

Commercial Advertiser

WALTER G. SMITH - - EDITOR.

FRIDAY : : : : : AUGUST 8

INTERVIEWING LI HUNG CHANG.

(By the Editor.)

The capture of Wei-hai-Wei early in February, 1895, ended the Chinese campaign of Marshal Oyama's army and permitted the war correspondents to get a breathing spell. Having lived for weeks on short rations, vainly trying to keep warm and subject to the almost daily perils of the skirmish line or the battlefield, we of the fourth estate longed for the fleshpots of Japan. So we went there, all except my personal comrade, Cowen, of the London Times, who had slipped away to Chefoo on H. M. S. Porpoise to get an interview with some white men who had served China in the war. So it fell to Lagarde of Le Temps, O'Shea of the New York Herald, Ward of the Pall Mall Gazette and myself to make the journey across the Yellow Sea together. We steamed out of Wei-hai-Wei bay on February 22nd. Thirty warships, including the U. S. S. Charleston lay there and these, with forty transports, were bright with American flags in honor of Washington's birthday. Exploding dynamite under captured forts made a grand salute.

Arriving in Japan the correspondents scattered. I went to Horoshima, the then military base of the empire, to arrange to make the Peking excursion with the Imperial Guard. Meanwhile Li Hung Chang had started for Japan to try and get a treaty of peace. It looked as if he might succeed. Meeting Miyoji Ito, Secretary General of the Imperial Cabinet, who had special charge of the foreign war correspondents, I asked him about the prospects. We had been rather confidential in the past and what advice he gave me I generally followed. This time his counsel was disappointing. "Don't leave with the army," he said. "Let the other men go if they want to, but you wait here. It will all come right. Sub-rosa, now, we are going to make peace and the army will probably get no further than Port Arthur. While the other fellows are there looking at the landscape you can be attending the peace conference."

So I settled down in an inn in Hiroshima and waited. Li Hung Chang arrived at Shimonoseki, the town at the western end of the Inland Sea, where the negotiators were to sit. Little news came from there and so far I had failed to get word from Ito. But on the night of March 24th I was awakened by a messenger who brought the following curious but exciting letter from a member of the general staff:

Dear Sir: I beg to inform you that I have just now received a telegram saying that His Excellency, Li Hung Chang, was fired from a pistol by an individual named Koyama and got a wound on his face. The poor fellow is arrested at once. This extraordinary event took place on the Chinese Minister on his way home from the meeting place this evening. His Imperial Japanese Majesty is exceedingly alarmed and sent to the Chinese Minister Surgeon General Ishiguro and Satow, to attend on him at once. The warship Tayeyama was sent tomorrow morning for the protection of Chinese ships in Shimonoseki. Yours very truly, MURATA.

There was no more sleep that night. The next afternoon I must be where the news was developing. And so in the morning I went to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Perhaps he thought of that the other day when a Chinese mob struck down the envoys at Peking; the Japanese Minister among the rest.

On reaching Shimonoseki it was learned that while the aged Viceroy was going through the narrow streets, borne in his sedan chair, a Japanese coolie had sprung in front of the escort and fired at him point blank. The ball had smacked the left cheek of Li's spectacles and lodged in the cheekbone. Li Hung Chang was then hurried to the temple, which had been assigned him for quarters and was lying there with good prospects of recovery. Because of the sad affair China had been granted an armistice of three weeks—a request for one having previously been refused.

The open season to Li Hung Chang's sick room was hard to get, but John W. Foster who was in Shimonoseki as counsel for the Chinese Government, spoke the magic word and all doors swung widely. When I met the greatest man of China—whom General Grant had called a stronger statesman than Gladstone or Bismarck—he lay on a lounge surrounded by several fat mandarins attired like himself, in magnificent furs and silks. There were European chairs about and in the corner was a carpeted bed with an air mattress. Servants were near with lotions and one knelt by the wounded man's side holding a great pipe to his lips. Li's son, Lord Li, and his American secretary, Mr. Pethick, made me welcome; the Viceroy motioned to a chair and the interview began.

Li Hung Chang has peculiar notions about interviewing. That is to say, he answers no questions, but fills in the time by putting them. Occasionally he shows a coercive disposition. Some weeks before he went to Shimonoseki the old statesman sent word to the Peking correspondent of the London publication. The correspondent called and found Li in a furious temper. "I want to know, sir," said the statesman, "what you newspaper men mean by writing about Japanese victories. There are no Japanese victories."

"You are mistaken," was the calm reply of the journalist. "There have been nothing but Japanese victories in this war."

"That is false," shouted the Viceroy. "You know it is false. Our armies may have had small reverses now and then, but nothing more. You people continually invent stories of Japanese victories, and must stop it."

