

PILGRIMS TO WESTERN SEATS OF LEARNING.

CHINA'S FIRST EDUCATIONAL MISSION TO U.S.

The Breaking Of Chinese Intellectual Isolation.

HISTORY OF A SIGNIFICANT PIONEER MOVEMENT.

(Reprinted from P. & T. Times of June 24, 1932.)

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the sailing of the first detachment of Chinese Students to the United States, the Tientsin Rotary Club entertained a number of the pioneer students at its meeting yesterday, and heard an address on the subject by Rotarian A. G. Robinson, who has made a special study of the movement. Among the pioneer students able to attend the gathering were Admiral Tsai Ting-kan (whose fame as a witty speaker when residing in Peking spread far and wide), Messrs. Y. T. Woo, K. S. Shen, and Y. K. Kwong. Unfortunately neither Mr. M. T. Liang nor Mr. Tsai Shou-kie was able to attend, owing to doctor's orders.

The President of the Club (Mr. W. V. Pennell), in his introductory remarks, said they had "come to praise the famous men." Unlike Kipling's schoolmasters, they were not men of little showing, for all of them had distinguished careers in their own country. But they were alike in that "their work continueth, broad and deep continueth, far beyond their knowing." It was no small thing that there were parents in the complacent and only too self-sufficient China of that period who were ready to send

their boys to a distant and unknown land, in the belief that China did have something to learn from the West, and that there were boys ready to face the dreaded perils and discomforts of ocean travel. They had a hard battle against prejudice and hostility on their return but they had done much to turn China's face to the West, and the Rotary Club delighted to do them honour.

Admiral Tsai, in returning thanks to the Club, gave a few characteristically witty remarks. He was, it seemed, fated always to have to work for his dinner. Besides the invitation of the Chairman, his friends had nudged him to express their thanks. Unfortunately he was not inclined to be funny when the world was in a state of unparalleled depression and the exchange was working against his pocket. A friend had once told him that exchange was no robbery. It wasn't. It was plunder. (Laughter.) As to his reminiscences of the trip to America, he desired to remark three points: the trip across the ocean, the journey across the continent, and the arrival at Hartford. They crossed the Pacific in a wonderful steamer, so wonderful that he was sorry the model had been lost. It was a

combination of steamer, submarine, and flying ship. It achieved the great speed of ten miles an hour on occasion, and it took a good long time to get to the other side of the Pacific. When the sea was rough it ran sideways, with one paddle-wheel in the water and one in the air. It would plunge its forepart into the sea like a submarine, and when a big wave got under it, the vessel would leap into the air. (Laughter.) It was a wonderful ship, and he thought it was an American invention. On the Continent the Americans gave them a very warm reception. Their train was robbed by a Jesse James gang. (Laughter.) The Admiral wound up with a humorous story of what befell them in Hartford.

The prepared address from which Mr. Robinson quoted in his remarks to the Club was originally given at the North China Union Language School in Peiping on May 31st. In view of the great interest and historic importance of the subject, we are printing it in full below.

The “Senior Returned Students.”

Even in these days when the world has so shrunk and national and racial boundaries are so easily crossed, if not altogether obliterated, to take one hundred and twenty boys of one nationality, of ages ranging from nine to thirteen, and place them for a period of five years or more in the homes of another country—this would, I judge, be considered an educational experiment of great significance. In these days of wide and quickly spread publicity, such an undertaking would command space on the front pages of the leading newspapers the world over. Photographs of the boys also would appear in these papers, movie newsreels would picture their start from their homeland, their experiences *en route*, and their arrival in the land of temporary adoption. The leader in the enterprise would

become known in educational circles everywhere not only as a man able to carry out great visions, but also as a statesman in education, both for the promotion of national development and for the creation of international friendship.

With such a project before us in general terms, let us fill in the outline with the facts of actual accomplishment. Some of us may know, but even in China it is not generally known in foreign circles, that the Chinese Educational Commission launched just sixty years ago was exactly that kind of an experiment. The leader, Dr. Yung Wing, a Cantonese who had been educated in the States, conceived this plan of helping China forward and actually conducted one hundred and twenty Chinese boys of tender years, in four installments of thirty each, to central New England, where he placed them in the best homes as members of the families. It would be interesting and useful, did time permit, to reconstruct in imagination Chinese life and thought of 1872 as we would find it along the southeastern coast, especially in the cities of Canton and Shanghai, whence these boys sailed.

Difficulties in the Way.

A quotation from the inscription on the stone over the grave of Wong Kai Kah, one of these boys, puts in a few words the current Chinese idea of the Middle Kingdom’s position in regard to the rest of the world: “At that time China was shut off from the rest of the world. No one had any idea about foreign affairs. High class officials considered Western Education as abnormal training and would not even mention it in their conversation. Moreover to cross the ocean of several thousands of miles would mean incessant obstacles and dangers and generally no one would risk himself for such a voyage. Especially in the villages where the people know very little

about the outside world, no student would dare go abroad.”

Several authorities on education in China agree that of all the influences from the west working toward modernization of the Middle Kingdom, this Educational Commission of Yung Wing's has been the most significant and most powerful. Yet Dr. Yung, at the time of his death in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1912, probably felt that his project was more or less of a failure. In 1881, when the first group of thirty boys had been in the States nine years out of the expected fifteen, and the last group but six, the boys were all recalled, and on their return to Shanghai were subjected to harsh and humiliating treatment by the authorities and were made to feel disgraced as it were. Dr. Yung felt the keenest disappointment over this sudden termination of the Educational Commission, speaking in his autobiography of this “blow” as one that “scattered my life work to the four winds.”

