I have seen multitudes of Armenians at Canton; and I am much mistaken if there was not many Jews among them. They I flocked always together, and here, as every where in Europe, they distinguished themselves from the people of China. 1 Their beards, features, and complexion, I confirmed my conjecture. I sometimes asked my Chinese acquaintances, what they were: they gave me many answers in broken and mixed dialect of English and Portuguese, which I could not understand. One of them told me, pointing at one of them, *He no cari China man’s Joss, hap oter Joss*, or, in better English, that man does not worship our god; but has another god.

It is a common thing for the Chinese to act a play before their idols, after their worship is over. I have seen several acted in different Joss-houses, and every body is welcome to see them gratis. Sometimes these smaller temples are so crowded by the poorer fort of people among the Chinese, that an European can scarcely get in. In summer the people are mostly naked; and, as they stand closely together the whole time, there is such heat, sweat, and stench, that an European cannot set his nose within doors.

I have also frequently seen plays acted upon open scaffolds erected in the public streets of Canton; and those in half a dozen streets at a time. Their actors are richly dressed, and have a large stock of dresses and military arms and trinkets.

Their costly dresses, &c. are kept in square-chests. In the temples they have dressing-rooms; on each side the stages they have screens. They have few or no painted scenes, &c. Persons wait within the screens ready to dress or undress them, as occasion requires.

When they act in the street, they are paid by the inhabitants of that street; when they act in temples, it is at the charge of the members of the temple, or him who, on any particular occasion, employs them. As none of the fair sex are allowed to appear on a stage, they employ young men or boys of an effeminate air and countenance to act the woman’s part. Some companies of actors consist of men from twenty to forty years of age; and these are in the most esteem among the Chinese. Others consist of young men between twelve and eighteen; and these are most esteemed by the Europeans. They have both tragic and comic performances. These, especially the first, they seem to act with great propriety both of gesture and expression. They represent the workings of the passions to naturally, that they often affect very sensibly even an European spectator, though ignorant of the language with which this action is accompanied.

The subject of their plays is generally the life and heroic actions of some brave man among their ancestors. Some of my Chinese acquaintance told me, that these plays were instituted, and often repeated, to recommend bravery and virtue, and to ridicule vice; and to give the mob an idea of the constitution, the different degrees of dignity in the empire, and the authority and manners of the court; which, in such an extensive empire, the common people could not be otherwise informed of.

The whole streets are so filled on these occasions with a pleased and attentive crowd, that you cannot pass by. When an actor plays his part well, the mob all unite in calling him to return to the stage, and re-act his part. I have seen young boys, resembling young women, in beauty, effeminacy and dress, act the females part so well, that the mob obliged them to act it three times over before they were allowed to leave the stage.

The plays are generally concluded with tumbling, fighting, or combating with giants or wild beasts; or else with some humorous postures, gestures, and expressions, calculated to raise a laugh.

During my stay at Canton, a great many festivals were celebrated by feasting, gaming, acting comedies, and sending presents to their friends. On one of these days I went in company with four gentlemen belonging to our ships, to take a walk round the city walls. In order to get into the country, we had a long street to pass through, which was so crowded with people and stages at every twenty yards distance, that it was with great difficulty we could make way for ourselves. When we had got to the end of it, and had just got a glance of the country, we found as great a concourse of people, as we had seen in the street; which determined us to return; especially as we had observed a number of ill-looking fellows beginning to follow us, and making motions to one another as if they had some design upon us when we were got a little further from the city. On our turning back, they appeared to angry at the disappointment, that they boldly came up, and demanded money of us; and one of us taking a pinch of snuff, they demanded each a pinch, which was readily granted. But the continual cry was for money, which we were resolutely determined not to comply with; but continued to struggle through the crowd, while they were endeavouring all the while to pull us back. Had we offered to defend ourselves with blows, it would have been extremely imprudent, because there was not one Chinese that offered to assist us, and had we made any resistance, they would certainly have overpowered us. The mob in general, seemed to encourage these impudent fellows. So that we were fain to bear their pulling and jostling us very patiently, while we endeavoured to get nearer and nearer home. Some thousands followed, seeming mightily pleased at the distress of the poor *Fanquoys*, as they call us. In our way, as we were endeavouring to get under a stage erected in the street, one of these fellows pulled off the hat and wig, from one of our companions, and threw it upon the stage. The poor gentleman looked very foolish, at seeing them tossed in the air, from side to side, without being able to reach them; and seemed not a little nettled at being obliged to suffer an affront, which it was not in his power to resent. At length, one of the Chinese took compassion upon the poor bare-headed *Fanquoy*, brought him his hat and wig, used means to rid us of our troublesome attendants, and conducted us home. We entertained our Chinese friend in the factory as well as we could, and the gentleman who was so particularly obliged to his civility, gave him to the value of is. 3d. two *mace*, with which he seemed extremely well-pleased, and, after a great many *chin-chins*, (a prevailing salutation in China) he left us.

There is none of their festivals solemnized with such pomp and splendor as that called by us the *Feast of Lanthorns*. All the people in the city and suburbs hang up lanthorns in the streets and in their houses, and those upon the water, hang them up upon their boats; and in all places they are hung so near each other, that they are indeed innumerable, and make the night appear as light as day. On this occasion, they give themselves up to all the extravagancies practised at a carnival. Some of these lanthorns are very costly. The people will retrench their other necessary expence, that they may do something extraordinary on this night. They are illuminated either with wax-candles or with lamps. The generality of these lanthorns are about four foot high; some round, others square. The panes are of transparent silk or finest gauze, having human figures, rocks, trees and flowers, painted upon them, in very lively colours. Some of the grand lanthorns have the figures; of men on horseback, deer, dogs, and many other figures of animals, nicely cut out, which being made to move on the inside, appear very lively to the spectators without. The number of lanthorns is almost infinite; the gilding, carving, silk, painting, and other expences attending them, must amount to a vast sum. In short, on this illuminated night, the whole people seem to run mad for they know not what. I wish our Europeans could be excepted from the charge.

The Chinese say, that this feast took its rise from the following accident. A great Mandarine, who had used the people under him with great humanity and tenderness, had a beloved daughter, who took it into her head one evening to throw herself into the river, and was drowned. As soon as she was missed, the whole people both in town and country, who lived under his jurisdiction, out of gratitude, sallied forth with lanthorns, to look for the young lady, but she could not be found. Every year afterwards the people of that place assembled with their lanthorns on the anniversary of that evening; and, in process of time, this practice among a few, prevailed over all, and is now become an established and universal custom.

After sun-set no Chinese will walk abroad, unless he take a *Timlong*, *i.e.* a small round lanthorn, along with him. These hand-lanthorns are made of small wire, fastened with silk thread in the manner of net-work, and covered with very thin oiled paper. They have some red characters painted on the one side, which I take to be the maker’s, or perhaps the owner’s name. They give a good deal of light, and are fold very cheap. Every one walking the streets at night without a lanthorn, is suspected of intending some mischief, is seized by the watchmen, and kept in custody till he is examined.