

VAN BRAAM HOUCKGEEST,  
AN EARLY AMERICAN COLLECTOR

BY HENRY W. KENT

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TO THE student of international relations the following story of certain details connected with an almost forgotten embassy made by the Dutch East India Company in 1794 and 1795 might not seem of sufficient importance to be recalled. But since through these details the new-born American Republic found a place in the episode and its people were first made aware of the economic importance of a nation whose good will Europeans had long before sought to cultivate and whose art had a strong influence upon that of Europe, especially in the eighteenth century, it may not be amiss to repeat the tale.

The United States comes into the story in the person of the second in command of the Embassy in question, André Everard Van Braam Houckgeest. Van Braam was a native of Holland and later, by naturalization, an American citizen, who by study during a period of residence in China acquired the knowledge of that country which enabled him to write with understanding the account of the journey of the Embassy from Canton to Peking which was later to be published in Philadelphia to the honor of book making in this country.

The life of Van Braam was one of interest, and worthy of attention, but it is his book that is most remarkable, especially in its illustrations prepared as corroborative evidence of the truthfulness of his narrative. These latter represent a side of authorship

which, except in the case of Audubon, I do not know to have been anywhere equally developed.

For an account of Van Braam's life we are indebted chiefly, as all his biographers have been, to Moreau de Saint Méry, the editor, printer, and publisher of his book, who undoubtedly received his facts from Van Braam himself. In his Advertisement to the book<sup>1</sup> Moreau says that "it is to shew the well-informed reader what confidence he may place in the Travels now submitted to his inspection, that the Editor has thought it advisable to give him some idea of the character of the person who presents them to the public."<sup>2</sup> I shall draw upon this statement in the following paragraphs, adding certain details which have come to light since it was written.

"M. André Everard Van Braam Houckgeest, born in 1739, in the province of Utrecht, in Holland, first served his country in the Dutch navy, in which two of his brothers . . . have more than once displayed great talents, and have both obtained the rank of Admiral, as a just reward for their services."<sup>3</sup> Quitting the Navy in 1758, he went to China as a supercargo of the Dutch East India Company, living at Macao and Canton until 1773, when he returned to Guelderland in Holland, to remain there until 1783. As Moreau elegantly puts it: "At the last-mentioned epoch, the Independence of America had just been solemnly acknowledged by the powers of the old world. This event, which re-echoed throughout Europe, and

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<sup>1</sup>*Voyage de l'Ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales Hollandaises, vers l'Empereur de la Chine, dans les Années 1794 & 1795 . . . Le tout tiré du Journal d'André Everard Van Braam Houckgeest . . . Publié en Français par M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry.* Philadelphia, 1798. References to Van Braam's book are made to this edition, but the text of the quotations is taken from the English edition of 1798, published under the title: *An Authentic Account of the Embassy of the Dutch East-India Company to the Court of the Emperor of China, in the Year 1794 and 1795 . . . Taken from the Journal of André Everard Van Braam . . . Translated from the original of M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry. With a correct chart of the Route.* London: Printed by R. Phillips, No. 71, Saint Paul's Churchyard, 1798. Footnote page references are given to both editions.

<sup>2</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, English ed., vol. I., p. viii; French ed., vol. I., p. vi.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid*, English ed., vol. I, p. viii; French ed., vol. I, pp. vi-vii.

awakened ideas almost as new as itself,"<sup>1</sup> inspired Van Braam with an interest in this country, as did no doubt, also, the general unrest of the times and the strife of political factions by which his own country was then torn. He had evidenced his interest in what was going on here as early as 1777, in a letter to Franklin written from Zutphen en Guckne, in which he makes application for the appointment in the Army of three young men, lieutenants in the Dutch service. Here he says:

"I must tell you, Monsieur, in the first place, that I am entirely devoted to the Americans and to their cause, and so I learn of all their advantages with joy as if all that were my own good fortune. And with all my heart I congratulate you, Monsieur, on the victory won by the brave General Gates. May the Supreme Lord give grace to General Washington to give a similar fate to the head of the English army in Philadelphia, so that America may achieve her liberty in spite of her enemies. I drink sometimes to the health of your brave general and my heart forms a thousand wishes for his well-being and for the prosperity of his armies."<sup>2</sup>

Van Braam dedicated his book to "His Excellency, George Washington, President of the United States of America," in the following sententious words, expressive of more than the usual emotion of an author looking for a patron: "Permit me then to address the homage of my veneration to the virtues which in your Excellency afford so striking a resemblance between Asia and America. I cannot show myself more worthy of the title of Citizen of the United States, which is become my adopted country, than by paying a just tribute to the Chief, whose principles and sentiments are calculated to procure them a duration equal to that of the Chinese Empire."<sup>3</sup> To show still farther his

<sup>1</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, p. ix; Fr. ed., vol. I, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>2</sup>American Philosophical Society, vol. 62, p. 59 (original letter).