"Did I understand His Excellency to use the word 'must'?" asked the Times correspondent of the interpreter. "He did."

"Well, then, tell him that the foreign correspondents at this capital are not accustomed to receive orders from any Chinese official touching the manner in which they shall perform their duties. Furthermore tell him this interview is closed." With that the Englishman turned his broad back upon the Viceroy and left the room. The next day he

received an apology through the secretary. To return to my own call. Li Hung Chang was affability itself. Also picturesqueness. He was dressed in a jacket of fur that looked like sealskin and his legs were covered with a broad-skirted robe. The wound under his eye was bandaged but the part of his face which could be seen had a healthy hue and his exposed eye was bright and genial. Queue and beard were gray and scant. Li wanted to talk at once about his narrow escape and after asking when I had come from America inquired if there was any previous instance where an ambassador had been shot in the country to which he was accredited. This was an inquiry which Li Hung Chang had put to all his foreign visitors except the Japanese.

I expressed a desire to see the garments the Ambassador had worn when shot. They were brought in, together with the damaged pair of modern, gold-rimmed spectacles. First a long, yellow robe with a lining of squirrel fur was shown. There were dark stains in front and the sleeve was almost inky with coagulated blood. A blue jacket that had been worn under the robe was also bloody, as was an outer jacket of other fur. Several stained handkerchiefs were shown. All these ghastly relics were to be taken back to China uncleaned for the delectation of the Empress Dowager.

The interview, with the Viceroy as the interviewer, proceeded in this way: "How long will you remain in Japan?" he asked.

"Until the conclusion of peace, or, if the war goes on I shall return to China," I replied.

"Where have you been in my country?" was the next question.

"Port Arthur, Kinchow, Tallen-wan, Yung Ching, Wei-hai-Wei and many villages. But Your Excellency let me ask—"

"One moment," put in the interpreter. "His Excellency would like to ask how many soldiers the Japanese had in the Wei-hai-Wei campaign?"

I answered "Twenty thousand."

"Ah!" put in the old diplomat, "then our troops were greatly outnumbered. Did our soldiers fight well?"

"They made it quite unpleasant for us at times."

"Were you under fire?"

"Often."

Here the American Secretary, Mr. Pethick, listened to a few words from his chief and then remarked: "His Excellency says that a newspaper man must receive a great deal of money to compensate him for the risks he has to take in war. Would you mind telling him what you get?"

I named a sum over which the richest man in the world ruminates for a full minute without appearing envious.

"How many Japanese soldiers are now in the Shantung province?" was asked.

"I could not tell."

"Do you know how many Japanese soldiers remain on the island in Wei-hai-Wei bay?"

"The force is quite large and there are a number of guardships in the harbor."

The Viceroy sucked his pipe for a while and had cigarettes passed to the correspondent. They were an Egyptian brand, served on a lacquered tray. After a few whiffs I asked about his wound.

"It is painful," said he with a smile, "but I shall be quite content whenever it is necessary to shed my blood for my country."

That sounded so Fourth of July-like that I mentally charged it up to the American interpreter.

But we were not getting on and remembering that Li Hung Chang was the man to be interviewed I put a leading question of Oriental politics.

"His Excellency," said the interpreter blandly, "would like to enquire how old you are?"

The Viceroy had evidently scored. I gave him this important data, as he seemed to insist.

The next Vice-Regal questions were: "Are you married? How old is your wife? Have you any children? How many? Boys or girls or both?"

"But, Your Excellency," I put in, "the San Francisco Chronicle desires to know something about the probable position of China in this conference and if the prospects of peace may be called reassuring?"

"His Excellency will answer that later," said the Secretary after passing a few remarks with his chief, "but as he is deeply interested in the American press he would like first to ask something about your paper. You call it the Chronicle?"

"Quite right."

"Is it sold or given away?"

I modestly placed the journal on a commercial footing.

"How often is it printed?"

"Daily."

"Daily?"

"Daily!"

"Do many people buy it?"

Some interesting figures were given to the interpreter and while Li was pondering deeply the correspondent ventured to ask again about the attitude of China in the conference.

The Secretary turned to an attendant and said something. The latter hurried out and brought in tea that would sell, if sold at all, for \$50 a pound. It was a colorless liquid with a faint perfume of rose leaves. We sipped the cheerful drink together and the Viceroy, after hinting that if I was minded to return with him to Tien-Tsin a place in the Chinese army might be found for one who had campaigned in Shantung, nodded a friendly farewell, whereat the Mandarins bowed, the servants kow-towed and the interview ended without the correspondent of the San Francisco Chronicle getting anything more than a unique experience.

I never saw the old Chinaman again; but I was ready to agree with ex-Secretary Foster, to whom the story of the visit was told the same evening, that Li Hung Chang was too old a diplomatic bird to be caught with newspaper chaff.