As the years passed, however, and the struggle for the overthrow of the Empire went on, these protégés of Yung Wing—the first, or “Senior Returned Students,” we may call them, played a large part in political developments, some loyal to the Manchu throne, others active revolutionists. Looking over their careers, most of them now completed, it becomes increasingly clear how important in the past fifty years' events have been the influence of these “China Boys,” as they were known in the '70's about Hartford, and as they are still affectionately remembered there.

A thorough-going study of the Senior Returned Students is not possible within the time limits of this paper. Our consideration of the subject is bound to be rather sketchy. But the material already at hand is so rich and interesting that one is immediately confronted with the need for choosing a particular viewpoint. We need to decide through whose eyes we shall look at the

Educational Commission, at its establishment and development in Hartford for those nine years, at the careers of the boys from their return to China in 1881 down to the present, and at the influence of this group of distinguished men upon the thought and life of this country.

Various Viewpoints.

First, with the autobiography of Yung Wing in hand and with such comment as we can secure from his relatives and friends, both American and Chinese, we might reconstruct the whole scheme of the Commission as it developed and grew, seemed to fail, and then expressed itself through the lives of his “boys,” entirely from the standpoint of the noble man who dreamed and built so much better than he knew. Whether we follow that lead altogether or not, we shall still want to look deeply into the life of Yung Wing and catch, if we may, something of his vision for the future of his country.

A second and even more intimate view of this educational project could be had from the students themselves, both through their boyish letters, to which the writer has had all too little access, and also from their later reminiscences, many of which, unfortunately, have been given only in oral form. We may well pause here to quote part of the account written by one of the boys, telling how he left his Canton home for the wonderful adventure of going abroad to study. Word had gone out about the school established in Shanghai to receive candidates and the government's financial support of the one hundred and twenty boys to be selected. A fifteen year's residence in the States was the plan; then government service in China.

A Chinese Boy's Impressions.

This boy writes: "Comparatively few candidates presented themselves and these hailed, for the most part, from the maritime provinces. In fact parents were not over-eager to send their sons away for so long a time, and to a land unknown to them, the inhabitants of which they heard and believed were barbarians. A cousin of mine, however, who was in business then at Shanghai, thought differently, and was not deterred by any such considerations. He came home with glowing accounts of the new movement; and so painted the golden prospects of the successful candidate that he persuaded my mother to let me go. I was then twelve years old; my father had died three years before and my mother had assumed the sole charge of her three sons. But she was not going to force me to go, whether willing or unwilling, and so left the matter for me to decide.

"I was more or less adventurous in disposition. A chance to see the world was just what I wanted. I said Yes without hesitation. I was more or less adventurous in disposition. A chance to see the world was just what I wanted. I said yes without hesitation. My mother, if she had any misgivings, wisely kept them to herself; and, like a brave woman who has resolved to deny herself for the good of her child, she set to work to prepare me for the journey to Shanghai.

"For a whole month, I reveled at the sight of new clothes that were made for me. Friends and relations made presents of food for the voyage, sweetmeats predominating. At last, after bidding farewell to all my uncles, aunts and cousins, with others of my kith and kin, I paid my last respects to my mother in the conventional way. I did not embrace her and kiss her. O no! that would have been un-Chinese and undignified. What I actually did was to bow my head

four times to the ground upon my knees. She tried to appear cheerful, but I could see that her eyes were moistened with tears. I did not think much of it then, but I remembered it in after-time. Ah! a mother's love is strong wherever it is found. She gave me some pocket-money and bade me be a good boy and write often.

"With those words ringing in my ears and then memory of that sad face fresh in my mind, I walked briskly by the side of my cousin down to the wharf at which the junk was moored, which vessel, of a style well-known by picture to American boys and girls, was to carry us to Hong Kong, whence we expected to take steamer for Shanghai. We sailed down the narrow river with a stiff breeze in our favor, after offerings had been made to the river god, and the gong had announced to the world that 'we were off.'

"The river was so serpentine with its numerous bends that the men often had to take a run on the banks to pull the boat along. The sun was just tinging the western cloud-castles with crimson and gold and as we went further and further from the town a panorama of great beauty passed before our eyes. Mountains and stream, and fields wavy with golden grain, and towering pagodas, all gemmed by the setting sun, composed this kaleidoscopic scene. But I had no heart to enjoy it. I was homesick for the first time in my life. A sense of solitude, of desolation—a feeling of loss possessed me—and I retired into the small cabin to weep unseen. Before long, a tossing of the boat announced the awful presence of the sea, and soon after I realized what seasickness meant.

We arrived at Hong Kong the next morning. It was a wonderful place to me. I never wearied with gazing at the vessels, which were of all sorts and all nationalities. The foreigners too were strange sights. How I stared at them and wondered how they

could move with their 'straight-jackets and tight pantaloons!'"

Hartford's Reaction.

The viewpoint of the historian must be ours for the most part, but to the modern educationalist this project of Dr. Yung's has an especial appeal, one which demands separate treatment quite beyond the scope of this paper. The reaction of the Commission upon the life of that staid Connecticut city, however, is a matter for our consideration here. We need also to keep in mind that the whole educational process growing out of the life of those one hundred and twenty boys in those New England homes and schools was reciprocal. Miss Mary Bartlett on a Sunday morning braided the queues of the four Chinese boys whose older sister she became was probably quite as much influenced in her thinking by the process as were the boys. Nearly sixty years later, the writer, on returning to Tientsin from Hartford, and meeting one of these "Bartlett boys," a dignified retired engineer approaching seventy, was greeted with the eager question about another sister in that home. "And how's Louise?" (the latter, now an old lady past seventy, who carries on a faithful correspondence with her Chinese brother).

