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THE VICEROY LI HUNG CHANG.

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THE recent coronation of the Emperor of all the Russias was an event which in some respects is without parallel in the history of the human race. The facility of intercommunication, the timely notice of the ceremony, and the commanding position of the people whose ruler was to be crowned, brought together at the ancient Muscovite capital such a representation of the nations of the earth as was never before assembled in the world. And it is safe to say that the most notable personage in that august and memorable assemblage was the representative of the «Son of Heaven,» the Emperor of China. In length of public service, in the character and importance of that service, and of the myriads of people in whose behalf it was rendered, in his intellectual attainments, his unique characteristics, and in his commanding personality, Li Hung Chang was the most conspicuous witness of the young Czar's coronation.

Aside from his distinguished services and

his high offices, he is a man well suited to be placed at the head of an imposing embassy, and to represent his imperial master. He is of pure Chinese extraction, having no mixture of Manchu blood. Although seventy-four years of age, he is in fair degree of health and vigor, of fine physique, full six feet in height, of commanding presence, erect and stoutly built, with dark, piercing eyes, and a face that is strongly molded and indicative of strength of character, and that would command attention in any foreign circle. Dressed in his party-colored silken flowing robes, and his hat decorated with the three-eyed peacock feathers, he presents a figure which would be distinguished amid the glitter and pageantry of any European court.

For nearly half a century he has been in the public service, but this is the first time he has ever visited the nations of the West, and the second time he has been outside his native land. Only last year, it will be remembered, he was called by his sovereign to undertake the important and difficult mission of a journey to Japan to negotiate peace. On that occasion, although going as the representative of the defeated party, he was not unmindful of his country's greatness, or of the Oriental fondness for display, and the two merchant-steamers chartered for the voyage carried a retinue of one hundred and thirty-five persons, among whom were two Chinese ex-ministers to foreign courts, four secretaries of rank speaking English or French, a score of translators and copyists, a Chinese and a French physician, a captain and a body-guard, with a mandarin chair of highest rank, and its bearers, and cooks and servants in liberal numbers. The interesting and tragic circumstances attending that embassy, and the manner in which he discharged his high trust, added greatly to his prestige abroad, and make his present visit to the West the more attractive. Doubtless he will be received in its capitals and leading cities not only with great curiosity, but with demonstrations of sincere respect, because he is the most distinguished visitor which the great continent of Asia has sent to Europe during this generation. Shahs, princes, rajas, statesmen, and generals have come and gone, some mere puppets of power and others persons of distinction and merit; but none who has so fully represented power, and combined the qualities of a successful soldier, an able statesman, an accomplished diplomatist, and a trained scholar.

He is a striking illustration of the workings of the social and political system of the Chinese Empire. Although it is the oldest monarchy of the earth, it may be said to possess no hereditary nobility. It is the only land which bases its aristocracy on letters, and in this respect is a near approach to a pure democracy. The highest posts in the empire, except the few places held by the princes of the imperial blood, are open to the lowest subject, and the road to them is through the three grades of the competitive scholastic examinations held in the district, the province, and at Peking, the imperial capital.

CHINESE EDUCATION.

LI HUNG CHANG came of worthy but not distinguished parentage. His father had successfully passed the examinations, but held no official position, and was possessed of no opportunity to secure his son's advancement beyond affording him an opportunity to pursue his studies and fit himself for the examinations. These he successfully passed in all grades, and in the final contest at Peking he came out with distinguished honors among twenty thousand competitors. Later he was made a member of the Hanlin College, which corresponds somewhat to the French Academy. He therefore has reason to take pride in his accomplishments and standing as a scholar, though, judged by the Western standard of education, Chinese scholars would hold a very low grade. They have no conception of learning as understood in the West—of mathematics, chemistry, geology, or kindred sciences, and of universal history. Indeed, they have a very imperfect knowledge of geography. Their curriculum of study embraces the Chinese classics and philosophy (a voluminous compilation, especially holding in eminence the teachings of Confucius), the theory of government, and Chinese poetry and history. It is the standard fixed two thousand years ago, and has undergone little change in the succeeding centuries. One of our diplomatic representatives tells of a conversation had with one of the most distinguished scholars and highest officers in the empire, in which they canvassed their respective systems of education; and he reports that his Chinese friend had never heard of Homer, Virgil, or Shakspere; knew something of Alexander having crossed the Indus, had a vague knowledge of Cæsar and Napoleon, but none whatever of Hannibal, Peter the Great, Wellington, or other modern soldiers; and he was ignorant of astronomy, mathematics, or the modern sciences. When the American minister expressed surprise at these defects in Chinese education, the mandarin replied: «That is your civilization, and you learn it; we have ours,

and we learn it. For centuries we have gone on satisfied to know what we know. Why should we care to know what you know?»

Yet it must be conceded that Chinese scholars and officials are usually men of decided intellectual ability, and they cannot be set down as uneducated because they have not followed the curriculum of study marked out by European civilization. It is a source of natural pride that they possess a literature and philosophy older than any similar learning of the West, and which even at this day are not obsolete, but exercise an elevating moral and intellectual influence on a vast multitude of the human family. But no one of his race more than Li Hung Chang recognizes the defects of the national system of education. Largely through his influence, the Emperor has established at Peking a college with a full faculty of foreign professors for the instruction of chosen Chinese youths in the European languages and modern sciences, with a view to training them for the diplomatic service. So he has also established at Tientsin, for the last twenty-five years his viceregal residence, schools for military, naval, and medical education, manned by European instructors; and his example has been followed by other viceroys.