<sup>3</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, p. vi; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. iii.

admiration for the President we may cite the gift which he made at a later time to Martha Washington of what in her will she describes as a "set of tea china that was given me by Mr. Van Braam, every piece having M. W. on it."<sup>1</sup> We may shrewdly conclude that Van Braam, took an early opportunity to use his knowledge of commercial opportunities in China to good advantage in advancing his position at Mount Vernon.

In the year 1783 Van Braam was appointed Consul at Charleston, South Carolina, where he took up his residence the same year and became a merchant and a cultivator of rice. He had a place of business on East Bay near Elliott Street, and he seems to have owned the Stuart House on the corner of Tradd and Orange Streets. He is said to have owned a plantation on the Cooper River, although there is no record of such ownership, and to have introduced some new methods of rice culture and pounding,<sup>2</sup> to which he himself refers in his book. Speaking of rice mills in China and their slow working, he says: "In 1786, when I was a planter in that state [South Carolina], I had constructed a machine according to my own ideas. Two horses set it in motion, and each of its pestles struck four and twenty strokes in a minute; on which account it was considered as a great improvement."<sup>3</sup>

Van Braam was naturalized in March or April, 1784,<sup>4</sup> and as Moreau says "was living there in peace

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<sup>1</sup>Lossing, B. J., *Mary and Martha, the Mother and Wife of George Washington*, New York, 1886, p. 338. The will of Martha Washington is here quoted in its entirety.

Van Braam Houckgeest has been confused by some with Jacob van Braam (or Bramm), a friend of Washington's youth, who taught him fencing, and the gift has been assumed to be his. Jacob, however, was later suspected of treason to the American cause, and it seems improbable that Martha Washington should have treasured his gift, while Van Braam Houckgeest entertained Washington in Philadelphia and was amply able to give Mrs. Washington such a present.

<sup>2</sup>*South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. XIX, p. 109, note. In the *Charleston Columbian Herald* of Jan. 27, 1785 is a long advertisement of goods imported and sold by Van Braam at No. 42 Bay. He had formed a partnership with James Johnston and William Joyner in April 1784 which was dissolved, after considerable dispute, in April 1785. See *Columbian Herald* June 13 and July 13, 1785.

<sup>3</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. II, p. 286; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. 430.

<sup>4</sup>*South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. XIX, pp. 109-110, note.

and happiness when one of these dreadful fatalities [diphtheria] of which the climate of that province affords but too many examples, deprived him, in the course of a single month, of four of his children."<sup>1</sup> This event and business losses led him to accept a proposal which now came to him from the Dutch East India Company through his brother, Jean Pieter, to go back again to Canton as commercial director for the Company, and he returned there by way of Holland in 1788.

Besides his work, Van Braam devoted himself systematically to the study of the country and its people in all their aspects. We must listen again to the fluent Moreau discourse on this point:

"A knowledge of several countries and a consequent habit of observing their opposite characters, inspired M. Van Braam with a desire of more attentively examining all that he was allowed to see of China. With this desire was combined that rational curiosity which seeks to penetrate into mysteries under which it imagines useful truths to lie concealed; and, lastly, that sentiment so natural to a European, of wishing to acquire further knowledge of a nation of which the little already known furnishes matter of so much well-founded astonishment."<sup>2</sup> An unrivalled opportunity for the extension of his study was opened to him with the expedition to Peking which was now proposed.

