variety of food stuffs served in a more delectable way than probably have any other people. Their cooks are artists. Thus it is very necessary to be careful in connection with criticism against Chinese articles of diet or their menus.

Another misconception seems to be that every Chinese is a frequenter of an opium den or a gambling house or in some way or other related to pirates or brigands. The great majority of the ten thousand Americans who live in China probably have never seen an opium den and most of the Chinese friends and acquaintances of these Americans undoubtedly have no contact with opium dens or opium smoking institutions. It is true that there are pirates and brigands in China, but they are about as much the exception to the rule as in the United States.

One of the gravest misconceptions regarding the Chinese is that he is mysterious, with mental processes greatly different from peoples of the Occident. If an American makes proper allowances for his non-scientific environment and the varied manifestations of the Chinese family system, one may soon come to realize that the Chinese in his ordinary reactions is not very different from one's own compatriots. The fact remains, however, that the Chinese have produced a rich civilization, with an art, architecture, literature, and many of their institutions not only distinctive, but also unique. It is certainly not correct to apply to these people the appellation "heathen" in the commonly accepted western interpretation of this word. Libraries and books existed in China prior to the beginnings of the Christian era and pre-

tically every Chinese today enjoys in some degree at least the heritage of a rich civilization, and culture.

It is suggested when American film producers are making efforts to feature things Chinese on the American screen, even though it may be but a slight touch of Chinese color, it would be well to take advantage of some of the Chinese students scattered over the United States in checking against errors. In this connection one must make allowance for the fact that Young China is at times supersensitive regarding anything which may in any way be interpreted as reflecting unfavorably upon his people or country. It would be well, if it is a matter of real importance, to check from several sources, including an opinion from an American familiar with China through actual intellectual contact. The majority of our universities have upon their faculties men who are students of things Chinese and who upon this account have access to authoritative sources of information. It is also important that translations of English into Chinese and the use of Chinese characters be checked against mistakes. We often criticize Chinese for some of the English used by them, especially English shop signs, while remaining innocently ignorant of some of the glaringly amusing mistakes our own people make in efforts to reproduce ideas in the Chinese ideograph. There have been cases in which some Americans in efforts to imitate the Chinese ideograph reproduced them upside down. It is always well to check from several sources, as it is just as reasonable to expect every Chinese to know everything about China as it would be for a Chinese to credit every American, educated or illiterate, as being an authority on everything American, including the niceties of the English language.

Thus in filming these things having to do with China or the Chinese people, it will be to the credit of the American producer and help to assure respect for the American film if reasonably intelligent safeguards be taken against advertising to the world American ignorance of those essentials of a civilization which it is presumed should be common knowledge among educated peoples everywhere.

It is not surprising that the Chinese should object to the distorted manner in which their people and institutions are often portrayed on the motion picture film as produced in the Occident. American Chinese relations and American prestige in China will be put on a higher plane through a proper regard for the justifiable sensibilities of the Chinese in connection with the way their country, customs and institutions are depicted by their neighbors across the Pacific.

The local leather industry in the United States. The sale and sale of leather will be manufactured by the Shanghai leather works. The local factory will be able to produce fairly good looking foreign style shoes at a net price of \$4.25 or \$5.00 per pair. The local factory is in the neighborhood of \$1.50 U.S. currency. Commercial Attaché.

Julian Arnold, Commercial Attaché. The distribution of shoes from the Beijing Valley have not been made but the prospect of the shoes is promising in opening two or three retail shops in