Neither does he regard the competitive educational system of admission to the public service as a perfect method, and more than once he has recommended to his Emperor material modifications in the existing system. But it must be confessed that it has stood the test of centuries with much benefit to China, and its practical operation has demonstrated that it possesses two merits of inestimable value to any nation: first, it brings all the offices of the empire within the reach of the lowest subject; and secondly, it diminishes the incentives to, and opportunities of, corruption and favoritism in securing entrance into official life. But in China the competitive examination ends with the admission; beyond that step promotion must come through other methods. Li Hung Chang secured the right of admission to office through his assiduous application to study, and every succeeding step in his upward career has been attained by his own genius and capacity.

THE TAIPING REBELLION.

He had developed in his studies great literary taste, and the high distinction with which he passed his final examination at Peking was a guarantee of some desirable civil post in which he might satisfy his taste for study. But the course of public affairs was destined to defeat this natural expectation, and turn his life into an entirely different channel. The Taiping rebellion, the most formidable of the many revolts against the reigning dynasty, had its inception during his student days; and about the time of his return from the imperial capital to his father's home on the Yang-tse-kiang River, to receive the honors which every community in China showers upon its successful students at the examinations, the rebellion assumed most alarming proportions. Its leaders captured the ancient capital, Nanking, a most important neighboring city, and marched a great army by the parental home on its triumphant way northward toward Peking. The young student, fired with patriotic zeal, and greatly alarmed for the fate of the sovereign whose honors he had so recently received, raised a regiment of home militia and entered upon the untried field of war. He possessed no training or experience as a soldier, but he developed many of the qualities of a successful general. His force was small and his resources were few, but he fell upon and harassed the rear of the rebel army, and sought to cut off its communications. Its advance on Peking was finally checked, and it was forced to recross the great river and return to Nanking. The imperial capital was saved, and the young student soldier had borne such an honorable and conspicuous part in this campaign that he attracted the attention of the generalissimo of the imperial army, Tseng Kwo-fan; his forces were attached to the latter's command, and he was assigned an important post under the general-in-chief. Tseng Kwo-fan was at the time the leading man of the empire, the father of the Marquis Tseng, who in the present generation attained much fame as a diplomatist in European capitals, and the former was not slow in recognizing the ability of the young soldier. He displayed such military qualities, and such devotion to the imperial cause, that he rose rapidly in the army, and soon became the active commander in the field, having immediate charge of the operations about Nanking and Shanghai, which latter city and important treaty-port was being threatened by the rebels.

With a spirit of liberality and quick discernment little characteristic of his countrymen, he early recognized the fact that the methods and weapons of Chinese warfare were antiquated and ill-suited to the work in hand, and he welcomed the opportunity afforded by his stay at Shanghai to introduce into the campaign modern military appliances. A foreign legion, enlisted from the unemployed and

adventurous Europeans who frequented that port, was admitted into the Chinese army under the command of an American sailor named Ward, and which, on account of its brilliant successes, and following the Chinese practice of adopting high-sounding titles, was called the «Ever-Victorious Army.» Ward, after a thorough organization of his foreign contingent, and a series of triumphs over the rebels, was killed in an assault upon the enemy, and the command of the corps devolved upon Colonel Gordon, who was detached from the British army for that purpose. This foreign contingent was the most trustworthy ally of the Chinese general in the suppression of the great rebellion, and much fame has justly come to Gordon for the part he bore in the contest. But there is a general disposition on the part of British writers to belittle the services and smirch the reputation of the American, Ward, who is always styled by them an «adventurer.» How he differed from Gordon in that respect is not apparent: but certain it is that he is entitled to the credit of having displayed marked military ability both in organizing his forces and in leading them in battle; and he demonstrated the wisdom of the Chinese commander in enlisting the corps, and its utility as a means of putting down the rebellion. No greater indorsement of his military genius could have been given than by Gordon himself in adopting his organization and following his methods to the smallest details.

Li Hung Chang came out of these campaigns with a high reputation for military skill, great administrative capacity, and devoted loyalty to the reigning dynasty, and was thenceforward the most famous man of his nation. But just at the close of the war an incident occurred which, in the estimation of most foreigners, has remained as a blight upon his fair fame. In the final great battle, which resulted in the capture of the most prominent of the leaders of the rebellion, Gordon, who was instrumental in their actual capture, promised to spare their lives, but immediately after being sent to headquarters they were beheaded. Gordon, who was of an impetuous temperament, denounced this act as a breach of faith, and, it is said, threatened to take the life of Li and to throw up his command. But he did neither. Li claimed that the refractory conduct of the rebel princes after their surrender made the punishment a necessity; and such a cool-headed and experienced man as Sir Robert Hart, with a full knowledge of the facts, held that Colonel Gordon was not justified in his conduct, and induced him to reconsider his action and judgment. Gordon continued in command for some time, and up to the day of his death at Khartum maintained most friendly relations with the viceroy. Notwithstanding these facts, English writers generally insist that Li was guilty of bad faith and of bloody and inhuman conduct. But it should be borne in mind that the Taiping rebellion was a most desolating and relentless war; that it had destroyed many populous cities; had laid waste nearly one half of the empire; had sacrificed an enormous number of lives, estimated as high as twenty millions; and that the leaders who were beheaded had been guilty of horrid cruelties. Under such circumstances it would not have been strange if even the most civilized and Christian commander, in the flush of victory, should have ordered the execution of the authors of such untold horrors and bloodshed. The sepoy mutiny of India synchronizes with the Taiping rebellion. If the «heathen Chinese» should wish to retort upon his foreign critics, he might not find it difficult to parallel his own conduct with that of his civilized neighbors, the rulers of India.