So we shall do well to bring Hartford into our composite picture of those early days of the Commission, and, even before we begin our narrative of its origin and development, to hear what New England friends of the "China Boys" have to say of them. A close friend of Yung Wing was Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Twichell, pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford. Many of the Chinese boys attended services there and it was Dr. Twichell who led the farewell meeting for them in 1881. Speaking in April of 1878 he said: "A visitor to Hartford at the present

time will be likely to meet on the streets groups of Chinese boys in their native dress, though somewhat modified, and speaking their native tongue, yet seeming, withal, to be very much at home. He will also occasionally meet Chinese men who, by their bearing, will impress him as being gentlemen of their race.

"These gentlemen are officers, and these boys are pupils of the Chinese Educational Mission, although one of the most remarkable and significant institutions of the age on the face of the whole earth. The object of the mission, now of nearly six years' standing, is the education in this country, through a term of fifteen years, of a corps of young men for the Chinese Government service; that Government paying the whole cost—an annual expense of about \$100,000. The number of the officers is five, viz.—the two Imperial Commissioners in charge, a translator and interpreter and two teachers. The function of the teachers is to direct the Chinese education of the pupils, which proceeds *pari passu* with their Western education. The number of pupils was originally 120, but now 112, one having died and seven having, for various reasons, returned to China. A fine, large house recently erected by the Chinese Government in the western part of the City, at a cost of fifty thousand dollars, is the headquarters of the Mission. There are the offices of the officers, and there is lodged the class that is present for examination and instruction in Chinese studies. For this purpose the pupils are divided into classes of about twenty, one coming as another goes, each staying at the Mission House two weeks at a time. A small part only of the whole number are permanently located in Hartford. Most of them are in other places, though not far away, generally two together—attending school or receiving private instruction in families.

“They come in yearly companies of thirty, beginning with 1872, and the last detachment is still chiefly engaged in learning our language. The plan is to afford these boys the advantages of our best educational institutions—academies, colleges, and, to some extent, professional schools—to assign them, by and by, as they shall develop aptitude, to various special courses of study and training in the physical, mechanical and military sciences, in political history and economy, international law, the principles and practice of civil administration and in all departments and branches of knowledge, skill in which is useful for public government service in these modern times.

“And through the whole process of this education, it is to be impressed upon them that they belong and are to belong to their nation, for whose sake they are elected to enjoy these great and peculiar opportunities. The result will be, if all goes well and the plan is carried out—and there is apparently nothing now to prevent it—that in the year 1887 or thereabout there will go from this country to China a body of somewhere near a hundred men who have grown up under exceedingly favorable conditions from early youth to manhood here among us, destined to hold places of importance in the government and in the society of their native land, better equipped in all save experience to do for that land what most needs to be done, and inspired for their work with a more enlightened sense of patriotic duty and responsibility than any other hundred of her sons of their generation. And who can forecast or estimate the consequences that Divine Providence is thus preparing?”

Major Fred G. Blakeslee of Hartford, whose mother had seven of these “China Boys” under her friendly roof at different times, gives us this glimpse from his boyhood memories: “When the boys arrived they were dressed in Chinese costume but

they soon discarded this and appeared in American clothes. As it was a beheading offense to cut off the cue, they were obliged to retain their pig-tails but they made them as inconspicuous as possible by wearing them under their clothing.

“The boys took kindly to sports being especially fond of baseball. Our home was then located on Sumner street and the lot where they played being across the street from our house, the boys kept their balls and bats in our vestibule. No Chinese boy ever rang our front door bell to enquire if any of our boys were at home. He simply opened the door and walked upstairs to see for himself.”

Marquis Tseng’s Support.

From still another standpoint might we study the Chinese Educational Commission, especially in its beginnings. The great Viceroy, Marquis Tseng Kuo Fan, was really the man who made possible the realization of Yung Wing’s dream. From his official standpoint and that of his fellow viceroy, Li Hung Chang, also an endorser of the Commission, we could view this daring experiment as through the eyes of the more enlightened mandarins of seventy years ago.

Toward the close of the Taiping Rebellion, in the year 1863, when Tseng Kuo Fan was “literally and practically the supreme power of China,” invested with almost regal authority, he had heard of this energetic young tea merchant, Yung Wing, through two friends of the latter at that time serving as secretaries in the military headquarters of the great Viceroy at Anking in Anhwei Province. Despite Tseng Kuo Fan’s power and prestige, it took three urgent letters from Yung’s friends, Chang and Li, in the yamen, covering a period of some seven months, to get this humble but able and ambitious first “returned student”

into the presence of Marquis Tseng. The interview took place in September of 1863.

Yung Wing and the Viceroy.

Let us now follow Yung Wing's own narrative in its historical sequence, first getting in his own words a picture of the great Viceroy as he appeared to Yung at the time of this now historic interview. He speaks of Marquis Tseng as "over sixty years of age, in the very prime of life. He was five feet, eight or nine inches tall, strongly built and well-knitted together and in fine proportion. He had a broad chest and square shoulders surmounted by a large symmetrical head. He had a broad and high forehead; his eyes were set on a straight line under triangular-shaped eyelids, free from that obliquity so characteristic of the Mongolian type of countenance usually accompanied by high cheek bones, which is another feature peculiar to the Chinese physiognomy. His face was straight and somewhat hairy. He allowed his side whiskers their full growth; they hung down with his full beard which swept across a broad chest and added dignity to a commanding appearance. His eyes though not large were keen and penetrating. They were of a clear hazel color. His mouth was large but well compressed with thin lips which showed a strong will and high purpose. Such was Tsang Kuo Fan's external appearance, when I first met him at Anking."