We will allow Van Braam to explain the purpose of this embassy, as he does in the opening pages of his book: "On the 2d of April, 1794, at noon, a visit was paid me by the Namheuyan [Mandarin of Justice] of the city of *Quang-tcheou-fou* (commonly called *Quang-tong*, and by the French Canton), accompanied by the merchant Monqua, Chief of the *Cohang* [company of merchants]. After the usual civilities, the mandarin, whom Monqua served as an interpreter, informed me that he was sent by the Tsong-tou [Viceroy governing a

<sup>1</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, p. ix; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, Eng. ed., vol. I, p. x; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. ix.

province], who wished to know whether the Dutch East-India Company would not adopt the idea of sending a Deputy to Pe-king, to congratulate the Emperor on the anniversary of his accession to the Throne, which his Majesty was going to celebrate for the sixtieth time."<sup>1</sup> The Commissaries General took the matter under advisement, and in due course determined to send the deputation. This was the third embassy undertaken by the Dutch, and the eleventh in the history of Chinese relations with the outside world. The first deputation was organized by the Russians under Backoff in 1654; the second was made by the Dutch in 1655-1656; and the third by the Dutch in 1664. The Russians made a second visit in 1692-1694, and three more before Van Braam's time; and the English in 1792-1794, so that such embassies were not unknown before this one, nor was Van Braam's book the first to describe them. In one respect, however, the present embassy and the present author were unique, and that was in the collection of drawings made to illustrate the book, which will be described more fully later.

The personnel of the embassy consisted of Isaac Titsing, Counsellor in Ordinary to the Dutch East India Company, Ambassador; Van Braam, heretofore Chief of the Direction of the Company, second in the embassy, with a commission of Ambassador in survivorship; a Secretary to the Embassy; a physician; a companion to Van Braam; two interpreters; a machinist; a private secretary to the Ambassador; two maîtres d'hôtel; a European servant; two Malay servants; and, lastly, a bodyguard consisting of a sergeant, a drummer, a fifer, and nine soldiers.

Upon his appointment, Van Braam immediately resigned his position in the Factory, and proceeded to devote himself to his new duties, which he construed, with satisfaction, to include the writing of an account

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<sup>1</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, pp. 1-2; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. i.

of all he saw and heard and all that befell. He makes his own explanation of this, in the Introduction to the book which resulted, as follows: "A journey from Canton to the City of Pe-king, where the Imperial Court resides—a journey made across parts of the Empire of China, which never yet were marked with the footstep of an European, and where his inquisitive eye never yet had an opportunity of making the smallest observation, cannot but be highly interesting to the Public, both in Europe, and throughout the United States of America . . . In this hope it was that I undertook to write a relation of that Journey, and that I made a point with myself of committing to paper, with the least possible delay, everything I should see and observe, in order that I might give a faithful description of it to my countrymen.

"Whenever I travelled by water, I had my Journal always on the table, that everything might be noted down in it at the very moment of its occurrence."<sup>1</sup>

On October 21, 1794, the company left Canton and returned in May (?) of the following year. For what befell the voyagers, I must refer you to Van Braam's book, but I cannot refrain from quoting certain passages referring to the Emperor in whose honor the embassy was undertaken, Ch'ien Lung, who was, perhaps, the greatest of all Chinese rulers, and who was to resign as sovereign in 1795, in his eighty-seventh year. Of him it has been said: "His rule was autocracy at its best, when a large-minded, brave and gifted monarch wholeheartedly devotes his talents to the service of the State. Ch'ien Lung was master of the arts of war no less than of those of peace, and the Chinese Empire reached its widest expansion during his reign . . . Ch'ien Lung was a great patron of the arts, himself a poet and calligrapher and a determined collector of antiques. The Catalogue of the Imperial Collection of bronzes compiled by his orders ranks as a

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<sup>1</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, pp. xvii-xviii; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. xlv.

classic on this subject; and poems of his composition and in his style of calligraphy are occasionally seen on porcelain and jade."<sup>1</sup>

Van Braam's portrait of this old man is of real interest, not alone because of its vividness but also because of the rarity of such a first-hand description by a European. He says:

"His personal appearance exhibits all of the marks of old age, particularly his eyes. They are watery, and so weak that it is with difficulty he raises his eye-lids which hang down in folds, especially that of the left eye. He is in consequence obliged, whenever he wishes to look at anything that is not very close to him, to raise his head and even to throw it a little back. His cheeks are shrivelled and pendant. His beard, which is short, is very gray . . . His dress consists of clothes lined with fur, which appeared to me to be that of the sea-otter; and round his cap, which is sometimes ornamented with a large pearl, was a border of the same kind. In this season, as well as in all others, the Emperor's dress is very plain, although he is served and honoured like a god."<sup>2</sup>

