LI ON AMERICAN HATRED

CHINESE LABORERS, HE SAYS, HAVE HIGHER VIRTUES.

Argues for Free Competition in Labor as Well as Free Trade in Commodities—The Geary Act Most Unfair, He Says in a Formal Audience with Reporters—Amazed by Our Tall Buildings and Pleased with Most Things He Sees.

Viceroy Li Hung Chang sent out Tuesday night an invitation for the newspaper reporters of New-York to meet him in his reception room in the Waldorf Hotel at 8:30 o'clock yesterday morning.

The early hour of the appointment was in strict accord with the habits of the great Chinaman. The Mongol's rest was not disturbed by the approaching interview. He was fresh and vivacious after a long, restful night. Before 8 o'clock he had risen, eaten of stewed chicken, and drunk several cups of tea.

His injured finger did not trouble him much during the night. Dr. Irwin had dressed it so carefully that the pain had gone. The only thing that remained yesterday to recall the accident of the day before was a plain white linen bandage around the third finger of the right hand.

Li, before receiving the reporters, had performed a day's work. He had answered his mail, given directions for the day to his attendants, had a sitting for his bust in clay, dressed for the ceremonies of the day, and was sitting in his apartments, chatting with his son and other members of his suite, waiting for the newspaper men, who had had to be awakened by alarm clocks and rush to the Waldorf in order to be ready for such early work.

The 100 or so reporters presented their cards in Room 116 to Mr. Drew, the master of ceremonies. Ernst Fuchs, a sculptor, was putting the finishing touches to a bust of the Viceroy in clay. The likeness has been very well caught, and the color of the clay makes the representation of the Mongol's face much more striking than it would be in marble. This sculptor has a commission to copy the bust in marble and in bronze.

Asks Them to Prepare Questions.

Li did not receive the reporters until nearly 9 o'clock. He sent out word that he would give them a little while in which to formulate questions, so that they would be ready to interview him as quickly as possible. After a few moments' waiting, the reporters were asked into the reception room. Chairs were arranged around a long table. At the end nearer the inner apartments of Li Hung Chang, a large chair was placed for the Viceroy.

The door behind this chair was soon thrown open, and Li entered, escorted by Mr. Drew, Dr. Mak, Lo Fong Loo, the interpreter, and several attendants.

He walks and sits with his massive head inclined forward on his breast, recalling Browning's picture of Napoleon—"the prone brow oppressive with its mind."

Approaching the table, the Viceroy stood and beckoned the reporters toward him. As each came up to him he extended his injured right hand and gave the reporter a hearty good-will grasp. Dr. Mak cautioned every one about hurting the bandaged finger. When all had shaken hands, the Viceroy seated himself at the head of the table, and motioned the reporters to seats on each side and in front of him.

Li was simply dressed. He wore a dark silk robe, with a kind of cape thrown around his shoulders. The latter he soon removed. His cap was a simple black silk fez, folded up all round, crowned with a knot or "button" of red cord. In front blazed the famous circlet of diamonds, eight brilliant stones set around a single great pearl.

Li, before beginning his interview, removed his cap and made a signal to an attendant. The follower disappeared, and immediately returned bearing a red vase, into which some paper had been thrust. Li spat in the vase, and the attendant bore it out again.

Took a Few Puffs at a Pipe.

Another attendant approached with a long-stemmed, big-bowled pipe. He placed the mouthpiece to the Viceroy's lips, applied a lighted taper to the bowl, the Ambassador took a few draughts, and the pipe was taken away.

The interview lasted for half an hour, and throughout that time the Vice regal Ambassador was graciousness itself, smiling at the reporters' questions, and replying as frankly as if he were a plain citizen of the world, and not a great Mandarin and a powerful official whose word must be China's word, and whose deed China's deed.

In the first part of the interview Dr. Mak, the Viceroy's physician, acted as interpreter, but was soon succeeded by Lo Fong Loo.

"Your Excellency has said many kind things of us," was the reporter's first question. "Will not your Excellency also tell us in what respect we have failed to come up to your expectations?"

"I could not say anything bad about America," replied the Viceroy. "I have nothing to complain of in the receptions given me. They were all that I could have expected. But there is one thing that surprises and disappoints me. You have too many political parties. I have thought much about your parties. There are so many of them they must bring about confusion. Could not your newspapers try to unite them, for the best interests of the country?"