The interview was characteristic of Tseng Kuo Fan, both in its directness and the keenness with which the astute but high-minded Viceroy examined the, probably to him, somewhat "foreignized" returned student. Again let us recall Yung Wing's own words: "My card was sent in, and without a moment's delay or waiting in the ante-room I was ushered into the presence of the great man of China. After the usual

ceremonies of greeting, I was pointed to a seat right in front of him. For a few minutes he sat in silence, smiling all the while as though he were much pleased to see me, but at the same time his keen eyes scanned me over from head to foot to see if he could discover anything strange in my outward appearance. Finally, he took a steady look into my eyes which seemed to attract his special attention. I must confess I felt quite uneasy all the while, though I was not abashed. Then came his first question. 'How long were you abroad?' 'I was absent from China eight years in pursuit of a Western education.' 'Would you like to be a soldier in charge of a company?' 'I should be pleased to head one if I had been fitted for it. I have never studied military science.' 'I should judge from your looks, you would make a fine soldier, for I can see from your eyes that you are brave and can command.'

'I thank Your Excellency for the compliment. I may have the courage of a soldier, but I certainly lack military training and experience, and on that account I may not be able to meet Your Excellency's expectations.'

"When the question of being a soldier was suggested, I thought he really meant to have me enrolled as an officer in his army against the rebels; but in this I was mistaken, as my Shanghai friends told me afterwards. He simply put it forward to find out whether my mind was at all martially inclined. But when he found by my response that the bent of my thought was something else, he dropped the military subject and asked me my age and whether or not I was married. The last question closed my first introductory interview, which had lasted only about half an hour. He began to sip his tea and I did likewise, which according to Chinese official etiquette means that the interview is ended and the guest is at liberty to take his departure.

“I returned to my room, and my Shanghai friends soon flocked around me to know what had passed between the Viceroy and myself. I told them everything, and they were highly delighted.”

New Project for Yung Wing.

Fascinating as it would be to follow in further detail the relations between Tseng Kuo Fan and Yung Wing, we must content ourselves for the purpose of this article with a rapid summary of the events between this first interview and the sailing of the first group of students in 1872, a period of nine busy years for Yung Wing. During the two weeks in Anking he learned from his friends that the matter on which the Viceroy wanted his help was in regard to the establishment in China of a machine shop under government auspices. Yung was not in the least perturbed by a request for advice on a subject so foreign to his training. He could, and did, bide his time, giving at the moment practical suggestions which eventually led to the building of the great Kiangnan Arsenal in Shanghai. His own comment is: “So my educational scheme was put in the background and the machine shop was allowed to take precedence.”

Visit to the States.

All the details in executing the plan agreed upon by Marquis Tseng were left to Yung Wing. He was authorized to go abroad and purchase machinery, which he did, with a sum of Tls. 68,000 to draw upon. He arrived in New York just ten years after his graduation from Yale in 1854 and had the pleasure of attending in July the decennial meeting of his class. In the mention in his autobiography of this Yale '54 tenth reunion there is a note of apparent disappointment that the “subject of his life plan was not brought up.” With him, for this decade, the

educational scheme had been a dominating ambition, the great passion of his life, and his classmates were evidently “thrown off the scent” by the nature of the commission with which he was then entrusted, the purchase of machinery. But this he regarded “as an inevitable and preliminary step that would ultimately lead to the realization of my educational scheme, which had never for a moment escaped my mind.”

After the class reunion, since the machinery order would take six months to fill, Yung Wing went to Washington with the purpose of enlisting in the Federal army. General Barnes, in charge of the Volunteer Department, remembered meeting him at Yale eleven years before and, much as he admired the spirit of this would-be volunteer courier, prompted by his “loyalty and patriotism to his adopted country,” the general dissuaded him, impressing upon him the responsibility he had for executing the trust of the Chinese government. So back he went to Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and awaited the completion of the machinery order.

Return to China.

Early in 1865, after much delay, this was accomplished. Yung Wing took passage on a sailing vessel for Yokohama. On arrival at Shanghai he found the machinery had preceded him by a month and to his great satisfaction was delivered “in good condition and in perfect working order.” He speaks of the Kiangnan Arsenal, where the American equipment was installed, as a “lasting monument to Tseng Kuo Fan’s broadmindedness as well as farsightedness in establishing Western machinery in China.”

In recognition of his services, Yung Wing was made the subject of a special memorial to government by the Viceroy and later received appointment as a full fledged

mandarin of the fifth rank. He was also retained by the provincial authorities as a government interpreter and translator with offices in Shanghai. Here he persuaded the Viceroy to add a mechanized engineering school to the Arsenal, a step which he deemed an educational victory and one which spurred him on to put forward his long-cherished dream.

But it was a delicate business requiring the utmost diplomacy and patience. He now had influential friends among the officials, one of whom offered to forward to the Manchu prime minister, Wen Seang, in Peking, Yung's educational plan. Greatly elated, Yung Wing with the help of another scholarly friend drew up his four proposals. These constitute a masterly document, calculated most shrewdly to forward the one chief objective in all of Yung's planning and hoping, to send abroad for study a group of Chinese boys, who would live as members of American families and return for government service in China.

Yung's Four Proposals.

Knowing so well the official psychology Yung Wing "chaperoned," as he says, his main proposal, second in order, with three others. These were: first, the organization of a purely Chinese steamship company on a joint stock basis; second the educational scheme; third, the opening of the mineral resources of the country; fourth, prohibiting missionaries of any religious sect from interference with legal processes in which their converts might be involved. Imagine his disappointment, two months after the proposals were forwarded to Peking, at learning that the death of the Prime Minister's mother had forced him into a three year period of mourning, completely stopping all his official business. Still worse, Wen Seang himself died three months later and Yung Wing felt still further discouraged,

with no voice now left to plead his cause at court. However, he was not wholly disheartened, having, as he tells us, "an abiding faith that his educational scheme would in the end come out all right."