LI'S HONORS AND PROMOTION.

THE overthrow of the rebels, and the part he bore in accomplishing this result, brought to him distinguished honors from the throne. He was made an earl, was presented with the yellow jacket (the exclusive emblem of the imperial favor), and was appointed viceroy of an important province. But he was afforded little opportunity for the exercise of his executive faculties in affairs of peace. The country continued in a state of unrest; new revolts in other parts of the empire broke out, and, as the hero of the Taiping war, he was designated by the Emperor to suppress them. For the next few years he was kept busy with military affairs, and, owing to the difficulty and delays experienced, he more than once suffered reprimands from Peking; but no other man was found equal to the tasks set him, and he always emerged in the end with success, and was the recipient of the renewed gratitude of his sovereign.

As the Taiping rebellion brought him out of the quiet of his father's home, and thrust him into a new and untried career of service, so another unexpected and almost equally alarming event called him from the interior of the country, and from internal warfare, to a service in which he was altogether inexperienced, and which was destined to bring to him new burdens and honors. Since the Anglo-

French war of 1858–60, with the occupation of Peking by foreign troops, and the partial opening up of the empire as the result of that war, the conservative or foreign-hating party had been active in fomenting discontent, and as the missionaries were the most exposed of the foreign residents, they were usually the chief sufferers. The mass of the people of China are a quiet and peace-loving race, and if left to themselves there would be little trouble between them and foreigners, and, being naturally tolerant in religious matters, they have no prejudice against the missionaries. But they are very ignorant, highly superstitious, and greatly under the influence of the literary and official class, who are often bigoted and conceited to the highest degree, and regard the teaching of the missionaries as tending to overthrow the existing order of government and society, which they look upon as a perfect system, and sanctified by great antiquity. Through the circulation of the most slanderous and incredible stories against the missionaries, they succeed from time to time in stirring up the people to disorder and riot. The most terrible and bloody of these occurred at Tientsin in 1870, when a sudden uprising of the populace, overpowering or carrying along with them the soldiers, rushed upon, pillaged, and burned the French consulate and the French Catholic cathedral, murdered the consul and priests, and thence marched to the orphanage, destroyed the building, and murdered the sisters in charge. The deed sent a thrill of horror throughout the Christian world, and led the French government to demand heavy reprisals, and to assume a menacing attitude, in which it was supported by all the representatives of the Western powers at Peking. The Chinese authorities were greatly alarmed at the situation. Tseng Kwo-fan, who had been the generalissimo of the imperial forces in the Taiping rebellion, was at the time viceroy of the province of Chihli, in which the riot occurred; but he was now an old man, and conservative in his tendencies, and the imperial government, recognizing the gravity of the peril confronting it, transferred him to the viceroyalty of another province, and directed Li Hung Chang to come at once to Tientsin, and to take charge of the settlement of the affair. On arrival he issued a proclamation, somewhat high-sounding in its style, but calculated to have its proper effect upon the populace, reciting his achievements in the Taiping and other rebellions, and warning them of what they might expect under his rule if they continued to disturb the public peace. This was followed by energetic measures against the participants in the late riot, and order and confidence were at once restored in the community. The negotiations of the French minister with the Tsung-li Yamen, or Chinese Foreign Office at Peking, had progressed very slowly and in an unsatisfactory manner, and at the minister's request these negotiations were transferred to Tientsin, and Li Hung Chang was empowered by the Emperor as plenipotentiary to effect a settlement. In a short time he presented to the French minister a proposition which was so complete an atonement for the wrongs and injuries sustained that the latter promptly accepted it, and the danger of another European war, with further humiliation for China, was averted.

LI HUNG CHANG'S VISITING-CARD.

THE PRIME MINISTER.

THE imperial government was so greatly relieved by the happy termination of the affair, and so much impressed with Li Hung Chang's conduct of the negotiations, that it showered upon him new and almost unprecedented honors. In addition to his appointment as viceroy of the province of Chihli, he was named imperial tutor, grand secretary of state, minister superintendent of trade of the northern ports, and a noble of the first rank. These high titles and offices made him from that time to the present, a period of twenty-five years, the first official and statesman of the government under the Emperor. He has often been styled the prime minister of China, but, as a matter of fact, there is no such official in the imperial government. It is nominally an autocracy, the Emperor being

regarded as the Son of Heaven and the source of all authority. But his person is held so sacred, and he is kept so secluded in his palace, that he has little or no contact with the world, and by personal observation has no knowledge of his kingdom. Its affairs are conducted by a series of boards, constituting a very cumbersome and complex system, and no one man stands at the head of affairs and directs its movements.