Upon his return to Peking, Van Braam remained in Canton until December, 1795, when "age . . . , the success that attended his undertakings, the ties of nature, and those of friendship, at last induced him to quit Canton with a view to pass the rest of his days in the United States of America. He arrived at Philadelphia on the 24th of April, 1796,"<sup>3</sup> the journey having been made by vessel from Canton to Philadelphia as we learn from Claypoole's *American Daily Advertiser*: "Arrived here the ship *Lady Louisa*, of New York, Captain Cooper, four months from Canton and two months from the Cape of Good Hope, in which came as a passenger, the owner M. A. E. Van Braam Houchgeest, and [sic] old citizen of America, late

<sup>1</sup>R. L. Hobson, *The Later Ceramic Wares of China*, London, 1925, p. 74.

<sup>2</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, pp. 240-241; Fr. ed., vol. I, pp. 180-181.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, Eng. ed., vol. I, p. xii; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. xii.



Chief of the Dutch Direction in China, and second in the embassy of the Dutch company to the emperor at Peking, with an intention to settle in that [sic] country of peace and happiness where he means to spend the remainder of his days . . . Five native Chinese have arrived in the *Lady Louisa*."<sup>1</sup> He chose for his place of residence a location on the Delaware River, three miles below Bristol, and not far from Philadelphia, where he built a fine house in the Adam style surmounted by a Chinese pagoda from which were suspended silver bells. This he called "China Retreat." Van Braam seems to have had excellent taste in his houses, that in Charleston, still standing, giving evidence of this, and the new one is described as large, with many rooms elegantly furnished, a music-room being especially mentioned as having a vaulted roof, gilded and frescoed.<sup>2</sup> "China Retreat" is still in existence and in good condition.<sup>3</sup> Changes have been made in the interior in some particulars, but not to the serious harm of the building. The descendants of the trees said to have been planted by Washington and Lafayette show where the originals stood. The house was furnished with a very considerable number of Chinese works of art, all carefully enumerated and described by Moreau.<sup>4</sup> Among them was "a vase of rock crystal, supported by the trunk of a tree, and embellished with a garland of flowers . . . two pictures three feet long by two feet high, in each of which, upon a tree of brown sandal wood, ornamented with branches, leaves, and flowers of different kinds, skillfully shaded, are fifty birds, making twenty-five couple, all of ivory, and coloured after

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<sup>1</sup>*Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser*, Philadelphia, April 28, 1796.

<sup>2</sup>W. W. H. Davis, *History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania*, New York, 1905, vol. I, pp. 96-97.

<sup>3</sup>An engraving of China Retreat appears in William Birch's *The Country Seats of the United States of North America, with Some Scenes Connected with Them*, Springfield, 1808, and it is shown in a halftone reproduction in W. W. H. Davis's *History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania*, New York, 1905, vol. I.

<sup>4</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. II, pp. 320-324; Fr. ed., vol. I, pp. xli-xliv.

nature," a *surtout de table* representing "rocks interspersed with pagodas, human figures, bridges, trees, fruit, flowers, quadrupeds, birds, insects, etc.," and a "collection of more than a hundred figures and other articles all of bamboo, which shew to what extent sculpture is carried in China;" and a collection of copies made by Chinese painters from subjects originally painted in Europe and particularly in France. "In short," says Moreau, "the furniture, ornaments, every thing at M. Van Braam's reminds us of China," an effect which must have been heightened by the presence of the native servants brought over with the collection. When the collection of drawings, or "copies," was on exhibition for several months in Philadelphia, these men were in attendance, and Moreau says that "It was even impossible to avoid fancying ourselves in China, while surrounded at once by living Chinese, and by representations of their manners, their usages, their monuments, and their arts."<sup>1</sup> It should not be forgotten that before this time no such opportunity had ever been offered to Americans.

Through his daughter, Van Braam's social position was an excellent one. By her first marriage to Major Richard Brooke Roberts, U. S. A., he was allied to families of South Carolina, and by her second marriage to Captain Staats Morris, son of Lewis Morris, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, to those of Pennsylvania. He is said to have dispensed a generous hospitality, receiving many of the distinguished men of the day, among them Washington, Lafayette, and Talleyrand. The two pine trees already referred to, said to have been planted by Washington and Lafayette, are shown carefully protected by fences in the engraving of China Retreat.