After three years of suspense and waiting, during which Mandarin Yung did his best in a quiet way to keep friendly officials reminded of his project, reward for his labors came with the so-called "Tientsin Massacre" in 1870. Viceroy Tseng Kuo Fan was one of the Imperial commissioners appointed to negotiate a settlement with the French for the loss in lives and property suffered in the unfortunate affair. Yung Wing, at the suggestion of his friend, Ting Yih Chang, who had written the original letter to the Prime Minister, was sent for to act as interpreter to the Commissioners in their negotiations with the French. This gave him the opportunity of pressing his cause both upon Governor Ting and through him upon the Board of Commissioners headed by Tseng Kuo Fan

Success at Last! Commission Appointed.

Enough momentum was now given to the project to speed its course through official channels. Yung Wing's own words tell how Governor Ting "one evening, returning to his headquarters very late, he came to my room and awakened me and told me that Viceroy Tsang and the other Commissioners unanimously decided to sign their names conjointly in a memorial to the government to adopt my four propositions. This piece of news was too much to allow me to sleep any more that night; while lying on my bed, as wakeful as an owl, I felt as though I were treading on clouds and walking in air. Two days after this stirring piece of news, the memorial was jointly signed with Viceroy Tsang Kwoh Fan's name heading the list, and was on its way to Peking by pony express. Meanwhile, before

the Board of Commissioners disbanded and Viceroy Tsang took his departure for Nanking, it was decided that Chin Lan Pin, a member of the Hanlin College, who had served twenty years as a clerk in the Board of Punishment, should be recommended by Ting to co-operate with me in charge of the Chinese Educational Commission. The ground upon which Chin Lan Pin was recommended as a co-commissioner was that he was a Han Lin and a regularly educated Chinese, and the enterprise would not be so likely to meet with the opposition it might have if I were to attempt to carry it out alone, because the scheme in principle and significance was against the Chinese theory of national education, and it would not have taken much to create a reaction to defeat the plan on account of the intense conservatism of the government. The wisdom and shrewd policy of such a move appealed to me at once, and I accepted the suggestion with pleasure and alacrity.”

On his return to his headquarters in Nanking in the early part of 1870, Viceroy Tseng received the imperial rescript sanctioning his joint memorial on Yung Wing’s four proposals. He at once notified the originator who says: “It was a glorious piece of news and the Chinese educational project thus became a veritable historical fact marking a new era in the annals of China.”

Details of the Scheme.

It is interesting to note how few changes were made in the details of the Educational Commission at the conference with the Viceroy following the Imperial Edict of 1870. Yung Wing’s original proposal was that the government should “send picked Chinese youths abroad to be thoroughly educated for the public service. The one hundred and twenty students were to be divided into four installments of thirty

students each, one installment to be sent each year. They were to have fifteen years to finish their education. Their average age was to be from twelve to fourteen years. If the first and second installments proved to be a success, the scheme was to be continued indefinitely. Chinese teachers were to be provided to keep up their knowledge of Chinese while in the United States. Over the whole enterprise two commissioners were to be appointed, and the government was to appropriate a certain percentage of the Shanghai customs to maintain the mission.”

To these were added the following stipulations agreed upon at Nanking: the establishment of a preparatory school; the two commissioners to be Yung Wing and Chin Lan Pin; two Chinese teachers to accompany the boys abroad to keep up their Chinese studies; an interpreter also to be engaged as a member of the Commission; students to pass a medical examination and an examination in their Chinese studies according to regulations, also to pass an English examination if the candidate had been in an English school. All successful candidates were required to be in constant attendance for at least one year at the preparatory school, where their Chinese studies were continued and where they were either to begin the study of English or to continue English courses already begun.

“Parents and guardians were required to sign a paper which stated that without recourse, they were perfectly willing to let their sons or protégés go abroad to be educated for a period of fifteen years, from the time that they began their studies in the United States until they had finished, and that during the fifteen years the government was not to be responsible for death or for any accident that might happen to any student.

“The government guaranteed to pay all their expenses while they were being educated. It was to provide every installment

with a Chinese teacher to accompany it to the United States, and to give each installment of students a suitable outfit.”

Preparatory School in Shanghai.

With the establishment of the preparatory school at Shanghai in the summer of 1871, accommodating thirty students, the Commission was duly launched. But to secure suitable students required a personal visit by Yung Wing to the English government schools in Hong Kong. There were at first very few applications for entrance and none at all from provinces north of Anhui. “All the applications came from the Canton people, especially from the district of Heang Shan.” Nine tenths of the students, all told, came from Canton. Six months later the Commission suffered an irretrievable loss in the death of its distinguished patron, Viceroy Tseng Kuo Fan. Had the great patron lived to see this significant experiment well through the fifteen years called for in the plan, the whole course of China’s modernization would have been greatly affected. It is said that Li Hung Chang, the famous northern Viceroy, Marquis Tseng’s successor and protégé, took up the work of the Educational Commission and carried it on in accordance with the dying wish of Tseng Kuo Fan.

First Detachment Sails.

In the late summer of 1872 the first detachment of boys sailed from Shanghai for the States, accompanied by Commissioner Chin Lan Pin, the two Chinese teachers and an interpreter. Yung Wing himself preceded them by a month in order to arrange for the homes in which the boys should live. It is not hard to imagine the satisfaction and joy he felt as he journeyed across the Pacific and overland by way of Washington and New York to New Haven. Here “under the elms

of Yale nearly twenty years before, he was tempted to stay in the United States and win money and position, but conscience and the Word of God spoke to him in this wise: ‘If any man provide not for the things of his own, he hath denied the faith.’” China won in the young student’s struggle. He dreamed a dream. He felt the call to definite service to China, and now, with the long years of patient waiting and difficult negotiations over, with the trying delays and forbidding obstacles removed, he returned to his alma mater and to the New England he had come to love almost as his own land, proudly asking hospitality for the thirty boys then on their way out to this strange land of the West.