Added dignity and importance over that of other viceroyalties attach to that of Chihli in that it is the metropolitan province, Peking being within its limits, and its viceroy is the guardian and protector of the Emperor. In the present case the office of imperial tutor conferred upon its occupant still further and more intimate duties in connection with the imperial household; as, for instance, when His Majesty, a few years ago, made his visit to the tombs of his ancestors, we find the hero of the Taiping war, and the first noble of the empire, giving his personal attention to the details of His Majesty's journey. Another and unusual duty became attached to this viceroyalty. Li Hung Chang had shown such aptitude for diplomatic duties in his negotiations respecting the Tientsin riot that thenceforth he conducted, or participated in, every important treaty negotiation or diplomatic controversy of his government. Having his residence at the seaport of the capital, for the last quarter of a century he has stood as a sentinel on the outpost of the forbidden city, and for his secluded Emperor has held intercourse with the outside world. Although not holding that position, he has acted as the virtual head of the Chinese Foreign Office, and has shown himself a match for the most astute of the trained European diplomatists. While in this capacity he has been the jealous guardian of his country's interests, he has always secured the confidence and esteem of the foreign ministers with whom he has conducted important negotiations. Probably no living man has received such signal marks of respect from his diplomatic antagonists as he. In the Margary affair, a most serious controversy with Great Britain, he was so straightforward and just in meeting the demands of that government that Sir Thomas Wade was led to make an important concession, «in recognition of the frankness with which he had negotiated this very troublesome business.» In the adjustment of the French conflict with China of 1884–85, the French minister inserted in the treaty a renunciation of all claims for indemnity, in order thereby «to pay a mark of regard to the patriotic wisdom of His Excellency Li Hung Chang.» When, last year, the Chinese government sent two of its distinguished subjects to Japan to sue for peace, the latter government declined to treat with them; but Marquis Ito, the prime minister, sent a message to Peking that if the Viceroy Li should be sent on such mission, it would be an evidence of sincere intentions, and that he would be received with the highest consideration; and the sequel realized to the greatest extent this estimate of his character and ability.

It would be a tedious task to recite all the duties and events which demanded his attention during his long service as viceroy of Chihli, in addition to those already mentioned. They were of a varied character and of infinite detail in administration, and brought into exercise his versatile talents. He had charge of the supervision of trade in all northern China, a task of no small moment. But that which required much of his time was the reorganization of the army, the building of a navy, and the fortification of the approaches to the capital, a work in which he was greatly hampered by the conservatism of the central government. In addition to periodical revolts, China is often afflicted with disastrous floods and terrible famines, and with many of these the viceroy had much to do. In 1877–78 Chihli and other neighboring provinces were visited by one of the most fearful famines in their history, in which it is estimated that about nine million persons perished. The Viceroy Li was the most prominent agent in staying the ravages of this fatal scourge, and his energy, administrative capacity, and large-hearted charity were conspicuously displayed in the measures for relief. He was untiring in securing and bringing supplies into the famine-stricken districts; his appeals to his countrymen for relief were persistent and pathetic, and were extended to those in foreign lands; he was active in exposing and punishing peculation of the relief funds, which was common; and he is said to have fed more than a thousand of the starving from his own table daily. His appeals brought generous responses, and it is estimated that from the Chinese provinces $3,500,000 were contributed.

MOURNING HIS MOTHER'S DEATH.

DURING his incumbency of the viceroyalty of Chihli an event took place which was of great moment to him, and has for Western readers an interest and a lesson. Little is known of the viceroy's father beyond the fact that he was a respectable member of the

gentry, or literati; but his mother was a woman of more than ordinary strength of character, and evidently had a marked influence on her son's life. She was the mother of eight sons, the eldest of whom also rose to distinction, and was for several years the viceroy of the two provinces of which Canton is the capital. The triumph over the Taiping rebellion brought to Li Hung Chang many adulatory addresses, in which praise his mother shared. As a specimen of Chinese poetry, it may be interesting to make the following extract from one of these:

> Noble lady! eight-bearer borne;
> Relict of one distinguished;
> Mother of many sons;
> Venerable in years, of family famous;
> Exalted; having in one
> Chief of soldiers and Minister of State;
> Wondrous attainment of a son!
> Wondrous of a younger son!