The naiveté of the suggestion to a people that thinks that its safety depends upon the beneficent attrition of political parties brought a smile to the faces of the reporters and to the smooth-shaven lip of W. Bourke Cockran, who had entered the room.

Never Saw Such Tall Buildings.

"What, among the things your Excellency has seen in this country has interested you most?"

"I am delighted with everything that I have seen in America," said Li. "Everything has pleased me so much that it is hard to say what has pleased me most. What has surprised me most has been the tall buildings, of twenty and more stories. I have never seen anything like them before, in China or in Europe. They seem so well constructed that they would resist any wind, perhaps; but we could not put them up in China, because the typhoon would soon blow them down. They would be terribly inconvenient were it not for your fine elevators."

Here the learned Dr. Mak explained that "typhoon" comes from two Chinese words: "Tai," meaning great, and "foon," or "fung," meaning wind.

In reply to a question, Li said that he could not compare or contrast this country with other countries of Europe. His position would not permit this.

"Does your Excellency favor the education of the common people of China?"

"Our custom," replied the Viceroy, "is to send all our boys [children, Dr. Mak put in parentheses, indicating that boys are the only real children in China] to public schools. We have good schools all over China, but only those who can afford it send their boys to them. The poorer classes do not give their boys education. We have not so many schools or colleges as you have, but we are going to introduce more schools throughout our country."

"Does your Excellency favor the education of women?"

The Ambassador paused for a moment and answered cautiously: "Our Chinese girls are educated at home, by their governesses. Governesses are in all families that can afford them. We have no public schools for the girls, and have no higher educational institutions which they can attend. This is due to the fact that our customs are so different from yours, both in Europe and America. Perhaps we should study both systems and adopt the one best suited to us and our needs."

"Was your Excellency most impressed by the receptions tendered to your Excellency by the people of this country, or by your reception by our prominent men?"

Would Not Answer That.

Dr. Mak and Li talked for a minute and both smiled. Then the interpreter said:

"The Viceroy says that he has opinions on the subject, but he will keep them to himself."

The descendant and heir of Confucius smiled again.

"Does your Excellency expect any modification of the existing Chinese Exclusion act?" ventured one of the reporters.

"I know that you are about to hold another election, and that there will necessarily be some changes in your Government. I can not say, therefore, anything in reference to any anticipated modification or repeal of the Geary law. I expect, however, the aid of the American newspapers in securing just treatment of Chinese immigrants. I know that the newspaper has a tremendous influence in this country, and I hope that the entire press will aid China in securing, if not the repeal, or at least a strong modification, of the Geary law."

"Will your Excellency give us your reasons for selecting your homeward route through Canada instead of through the United States? Was it because your Excellency's countrymen have not always met with kind treatment in some of our Western States?"

"I have two reasons for not going through your Western States," replied Li. "First: While I was High Commissioner of the Northern Ports of China I received complaints of the treatment of the Chinese who came into your country through California. These complaints set forth that the Chinese were not accorded their rights, and they have applied to me to aid them in securing the full recognition of their rights as immigrants to America. Now, by your Geary law, instead of granting to them full rights with other immigrants, you have denied them their just privileges. I should not like, therefore, to go through the States that have treated the Chinese in this way, nor to have to receive delegations of Chinamen who would present to me petitions pleading for the recognition of their rights in the Western States.

"My second reason is that while I am a good sailor, I am advanced in years and must shun the rough seas in coming by passage from Vancouver to Yokahama is shorter than that from San Francisco, and I am sad that the Empress of China is a larger and more comfortable steamer than any I could get from any other port on the Pacific."

A Most Unfair Law, He Says.

"The Chinese Exclusion act," continued the Viceroy, warming up a little, his small, bright eyes glowing, "is a most unfair law. It is admitted by all political economists that competition will always keep the markets of the world alive and active. This applies to labor as well as to commodities. We know that the Geary act is due to the influence of the Irish and the laboring classes, who wish to monopolize the labor market. The Chinese are their strong rivals and competitors, and they wish to exclude them. It would be the same thing if we should exclude your products from China and deny to your manufacturers and merchants the right or privilege of selling their goods in China. Do not consider me as a high Chinese official, but as a cosmopolitan; not as a Mandarin, but as a plain citizen of China and of the world, and let me ask what you expect to derive from excluding cheap Chinese labor from America? Cheaper labor means cheaper commodities, and better commodities at lower prices.