New England and his old friends there did not disappoint Yung Wing. If there were any dubious ones, any shakings of heads, any coldness, any doubts about the wisdom of the scheme, any expressions of racial superiority, these are not reflected in his autobiography. Loyal friends smoothed his path everywhere he went in those cities and towns of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Professor James Hadley of Yale, Education Commissioner Northrup of the Nutmeg State, the McLeans of Springfield, the Kelloggs and Bartletts of Hartford, all advised and helped directly in the placing of the boys and in the arrangements for their schooling. It was decided to scatter the boys, as far as practicable, so that some were placed in homes in small towns like Granby, Connecticut, Lee, Massachusetts, and Greenfield in the same state, as well as in the cities of Holyoke, Springfield and Hartford.

Headquarters Located in Hartford.

It was Yung Wing’s original plan to make Springfield the headquarters of the Commission, because of its central location, and its being the home of his good friends, Dr. and Mrs. A.S. McLean. Later advice

indicated Hartford as a more strategic location for the headquarters but he still made the Massachusetts city a center of location and distribution of the students as they came out from China in the next three years. For two years the Hartford headquarters were on Sumner Street but in January 1875 they were moved to the new building on Collins Street erected especially for the Chinese Educational Commission under authorization of Viceroy Li Hung Chang.

This permanent headquarters, still standing but now a part of the St. Joseph's Hospital Building, was a large, double, three story house with ample accommodations for the Commission staff and seventy-five students. There was a school room exclusively for the Chinese studies and a double kitchen, probably for convenience in preparing both Chinese and "foreign" food. Yung Wing's own comment on this important step is interesting. He says: "The motive which led me to build permanent headquarters of our own was to have the educational mission as deeply rooted in the United States as possible, so as not to give the Chinese government any chance of retrograding in this movement. Such was my proposal, but that was not God's disposal as subsequent events plainly proved."

Both the limits of this article and the scarcity of material at hand relating to the life of the students in those nine years of the Commission's formal existence, preclude anything more than a few general remarks on the boys' school careers in New England. We shall later glance at a few of the individual records of several of the outstanding "China Boys." We can imagine them, however, pursuing the routing of the American boys with whom they lived and went to school; first to grammar school; then on to high school and a few fortunate ones of the first detachment, even up to college, but not for complete courses. During the

long summer vacations the students all took up regular work in Chinese at the headquarters, coming into Hartford from the surrounding towns according to prescribed schedule. Their later careers showed how diligently these Chinese studies were pursued and with no interruption in their courses in the New England school which they attended.

New England Influence on the Boys.

Yung Wing was expert not only in business, executive work, and official diplomacy, but also in the field of education, in the training of boys to be men of character and scholarship. As one meets these elderly gentlemen, the survivors of the China Boys, even today, he is impressed with a certain stamp of cultured character about them, the distinctive mark of that early training in the homes, schools, and town life of New England.

It speaks well for the families in which they lived that, so far, as I have learned, there was no attempt at religious indoctrination. They were treated like the members of the family that they were and attended Sunday school and church along with their adopted brothers and sisters. Some became Christians but quite of their own volition and with no pressure or persuasion of any sort from their American foster parents. Great care was taken in this respect, so as not to incur unfavorable criticism from reactionary groups in China, which would have spelled early disaster. The charges that later came and eventually brought the Commission to its untimely end were unfounded and due not to the circumstances of the boys' life and environment, except that, as in the nature of the case, these were at variance with most of the Chinese background which they had left behind.

Difficulties Leading to Recall.

So we must come to the last sad chapter of the Educational Commission's formal existence, one foreshadowed by events some years before the students were actually recalled in 1881. In the fall of 1875 certain changes in personnel took place, the new men, including one Commissioner, being appointees of Li Hung Chang. These changes were made at the request of Commissioner Chin Lan Pin, who expected soon to return to China on leave of absence. Various political moves followed, all with the apparent intent to divorce Yung Wing in a very decent way from his great project. But tempting official promotion did not interest him, as is clear from his letter to Viceroy Li, the substance of which follows: "I thanked him for the appointment which I considered to be a great honor for any man to receive from the government; and said that while I appreciated fully its significance, the obligations and responsibilities inseparably connected with the position filled me with anxious solicitude that my abilities and qualifications might not be equal to their satisfactory fulfillment. In view of such a state of mind, I much preferred, if I were allowed to have my preference in the matter, to remain in my present position as a commissioner of the Chinese mission in Hartford and to continue in it till the Chinese students should have finished their education and were ready to return to China to serve the State in their various capacities. In that event I should have discharged a duty to "Tsang the Upright," and at the same time fulfilled a great duty to China. As Chin Lan Pin had been appointed minister at the same time, he would doubtless be able alone to meet the expectations of the government in his diplomatic capacity."

Dr. Yung's letter met with partial success. He was allowed to remain

Commissioner of Education but at the same time was made associate minister at Washington. From 1878 on his duties were largely in the legation, his influence as Commissioner having been steadily undermined by enemies of the educational project. Minister Chin Lan Pin's real opposition to the Commissioner became clear when he named a strongly reactionary member of his retinue, Woo Tse Tung, as one of the two Commissioners. Personal differences of long standing entered into the this man's attitude of opposition but the chief reason for it was his deep rooted conservatism. By him, as by other unprogressive officials the Educational Commission was regarded as "subversive of the principles and theories of Chinese culture."