In 1882 the old lady fell ill, and the viceroy memorialized the throne, begging for a month's leave of absence from his duties to visit her. As the correspondence is to us so novel, reveals so quaintly the relations existing between the high officials and the throne, and brings out so strikingly the domestic affections of the Chinese people, it will hardly be regarded as prolix if liberal extracts are here given. After the usual formal introduction, and reciting the news of his mother's illness, the viceroy proceeds:

> He prays, therefore, that he may be granted leave of absence to go at once to visit her. He states that his mother has been residing for some ten years in the official residence of his brother, Li Han Chang, the Governor of Hukuang. She is eighty-three years of age, and her constitution has hitherto been robust; but last winter she suffered from dysentery, and although the physicians succeeded in stopping the worst symptoms, she still continued feverish at night. At the beginning of spring she was a little better. Memorialist has sent his son, Ching-fong to Hupeh to wait on his mother with food and medicine in his stead, but a letter which he has just received informs him that she is afflicted with a continual cough, and cannot take food and drink in any quantity. She is old, and is breaking up; and the thought of her absent son continually recurs to her, and makes her illness more dangerous. When memorialist heard this his heart burned with anxiety, and his sleep and his food were worthless to him. And since the day in the spring of 1870 when he bade her farewell, thirteen years ago, he has never seen his mother's face. A man has a long lifetime, it is said, to spend in his country's service, and but a short term of years in which he can serve his parents; and now that the illness from which his mother has long been suffering still continues unabated, memorialist all night long tosses about in his trouble, and not for a single moment is his mind at rest. . . . This [a month's leave] will enable him to make a rapid journey to Wuchang, to visit his mother, and to be a witness of her recovery, and to satisfy in some slight degree the feelings of affection which, as the jay for its parent bird, he entertains for her. What bounds would then be set to his gratitude for such signal kindness on the part of their Majesties? . . . The reason for his application for leave, the wish, namely, to visit his mother, he has carefully set forth in the present petition to the throne, which he sends by courier post. He presents this memorial with inexpressible fear and distress of mind.

The month's leave of absence was granted, but meanwhile news came of his mother's death, and he thereupon, in accordance with the practice of the country, resigned all his offices, and memorialized for permission to avail himself of the customary three years' retirement for mourning a mother's death. But the Empress regents denied his request, setting forth in detail that the critical condition of public affairs would not permit of his withdrawal for such a long period, referring to the value of his services in flattering terms, stating that a modification of existing usage was necessary in his case, and that he must retain his offices and be content with a leave of absence of only one hundred days. They conclude:

> The questions of the hour are attended with much difficulty, and the viceroy should struggle to suppress his private sorrow, looking upon the affairs of state as of the first importance, and striving to make some return to us for our kindness to him. This will be the conduct that will inspire his mother's mind with the comforting conviction that her son, following the precepts early instilled into him, is devoting himself to the service of his country.

But this decision failed to convince the viceroy that filial duty could thus be satisfied, and he addressed a second lengthy memorial to the throne. After recognizing the great kindness and sympathy of their Majesties, he says:

> But memorialist feels that he must submit the full expression of his feelings to their Majesties. It is twelve years since, in the dearth of officials, he was appointed to Chihli; his shortcomings have been many, and his merits few. He has repeatedly received marks of extraordinary consideration in being preserved intact in his dignities, and in not receiving censure and punishment. . . . But since he heard of his mother's severe illness his brain has been dull and his eyes heavy. Leave of ab-

sence was granted him, but before he could start on his long journey, he received the letter telling of his mother's death. Remorse will consequently haunt him all his life, and there is a wound in his heart that prevents him privately from enjoying a moment's respite from pain, and publicly from being of any service to the state. . . . Even if memorialist, separated beyond hope of meeting from his mother, the living from the dead, were to spend three years in lamentations at her tomb, it would not avail to relieve his soul from the poignant and inexpressible regret he feels for his lack of filial duty. But if, while stunned with grief, he is forced to rise in the mourning garb and attend to business, not only will violence be done to the great principle of filial duty on which the government is based, but comment also will be provoked on the shortcomings of the disciple of Confucius. Though trusted to the fullest extent by his sovereign, a sense of shame would continue to harass him. He therefore prays their Majesties, in pitying recognition of the reality of their foolish servant's grief, to recall their commands, and graciously permit him to vacate his posts and observe the full term of mourning, that the autumn frosts and spring dews may, in the course of time, witness some alleviation of his bitter regrets. But though the earth be his pillow, and his bed be of rushes, he is still beneath the canopy of heaven. He is but sixty years of age, and his stay in the thatched hut has a limit. Many are the days left in which to show his gratitude to the state. Thus, little by little, now with loud weeping and now with silent sobs, has their Majesties' servant told them his piteous tale; and the anxiety with which he awaits their commands is beyond his power to express.

EMPEROR'S INSCRIPTION ACCOMPANYING THE GIFTS SENT TO THE VICEROY ON HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY.

But the viceroy's second appeal was to no purpose. The Empress regents esteemed too highly his usefulness to the government to allow him to resign his offices, or to retire from the public service for three years, and adhered to their original resolution to grant him only one hundred days' leave of absence; and even that he was not allowed to enjoy in quiet. Public affairs were so pressing that he had often «to rise in the mourning garb, and attend to business.» This unique correspondence brings out one of the most distinguishing traits of Chinese character—veneration for parents, which has become sanctified into religious worship, and also has exercised a marked influence on the political relations of the people, the Emperor being the parental head of the nation. If the fifth commandment of the Mosaic code were as faithfully observed by Christian nations as the central doctrine of the Confucian philosophy is practised by the Celestials, the social order of the Western world would be greatly improved.