It was in 1796, on Talleyrand's recommendation, that Moreau de Saint-Méry paid his first visit to Van

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<sup>1</sup>Van Braam, *Voyage*, Eng. ed., vol. I, p. xiii; Fr. ed., vol. I, p. xiii.

Braam at Bristol. He must have been impressed with what he saw because he was quick to put forward his claim as publisher of the Voyage, and he left the house with the manuscript, so to speak, under his arm, having "come to an agreement to edit the Journey, and to print and publish it."<sup>1</sup>

Moreau himself was an unusually interesting person. Born in Fort Royal, Martinique, in 1750, he sought his legal training in Paris and became an *avocat au parlement*. Returning to San Domingo, he codified the laws of that island in a monumental publication of six volumes. Again in Paris, he became one of the *Electeurs* who assembled on April 26, 1789, and filled a notable part in the days that were to follow, until he incurred Robespierre's hostility and was obliged to flee to the United States. He found his way to Philadelphia, where he opened a book-shop and printing establishment, and created a center much frequented by all of the French *Emigrés* who found refuge in that city, and by other distinguished visitors. He was a man of unusual character and interests and he attracted easily men of his kind, among them Talleyrand, Talon, the Duc de Noailles, de Beaumetz, Dêmeunier, La Colombe, La Rochefoucauld, the Duc de Liancourt, the Duc d'Orléans, the future Louis Philippe and his two brothers, and William Cobbett.

Van Braam was fortunate in this association. Accomplished, sympathetic, impressionable, Moreau was the ideal expositor for his author, and his editorship exhibits all of these qualities to a remarkable degree. Without his Advertisement, dates, and especially his notice of the collection of drawings, much, if not all, of the vivacity which enlivens the book would be missing.

Moreau also kept a most interesting dairy,<sup>2</sup> but he says little in it of the progress of his work on the Van

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<sup>1</sup>*Voyage aux États-Unis de l'Amérique, 1793-1798*, by Moreau de Saint-Méry, edited with an Introduction and Notes by S. L. Mims, New Haven, 1913, p. 222. The translation is the author's.

<sup>2</sup>The *Voyage aux États-Unis* already mentioned.

Braam book. He records visits to and from his author from time to time during the period between 1796 and 1798. Once he took Volney for a call, and on July 3, 1796, he went to the Chinese Retreat with Cazenove. He says, "I slept there, and the next day M. Van Braam took me to Bristol to a dinner (federal frolic) for the anniversary of Independence Day of the United States."<sup>1</sup> Once, "at his earnest entreaty," he took Van Braam to see M. d'Orléans.<sup>2</sup> M. de Liancourt invited Van Braam to dinner one day, and Moreau accompanied him.<sup>3</sup>

Under date of October 6, 1797, Moreau speaks of the book in the entry: "The Leyden Gazette of this date announces that the first volume of Van Braam's work is in Amsterdam and that the second will follow it soon."<sup>4</sup> On March 17, 1798, he says: "M. Van Braam dispatched to England the first volume of his Journey, of which I was the editor, but the ship was taken and the volume was sold in France. Garnery published it in two volumes, in octavo, and sold it for 6 francs. This is what the Currier of the legislative body for March 17 says."<sup>5</sup>

Under August 1, 1798, we find the entry: "To finish with M. Van Braam I was forced to have recourse to an arbitration which took place. In regard to this, I must quote from a letter of Casenove on M. Van Braam, written the twenty-second of last July, in which he declares himself to be convinced that M. Van Braam has more ostentation than real fortune."<sup>6</sup> On August 6 of the same year he says: "I returned to M. Van Braam everything I had of his,"<sup>7</sup> and on December 28:

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<sup>1</sup>Moreau, *Voyage*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 233.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 256.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 264.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 264.

"This year I published the second volume of Van Braam's Journey of the Dutch Embassy."<sup>1</sup>

As published in Philadelphia the book bore the title, *Voyage de l'Ambassade de la Compagnie des Indes Orientales Hollandais, vers l'Empereur de la Chine, dans les années 1794 & 1795 . . . Le tout tire du Journal d'André Everard van Braam Houckgeest. Publié en Français par M. L. E. Moreau de Saint-Méry. A Philadelphie, 1797-1798.* It was reprinted in English, in London (8 vo., 2 vols.), in 1798, with certain changes, especially in arrangement of parts; in Leipzig in German (8 vo., 2 vols.) in 1798-1799; and in Haarlem in Dutch (8 vo., 2 vols.) in 1804.