Reaction of Conservatives.

Yung Wing in the early stages of the project had had many bitter altercations with Chin Lan Pin over policies and the arrangements for the students. His own words give us the points of disagreement: "Such as the school and personal expenses of the students; their vacation expenses; their change of costume; their attendance at family worship; their attendance at Sunday School and church services; their outdoor exercises and athletic games. These and other questions of a social nature came up for settlement. I had to stand as a kind of buffer between Chin and the students, and defended them in all their reasonable claims. It was in this manner that I must have incurred Chin's displeasure if not his utter dislike. He had never been out of China in his life until he came to this country. The only standard by which he measured things and men (especially students) was purely Chinese. The gradual but marked transformation of the students in their behavior and conduct as they grew in

knowledge and stature under New England influence, culture and environment produced a contrast to their behavior and conduct when they first set foot in New England that might well be strange and repugnant to the ideas and senses of a man like Chin Lan Pin, who all his life had been accustomed to see the springs of life, energy and independence, candor, ingenuity and open-heartedness all covered up and concealed, and in a great measure smothered and never allowed their full play.”

With the coming to Hartford of the reactionary new Commissioner Woo, a continuous stream of misrepresentation flowed back to Peking and to Viceroy Li Hung Chang. “No sooner was he in office than he began to find fault with everything that had been done. Instead of laying those complaints before me, he clandestinely started a stream of misrepresentation to Peking about the students; how they had been mismanaged; how they had been indulged and petted by Commissioner Yung; how they had been allowed to enjoy more privileges than was good for them; how they imitated American students in athletics; that they played more than they studied; that they formed themselves into secret societies, both religious and political; that they ignored their teachers and would not listen to the advice of the new commissioner; that if they were allowed to continue to have their own way, they would soon lose their love of their own country, and on their return to China, they would be good for nothing or worse than nothing; that most of them went to church, attended Sunday Schools and had become Christians; that the sooner this educational enterprise was broken up and all the students recalled, the better it would be for China, etc., etc.”

Anti-Chinese Agitation.

Dr. Yung’s influence with his supposed patron waned under these malicious charges. But the life and work of the boys gave no basis for such misrepresentation, nor for the severe criticism of the Commission. Its very success was what most disturbed the reactionary officials. At the same time, feeling against the Chinese laborers on the Pacific coast was developing and in various quarters in the States a rather unfavorable racial attitude was making harder the lot of most Chinese in America, laborers, merchants and students alike. It is sadly significant that Yung Wing’s last official act as Educational Commissioner should have been his application to the State Department at Washington for the admission of several of the Chinese students to West Point and Annapolis. “Sadly significant,” I say, because the curt disdainful reply came back, “There is no room provided for Chinese students.”

This rebuff, of course, came as heavy blow to Yung Wing’s influence in Peking. Li Hung Chang’s reaction indicated that the fate of the Commission was sealed. Commissioner Woo redoubled his efforts to break up the project and succeeded in having a memorial presented to the Chinese government, officially supported, demanding that the students be recalled. Before action was taken, Viceroy Li was consulted, also Minister Chin Lan Pin and naturally Commissioner Woo in Hartford. All three assented to the recall, Chin saying that boys had been long enough in the United States. Yung Wing was not consulted. So there came about in 1881, the sad end to the Commission and the recall of the one hundred and more students at that time in the States. This breaking up of the project, however, was strongly opposed by Dr. Yung’s loyal friends in Hartford, who came forward with a signed petition addressed to

the Tsung Li Yamen in Peking. This was drawn up by President Porter of Yale and signed by a distinguished group, President Porter and President Seelye, Dr. Twichell and Mark Twain. As a summary of the Commission up to this point we can hardly do better than read from this memorable document: "The undersigned, who have been instructors, guardians and friends of the students who were sent to this country under the care of the Chinese Educational Commission, beg leave to represent:

Educators' Protest against Recall.

"That they exceedingly regret that these young men have been withdrawn from the country, and that the Educational Commission has been dissolved.

"So far as we have had opportunity to observe, and can learn from the representations of others, the young men have generally made a faithful use of their opportunities, and have made good progress in the studies assigned to them, and in the knowledge of the language, ideas, arts and institutions of the people of this country.

"With scarcely a single exception, their morals have been good; their manners have been singularly polite and decorous, and their behavior has been such as to make friends for themselves and their country in the families, the schools, the cities and villages in which they have resided.

"In these ways they have proved themselves eminently worthy of the confidence which has been reposed in them to represent their families and the great Chinese Empire in a land of strangers. Though children and youths, they have seemed always to understand that the honor of their race and their nation was committed to their keeping. As the result of their good conduct, many of the prejudices of ignorant and wicked men towards the Chinese have

been removed, and more favorable sentiments have taken their place.

"We deeply regret that the young men have been taken away just at the time when they were about to reap the most important advantages from their previous studies, and to gather in the rich harvest which their painful and laborious industry had been preparing for them to reap. The studies which most of them have pursued hitherto have been disciplinary and preparatory. The studies of which they have been deprived by their removal, would have been the bright flower and the ripened fruit of the roots and stems which have been slowly reared under patient watering and tillage. We have given to them the same knowledge and culture that we give to our own children and citizens.

"As instructors and guardians of these young men, we should have welcomed to our schools and colleges the Commissioners of Education or their representatives and have explained to them our system and methods of instruction. In some cases, they have been invited to visit us, but have failed to respond to their invitations in person or by their deputies.