A notable event in the life of the Viceroy Li was the commemoration, four years ago, of his seventieth birthday, which was made the occasion of great demonstrations of respect. The Emperor sent various rich and appropriate gifts, with flattering inscriptions written with his own hand; the Empress dowager, a woman of great ability, and the ruling spirit of the government for the last twenty years, vied with her imperial ward in her gifts; subjects of high and low degree, and foreign residents, lavished upon him presents and mementos; processions, ceremonies, and banquets in Chinese profusion were the order of the day; and all culminated in an address signed by the leading officials throughout the empire, written by Chang Chi-tung, next to the viceroy the most honored and influential man in the government, and often his political opponent. As a specimen of Chinese eulogy, an extract will be interesting:

> You are altogether to be admired; in literature deep, in warcraft terrible, in perception acute, in genius sublime, you are entrenched on every side, unassailable.

After alluding to his diplomacy, his service in building up the military defenses, and his public improvements, the address concludes:

As I stand beside you in the Hanlin, I feel how small I am, how little able to grapple with the great matters met within my province on the great river. In you we have perfect confidence, and I earnestly desire to learn from you. Compared with you, I am as a simple peasant to a picked archer, a poor jade to a fleet racer. You are men's ideal; you, like Kang Hou, enjoy the confidence of our Sovereign; yours is the glory of Chang the Councilor. You are the cynosure of all eyes.

POLITICAL FOES.

THE correspondence on his mother's death shows the great importance attached by the central government to the services of Li Hung Chang, and the demonstrations attending his seventieth birthday, although somewhat Oriental in their extravagance, truly reflect the esteem in which he was held by the nation; but it must not be inferred therefrom that his political career has been one of unbroken success and adulation. The ruling circles at Peking and throughout the empire are full of personal parties, and political bickerings and intrigues are as much the order of the day as in other countries. This condition of things is greatly promoted by an ancient institution at Peking called the Censorate, a body of prominent men whose special function it is to review and criticize the acts of all officials, and to bring their shortcomings to the attention of the throne. Under the inspiration of his political enemies, the Viceroy Li has been many times the object of the Censors' attacks, and on three separate occasions he has had inflicted upon him the punishment recommended by this body. In 1868, because of failure to put down the Nienfei revolt in the time expected, he was degraded in rank, ordered to be removed from his post, and deprived of the yellow jacket bestowed upon him for his triumph over the Taiping rebels. But before the decree could be carried out a turn of fortune gave him decisive victories, and his rank, post, and jacket were preserved. A few years later he was the victim of a new degradation. The Grand Canal has for many centuries played an important part in the affairs of the empire as the great artery of communication between the capital and the most populous parts of the country, is a ravenous consumer of the public funds, owing to the heavy floods which destroy its banks, and the cause of the downfall of many a public functionary. In 1871 the viceroy of Chihli, after the expenditure of a large sum appropriated from the imperial treasury, reported that he had put this great public work in complete condition. But, unfortunately, that very season an unprecedented flood swept away the embankment with great destruction and injury to public and private property. It was an opportunity not to be lost by the Censors, and again Li Hung Chang had to submit to degradation and the loss of his yellow jacket and peacock feathers. But he was allowed to hold his office of viceroy, and, with the indomitable will which has marked his public life, he set to work to repair the breaches, and his task was so promptly and successfully accomplished that he was restored to his dignities and insignia of imperial favor.

The last triumph of his enemies occurred during the late war with Japan, after the defeat of the Chinese forces in Corea, and the naval engagement off the mouth of the Yalu River. For years before the war the organization of the army in northern China, and the creation of a navy, had been in his hands, and, notwithstanding the fact that he had earnestly protested against the war with Japan, he was held responsible for the ignominious failure, and by imperial decree he was a third time degraded, deprived of the right to wear the famous yellow jacket and the three-eyed peacock feathers, and superseded in the command of the army of the North. But he was too influential and useful to be entirely withdrawn from the public service, and he retained his important post as viceroy. The events of the war very soon demonstrated the wisdom of his views, and that in the time of great emergencies he stood head and shoulders above any other subject of the Emperor. Within a few weeks his enemies had to bear the discomfiture of seeing him restored to all his honors, called to Peking, placed in most confidential relations with His Majesty, and intrusted singly with the high mission of negotiating peace with Japan.[1]

THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS WITH JAPAN.

WHILE he thus bore the most important trust ever committed to him by the Emperor, it was by no means a task to his liking. He was by nature high-spirited, and his military and political success had made him haughty and imperious. He was proud of his country,

[1] The reader need hardly be reminded that General Foster accompanied the viceroy on this mission, contributing to the service of China his well-recognized skill and knowledge, due to long experience in the diplomatic affairs of the United States.—EDITOR.