"You are proud of yourselves, of your country. Your States represent the best type of modern civilization. You are proud of your wealth and your freedom. Is this freedom? This is not liberty, because you are prevented from utilizing cheap labor in your mines and upon your farms. You are the most inventive people in the world, as is shown by the statistics of your Patent Office. You have more inventions than any other country, and you are far ahead of Europe in this respect. Besides, you do not confine yourselves to manufacturing and to agricultural people, and you combine agriculture, commerce, and industry. You are not like England, which is the workshop of the world. You have devoted yourselves to all the means of progress and development. You are superior to the countries of Europe in the skill of your workmen, and in the quality of your manufactures; but, unfortunately, you are not able to compete with Europe, because your manufactures are dearer than theirs.

"Your labor is so high that it makes the prices of your products too high to compete successfully with the countries of Europe. Labor is expensive, because you exclude the Chinese. It is your own fault. If you gave your labor free competition you would have cheaper labor. The Chinese can live cheaper than the Irish or the other laboring classes of the United States. Your laboring classes hate the Chinese because they are the possessors of higher virtues than themselves. [Here the interpreter, Lo Fong Loo, who had taken the place of Dr. Mark, smiled deprecatingly.]

Asks the Aid of Newspapers.

"I trust that the American newspapers will aid us in securing a repeal of the Exclusion act."

"Is there any desirable outlet for the investment of American capital in China?" asked the reporters.

"Wealth can be produced only by the combination of money, labor, and land," replied Li very promptly, "and the Chinese Government will very gladly welcome any capital that seeks investment in the empire. Gen. Grant, who was one of my best friends, said to me: 'You must invite European and American capital to China to establish industrial enterprises, and assist the Chinese in the material development of their country and their great natural resources, but the administration of these enterprises must remain in the hands of the Chinese Government.' We would be glad to have your capital and investments in China, and we would find skilled labor could be supplied by you, but the administration of the affairs of the railways, telegraph lines, &c., would have to be controlled by China. We must maintain our sovereign rights, and never allow anybody to touch our sacred privileges. I remember Gen. Grant's advice. All capitalists, whether American or European, can freely invest their money in enterprises in China."

"Would your Excellency favor the introduction into China of the newspaper as developed in this country and in Europe?"

"These newspapers in China, like the Chinese editors, unfortunately, do not tell the truth. They do not, as your papers, tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.' The editors in China are great economizers of the truth; they tell only a part of it. They do not have, therefore, the great circulation that your papers have. Because of this economy of the truth, our papers fail in the mission of a great press, to be one of the means of civilization."

Poor Newspaper Portraits.

"What does your Excellency think of the pictures of your Excellency that have appeared in the papers of this city?"

"They are not good. They are very poor representations of their original."

As the Viceroy made this criticism, his face assumed a very peculiar expression. He showed that he has some of the humor of America, and can even enjoy being made the subject of cartoon and caricature.

A final question was put to Li in regard to the commercial or political significance of his visit to America, he just put the question by with a wave of the hand.

The Viceroy, while replying to the questions put to him, was very much composed. His face was as expressionless for the most part as the face of a sphinx. No feeling was visible, nothing could be read there. The Geary law awoke his feelings somewhat, and he gesticulated a little with his right hand, a deprecatory gesture, but his face was unaffected by this animation. This fire soon passed, and the face of the diplomat assumed the impassivity of sphinx.

Li, at the end of the interview, arose and bowed graciously to the reporters.

John W. Foster, ex-Secretary of State, came forward and presented to the Viceroy W. Bourke Cockran, Gen. Lloyd Bryce, editor of the North American Review; Murat Halstead, and Arthur Turnure.

Mr. Turnure has made a special study of jade, and Li asked him if he had found this stone in America and Europe. He replied that only an insignificant amount of it is found in this country and none in Europe. Li seemed pleased to think that China enjoyed a monopoly of the precious stone.

The New York Times
Published: September 3, 1896
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