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Introduction -- The cast of the diaries -- Alabaster diary, volume 1-- Alabaster diary, volume 2 -- Alabaster diary, volume 3 -- Alabaster diary, volume 4.

Sommario/riassunto

'In August 1855, sixteen-year-old Chaloner Alabaster left England for Hong Kong, to take up a position as a student interpreter in the China Consular Service. He would stay for almost forty years, climbing the rungs of the service and eventually becoming consul-general of Canton. When he retired he returned to England and received a knighthood. He died in 1898. Throughout his adult life, Alabaster kept diaries. In the first four volumes of these diaries, collected here by Benjamin Penny, the teenage Alabaster recorded his thoughts and observations, told himself anecdotes, and exploded in outbursts of anger and frustration. He was young and enthusiastic, and the everyday sights, sounds and smells of Hong Kong were novel to him. He describes how the Chinese people around him ironed clothes, dried flour and threshed rice; how they gambled, prepared their food and made bean curd; and what opera, new year festivities and the birthday of the Heavenly Empress were like. Like many a young Victorian, he was also a keen observer of natural history, fascinated by fireflies and ants, corals and sea slugs, and the volcanic origins of the landscape. Alabaster's diaries are a unique, vibrant and riveting record of life in the young British colony on the cusp of the Second Opium War. With *A Young Englishman in Victorian Hong Kong*, Penny sheds new light on the history of the region.' - From publisher website.