of its past history, and of its institutions. He partook of the national feeling of contempt for the Japanese, and he felt keenly the humiliation which the war had inflicted upon his people. He knew the mission to which he had been assigned would make him unpopular, and expose him to fresh indignities from his partizan enemies. He felt that he was taking his life in his hand when he should place himself on Japanese soil, and he so expressed himself to the incredulous foreign diplomats at Peking; but he dared not shrink from the duty which his sovereign had imposed upon him. Seldom has a public man, under such trying circumstances, borne himself with such true heroism and patriotic devotion. A high-spirited and proud man, he went to the land of the despised but triumphant enemy to sue for peace; and yet he never failed to maintain his accustomed demeanor or his country's dignity. And it is due to the Japanese plenipotentiaries who were designated to receive and treat with him at Shimonoseki, to state that they exhibited toward him the highest marks of respect, and during the entire negotiations allowed no word to escape from their lips, and nothing to occur, which might be considered personally offensive to their distinguished guest. He had the good fortune to conduct negotiations with two compeers, men of marked ability, and worthy representatives of their government and race. Marquis Ito, the prime minister, is a typical member of the progressive party, educated in Europe, and trained in modern political science and methods of government, but an ardent and patriotic Japanese. He had a valuable colleague in Count Mutsu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who had been long in his country's service at home and abroad. Marquis Ito, ten years before, had been sent by his government to Tientsin to arrange with the Viceroy Li a settlement of Corean affairs; and the same subject brought the viceroy to Japan, but under changed conditions for the negotiators.

The defeated party always negotiates at a disadvantage, and the viceroy did not fail to appreciate the situation; but the judgment of the impartial observer is that he came out of it with as much credit as was possible, and it is quite certain that he obtained better terms for his country than any other Chinese official could have secured. This was due in part to the personal consideration shown him by the Japanese negotiators, but mainly to his own diplomatic experience and his thorough knowledge of his own government. Japan was robbed of a large measure of her triumph by the interposition of the European powers, and it has been stated that the viceroy consented in the treaty to the cession of the Liaotung Peninsula only because of his knowledge that these powers would compel its return to China. But this is not a fair statement of the facts. Neither the viceroy nor his government had received any information from Russia or other power, before the treaty was signed, as to its action on the subject; but he had been a close student of European politics for many years, and his action was based upon convictions born of that study. He neither reads nor speaks any foreign language, but he has secretaries charged with the duty of keeping him informed of current events, and has had much intercourse with diplomats and other intelligent foreigners; and he well knew that Russia, if no other nation, would not allow the domination of Corea by Japan, or its permanent lodgment on the continent so near to Peking and Russia's own possessions; and he was willing to make the Liaotung cession in order to escape other harsh terms.

But the viceroy's statesmanship and strength of character were most conspicuous in his conduct after the treaty was signed and he had returned to China. On his arrival at Tientsin he ascertained that his worst fears as to the reception which the treaty would receive from his own countrymen were more than realized. When its terms became known, it was met by a storm of almost unanimous condemnation. Without exception, the viceroys, and also most of the generals, memorialized the throne against it, and the representatives of three of the great powers of Europe sought to prevent or delay its ratification by the Emperor.

But the viceroy did not hesitate as to his duty. He felt that the honor of his sovereign and the good of the country required that faith should be kept with Japan. He therefore sent urgent telegraphic representations to the Emperor and to the Foreign Office, calling for prompt ratification and exchange of the treaty in spite of the foreign influence and the national clamor. His personal enemies were actively exerting themselves against the treaty, led by the Viceroy Chang Chi-tung, who had written the highly laudatory address on the occasion of his birthday celebration, and who to that end was fomenting the rebellion in Formosa, and supplying the rebels with arms from the imperial arsenal at Shanghai. It greatly redounds to the credit of the young Emperor that in such a grave crisis he followed the advice of his venerable counselor, and ratified the treaty.

LI'S OPPOSITION TO WAR.

THE foregoing sketch presents the salient points in the career of Li Hung Chang, but the portraiture of the man would be imperfect without a reference to certain of his characteristics. Although the greatest general his country has produced in this century, he is preëminently a man of peace. Confucius, whose disciple he is proud to call himself, taught the folly of war, and the practice of the government and Chinese society in this respect is inspired by his teachings. While Japan has exalted the warlike spirit, and there the soldier is the idol of the people, in China the soldier is lightly esteemed, and always takes rank below the literary class. But, notwithstanding this peaceful spirit, there is often a war party in China, and on two or three memorable occasions it has fallen to the lot of the Viceroy Li to be placed in antagonism to it. The Kuldja question, about 1880, brought the country to the brink of war with Russia, and it was only by his most active resistance to the war party at Peking that a peaceful settlement was reached. It is now well known that he opposed the late hostilities with Japan. The government of the latter during the progress of the war obtained possession of and published certain memorials to the throne, dated in 1882, and forwarded by the viceroy, which looked to the ultimate invasion of Japan; but at best it was merely an inchoate scheme, and probably encouraged by the viceroy to aid his projects for the defense of the approaches to Peking. He had a better knowledge of the military strength of Japan and of the weakness of China than any other of the Emperor's advisers, and he feared the consequences to his country of a conflict. In the verbal negotiations for peace the following colloquy occurred:

Marquis Ito: «War is an evil, though sometimes unavoidable.»

Viceroy Li: Far better avoided. When General Grant, ex-President of the United States, visited Tientsin, and we became friends, he said to me: 'The loss of life in the rebellion in my country was so terrible that after I became President I was always anxious to avert war, and have ever since advised others to do so. Your Excellency won favor in suppressing the Taiping rebellion, yet I urge you to beware of entrance to a quarrel which might lead to war.' I have always tried to follow this excellent advice. Your Excellency well knows that I was opposed to this war.»