Mr. Foster mentioned a conversation he lately had with the Viceroy which threw a Roentgen ray into the old Oriental's character.

And that is why Li Hung Chang at 60—he is now 80—was the richest man in the world. He had been the most powerful official of the Chinese Empire and had caught the nimble tael whenever it appeared.

One word about the other correspondents. When they sailed through the straits of Shimonoseki on the transport flagship, bound as they thought to Peking, they were sure that the Chronicle man had been caught napping. As Miyoji Ito predicted they got no further than Port Arthur, for when Li Hung Chang recovered he signed a treaty of peace. Cholera broke out among the transports and it was a month before my unhappy confreres got back to Japan and turned up at the Kyoto Exposition.

It may be Hung Li Chang instead of Li Hung Chang if the old Viceroy is playing a double game.

SHALL WE WEAR COATS?

To shuck, or not to shuck, that is the question:—Whether 'tis nobler in us men to suffer the woes and horrors of the summer solstice Or shuck our coats, despite the flouts of fashion, And by opposing end them?—To shuck,—to cool,—

No more,—and by a cool to say we end The headache, prickly heat and other shocks Warm flesh is held to. 'Tis a consummation Devoutly to be wished. To shuck,—to cool,—

To cool, perchance catch cold;—ay, there's the rub. For through our negliges what draughts may come

When we have shucked our heat-enhancing coats To give us chills. There's the respect That makes malaria of so long life. For who would bear the nineties in the shade; The oppressive air, the court's contumely;

The pangs of perspiration; the delay And insolence of icemen, and the spurs That patient merit of the unworthy takes. When we ourselves might real comfort gain

By shucking coatlets? Who would fardels bear, To grunt and sweat these torrid days and nights? But that the dread of lovely woman's scorn,—

Flashed from bright eyes to overwhelm and blight, And that we can't escape, puzzles us all And makes us rather wear the coats we have

Than pose in shirtsleeves and disgust the dears? Thus conscience does make cowards of us all. And thus the negligence of resolution Is sickled o'er with the pale cast of coat.

Shall we shuck? This is a question full of pregnant meaning at present. The weather man says he can hold out no hope for cooler weather. Of course it is sure to get cooler sooner or later, but just how long suffering Honolulu must endure old Sol's warm jokes may not be said. A well-known man who has already introduced into Honolulu novel ideas for health and comfort proposes that on next Monday, if the heat continues, every self-respecting citizen shuck his coat and Test a case. He says that we are simply sacrificing health and convenience to a custom at whose feet we should not worship.

Yesterday at the instigation of a number of friends who doubted his nerve, the man with the idea put it into execution himself, and coatless went about his work. In fact, he means to commence in real earnest an anti-coat crusade during the continuance of the dog-days. He is a comfort-seeker and believes that if the women can enjoy shirtwaists with plenty of lace to supply whiffs of fresh air around the neck, suffering male humanity should at once adopt a costume of its own in sub-tropical Hawaii.

Yesterday's attire on starting out on his peregrinations consisted of low-cut patent leathers, a pair of white duck trousers, a flannel-covered belt, a blue and white striped negligee shirt with collar and cuffs attached. Everything about him looked cool and comfortable. Being so well known, his appearance on certain streets was the cause of many back-looks. While he entered a street car, one of his business men friends tapped him on the shoulder and reminded him that he had forgotten his coat. But it was his women friends who cast suspicious glances at him. Some were indignant that he should appear in public minus a coat, and thought he was very rude. The gentleman, however, quietly laughed in his shirt-sleeve and reminded those who queried him about it, that he was adopting the shirtwaist idea, and found it suited him to perfection.

In the vicinity of the Judiciary building, however, his fortune began to forsake him. From the windows of the Circuit Court room the stentorian voice of Judge Humphreys, handing down an oral opinion, struck his ear, and he hesitated before entering the hallowed precincts of justice coatless as she was. His business, however, was in the law library, far away from the Judge, and he escaped from the building without being seen. The only trouble he had in going about in negligee shirt was the lack of pockets to store his tobacco pouch, his wallet, notebook, pencil, handkerchief, matchbox and other unmentionables. He believes that a belt provided in the same manner as a lady's chatelaine would just about hit the mark.

Mexico is considering the advisability of adopting a standard system of reckoning time. At present Mexico has an official time, computed at the capital and telegraphed to various parts of the republic. That time differs from Greenwich six and one-half hours. It is the time adopted by the railroads and telegraph lines, but in many parts of Mexico, especially in places not in telegraphic communication with the rest of the world, local time prevails.

Isn't Barbara droll? "What now?" "She has cards out for a silver celebration." "She's not married." "No, but she's been a bachelor girl for 25 years."

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