Doubtless the work obtained favorable comment. The American Philosophical Society elected its author, "formerly President Society of Holland,"<sup>2</sup> to its membership on January 20, 1797, after the first volume had appeared.

The reference to the ending of Moreau's relations with Van Braam may have been due to some unpleasantness arising possibly over money matters, because we know that the publisher was then hard pressed for that commodity, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that it referred rather to the closing up of his affairs preparatory to his return to France on the twenty-third of August, 1798, and to the most spectacular part of his vivid career, during which he was busily engaged in diplomatic and administrative work for his country.

As for Van Braam, he had already advertised the *China Retreat* for sale, on April 20, 1798, and in 1801 he returned to Holland where he died, at Amsterdam, in November of the same year.

And so ends the history of the book itself, its author,

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<sup>1</sup>Moreau, *Voyage*, p. 403.

<sup>2</sup>*Early Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society from 1744-1838*, Philadelphia, 1884, p. 246.

and its gifted publisher. It remains to speak of the corroborative evidence so carefully collected to enrich the work, the collection of drawings.

Today, the traveler in strange countries carries with him, as an essential part of his equipment, a camera or a moving picture machine, with which he records what he sees, and, what is more important, verifies what he says. In 1794, the traveler had no such corroborative instruments. At best, he could upon his return employ artists unacquainted with his subject to carry out in engraving the ideas which he might convey to them through sketches or verbal descriptions. Our author, however, conceived a method of work which, so far as I know, was unique in the history of books. He employed two native Chinese artists, whom he kept employed for five years, to make a series of drawings of what he saw and intended to talk about, artists who, judging from what we know of other similar work, were remarkably proficient in their art. The collection consisted of thirty-eight volumes, containing about eighteen hundred drawings, with maps, charts, and plans and other drawings not included in the volumes. Moreau prepared a classification of the drawings with understanding and appreciative notes describing them (*Notice of a Collection of Chinese Drawings, in the Possession of M. Van Braam, Author of this Work*), which follows his Advertisement in the Philadelphia edition and is appended to the second volume of the English edition. From it we gain an insight into the range of subjects covered: I. Geography; II. Views and Landscapes; III. Views and Monuments of Canton; IV. The Pagoda of Hsay-Tsong-Tsi; V. Mythology; VI. History; VII. Manners and Customs; VIII. Arts and Trade, Agriculture, Manufactures, Fine Arts, etc.; IX. Natural History.

In a note at the end of the list of drawings, in the English edition of 1798, the editor adds in brackets as if it were inserted at the last minute:

[The public will learn with pleasure that M. Van-Braam has offered this valuable collection to the Executive Directory of the French Republic; that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is not ignorant of its merits, and who will not be accused of losing any opportunity of favouring artists and the arts, has accepted this handsome offer in the name of the government; and that everyone will soon have it in his power to compare the collection with the account given by the Editor.] This statement comes as a surprise to one who has read Moreau's entry in his Diary under date of June 21, 1798, where he says, in reference to a letter from Talleyrand of March 28: "There is, however, a paragraph in his letter which requires a little commentary. M. Van Braam's Chinese Collection had cost him more than 150 francs to assemble in China, and was worth a million and a half in France. This collection Mr. Van Braam offered as a gift to France, and he had written to Talleyrand to make France accept it. I had written also, and it is to this that Talleyrand replies.

"But the Directoire had no concern for the invaluable offer, said nothing on the subject, and M. Van Braam finished by carrying off his collection to London, where he sold it. There's a case of French heedlessness that is quite criminal."<sup>1</sup>

The English edition was issued later in the year, as the editor's preface is dated October 20, so there may have been a change of heart on the part of the French, but if the collection was accepted no one knows where it is today. One account says that it was lost at sea on the passage.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor Ch'ien Lung has been forgotten but his name remains attached to a period of fine produc-

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<sup>1</sup>Moreau, *Voyage*, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>W. W. H. Davis, *History of Bucks County, Pennsylvania*, vol. I, pp. 96-97, states that it was lost at sea. *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine*, vol. xix, p. 110, however, states that it was given to France.

tion in the art of China; Van Braam and Moreau de Saint-Méry, also, have been forgotten, and only these tag-ends of gossip remain to show what manner of men they were. In their day they must have done much to create here an interest in the Empire on the other side of the world, and have had no small part in fixing the American public's mental picture of that strange land.



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