Marquis Ito: «War is a cruel and bloody business; yet there are times and conditions in the intercourse of states when there is no help for it.»

Viceroy Li: «It is barbarous, and the perfection of modern weapons adds to the slaughter. Your Excellency is in the prime of life, and feels the impulse of martial ardor.»

Marquis Ito: «How easily peace might have been made at the beginning!»

Viceroy Li: «I was for peace then, but the opposition was too much for me, and the opportunity was lost.»

It will be of interest, in this connection, to note that the friendship between the viceroy and General Grant above referred to was sincere and reciprocal, and the general regarded the former as one of the three great men of the world of his day. As a token of the viceroy's respect, by his direction the Chinese minister in Washington makes a visit to Riverside on the anniversary of the general's death, and lays upon his tomb a wreath of flowers.

It is claimed that, notwithstanding Li Hung Chang has shown some liberality of views toward modern improvements and education, he is at heart a hater of foreigners, and has an abiding faith in Chinese institutions and methods of government. He is, it is true, a great admirer of the Confucian philosophy, and, remembering the enduring history of his people, we can hardly wonder at his devotion to the institutions which have made that history possible. When we call to mind the experience China has had with certain Western nations, it might not be considered strange if his attachment to foreigners was not very ardent; but in all his public life his conduct shows that he feels the need of foreign aid, and is disposed to give it proper welcome, and of all Chinese statesmen he is the most liberal-minded and free from prejudice. He is far from claiming that the present system of government is perfect. He has, in fact, urged upon the authorities at Peking two important changes which look to a reform of most serious defects in the system; to wit, the withdrawal from the viceroys of provinces of powers which should be exercised only by the imperial government, and such a change in the method of admission to the public service as will liberalize the examinations, and make fitness rather than scholarship the test. There are other changes which he would gladly bring about if he had the power; but, as he confessed to Marquis Ito, «China is hampered by antiquated customs which prevent desirable reforms.»

The religious views of the viceroy are of interest at this time. It has been charged that he partakes fully of the superstition which is a marked characteristic of his people, and memorials to the throne are cited in which he recognizes the interposition of the river-gods in the form of a snake during the devastating floods, and other marvelous occurrences. How far his conduct in this regard may be considered a mere concession to the prevailing beliefs of the people, it is difficult to say, but he probably participates in the views of his great teacher Confucius, who was an avowed agnostic. He has to the Emperor denounced both Buddhism and Taoism as unorthodox sects. An incident of his peace mission shows that he is at least respectful toward Christianity, and recognizes the existence of an overruling providence. When the attack was made upon his life, the Christians of Nagoya, both Japanese and foreigners, sent a message of sympathy, with a statement that they were praying for his recovery. His son replied on his behalf as follows:

My father has directed me to write the following, dictated from his bed, in reply to your Address. He is deeply moved by the sentiments of kindly solicitude for his welfare expressed in your Address, and feels that the prayers you have offered for his recovery cannot have been unheeded by the Power who controls human destinies. He feels that his escape from death was little short of miraculous.

He believes that his life has been spared to him for some wise purpose beyond the capacity of man to fathom; but he will venture to interpret his good fortune as an indication that his life-work is not yet complete; that he may yet do some good in the world, and perhaps render service to his country by endeavoring to restore peace and good will where strife now prevails. . . .

Since the restoration of peace and his return to Peking, in an interview reported with a Methodist bishop, he said:

«Say to the American people for me to send over more missionaries for the schools and hospitals, and I hope to be in a position both to aid them and protect them.» As confirmatory of these sentiments, it is announced that since the war terminated all restrictions upon the propagation of the Christian religion have been expunged from the Chinese code. On the other hand, the war seems to have had the contrary effect on the Japanese, as we find the imperial diet engaged in decreeing the erection of Shinto temples in Formosa, in order that the spirit of a celebrated prince, and those of others who fell in the service, may be worshiped as gods; and the captured cannon are being molded into an immense Buddha to adorn the capital.

No living public man of Asia has been so much the subject of discussion and criticism as Li Hung Chang. Much of the criticism has been unfavorable, and his critics are often unfair. It is hardly just to him to estimate his character and attainments according to the standard of Western nations. His education is exclusively Oriental, and his entire life has been spent in China. His knowledge of our civilization is such as could be acquired in the motley society of a treaty-port. As a statesman he has had to deal with a very conservative and bigoted constituency, and with associates prejudiced against and ignorant of foreign nations. Judged in the light of his education, his experience, and his surroundings, he must be regarded as the first of living statesmen of Asia, and one of the most distinguished of the public men of the world.

John W. Foster.

NAY, ASK NO VOW!

NAY, ask no vow, dear heart! Too lightly slips
The word «forever» from our careless lips.
We pledge eternity—who in one day,
Forgotten, silenced, mingle clay with clay!
How do you know your eyes will always shine
With that glad welcome when they meet with mine?
How dare I say this heart for aye will swell
To answer yours—knowing its frailty well?
To-day sees plighted troth and clasping hands;
To-morrow, shattered faith and broken bands.
Oh, pitiful for mortal lips to swear!
More fitting this: unceasing, fervent prayer
That our love's flower, escaping frost and blight,
May bloom immortal, as we hope to-night!

Catharine Young Glen.