"We would remind your honorable body that these students were originally received to our homes and our colleges by request of the Chinese government through the Secretary of State with the express desire that they might learn our language, our manners, our sciences and our arts. To remove them permanently and suddenly without formal notice or inquiry on the ground that as yet they had learned nothing useful to China when their education in Western institutions, arts and sciences is as yet incomplete, seems to us as unworthy of the great Empire for which we wish eminent prosperity and peace, as it is discourteous to the nation that extended to these young men its friendly hospitality.

"We cannot accept as true the representation that they have derived evil

and not good from our institutions, our principles and our manners. If they have neglected or forgotten their native language, we never assumed the duty of instructing them in it, and cannot be held responsible for this neglect. The Chinese government thought it wise that some of its own youth should be trained after our methods. We have not finished the work which we were expected to perform. May we not reasonably be displeased that the results of our work should be judged unfavorably before it could possibly be finished?

“In view of these considerations, and especially in view of the injury and loss which have fallen upon the young men whom we have learned to respect and love, and the reproach which has implicitly been brought upon ourselves and the great nation to which we belong—we would respectfully urge that the reasons for this sudden decision should be reconsidered, and the representations which have been made concerning the intellectual and moral character of our education should be properly substantiated. We would suggest that to this end, a committee may be appointed of eminent Chinese citizens whose duty it shall be to examine into the truth of the statements unfavorable to the young men or their teachers, which have led to the unexpected abandonment of the Educational Commission and to the withdrawal of the young men from the United States before their education could be finished.”

Hartford’s Farewell.

From the restrained wording of this petition may be clearly seen how much the Chinese Educational Mission meant to leading educators in central New England. From other sources we have already seen how much a part of Hartford life the “China Boys” had become and how really attached

to them were the good folk whose homes they shared. The group of students most affiliated with the Asylum Hill Church, through Dr. Twichell and prominent families in his congregation, met for a farewell gathering in the Bartlett home on the evening of August 21, 1881. Dr. Twichell very simply but impressively presided. All present were deeply moved. The “China Boys” were “leaving home” in a very real sense. That day, one of the mothers had penned a letter to the Chinese mother of one of the boys. We are fortunate still to have that letter, which reads as follows:

Dear Mrs. Woo:

You will, I am sure, be glad to see your little boy grow into a man, and feel proud of him.

He has been with us during his whole stay in America and we have become much attached to him. He has pursued an upright, steadfast course in his studies as well as in his general character, and we feel that he will be a useful man and serve his country with honour to himself and to his parents.

We shall miss him and the others who leave us tomorrow and shall always feel the most affectionate interest in his welfare and hope for his success in whatever he may undertake.

I hope that we may see him again sometime in the future, but if we do not, we shall never cease to wish the best things for him.

With sincere respect and best wishes.

Yours very truly,

Mary L. Bartlett.

Hartford, Aug. 21, 1881

Return to China.

In marked contrast to the joyous outset of the first detachment of students in the late summer of 1872 was the return of the whole

Commission in the fall of 1881. Well might these alert students, most of them now in their late teens, a few in their twenties and rated as college men, be surprised and somewhat dazed at the treatment accorded them on landing in Shanghai. Herded together in an old school house, roughly treated by petty officials, furnished only the bare necessities of living, denied access to their friends, without financial means, and generally made to feel in disgrace, virtually prisoners, the “China Boys” back in their own country underwent a preliminary period of real suffering and privation. This was followed by a period of probation, as influential friends and relatives came to their rescue and secured for them positions in which their mettle could be proved, in which their training in modern education and sound character would show its worth.

Careers Begun.

Just a year after their departure from Hartford, one of the boys writing from Tientsin, where he was enrolled with seven others in the newly established Viceroy’s medical school, thus informs his foster father of his circumstances:

“At present (August 1882) we are not indulging in any vacation, but we study so little that it seems almost a vacation in itself; and as far as the present condition is concerned we all are contented, having everything we want; our teachers are both kindhearted and good...

“Mr. Yung Wing having interviewed the Emperor is appointed to manage the affairs in the Abolition of Opium Trade between China and England, which will be, of course, a great blessing to our people.

“Messrs. Young, Holcombe, and (probably) Martin, Prince Kung, Viceroys Li and Chang are going to push ‘our cause’ and, of course, no one ought to doubt of our returning to the States. It has been said that

the contract for the admission of forty of our students to the Annapolis Naval Academy has been made between our Government and that of yours...

“Chow is doing well in the telegraph school. He is to go to the stations within three months and sends his regards to you all...”

From the letter of another of the students, written from London in 1887, we can see how rapidly most of the young men forged ahead. He tells his foster mother how one of the group is acting in the North China Telegraph Company as translator, how another is filling the same post in Kwangtung Viceroy’s yamen, and how still another has gone to Tientsin at a big salary for service in the Taotai’s retinue. He speaks of himself as hard at work on his chemistry and geology in preparation for a career in mining engineering, which we know he later pursued in North China with marked success.

Later Successes of the “China Boys.”

More details about the individuals in this picked group of Chinese “Senior Returned Students” must be reserved for later and separate treatment. Here it can be but hinted that these men “succeeded in a remarkable way, influencing the course of events in China very surely, even if, at times, as yet obscurely. Year by year the Chinese Educational Mission grows in significance and in its appeal to those looking for the sources of China’s modernization. In closing let us quote from a summary made by Dr. Alfred Sze in Hartford a few years ago, which shows how the “China Boys” have attained high official position in the service of their country. “One became the first ‘Prime Minister’ of the Chinese Republic; two held the high office of Minister of Foreign Affairs; two represented China in England, Germany and the United States, Spain and Peru, as Ministers; others

achieved success as civil engineers, mining engineers, manufacturers and business men. Any class at Yale or Harvard would be filled with pride if it could point to so many distinguished men among its members.”

Of the thirty-two members of the Commission still living, it has been the writer's privilege to make the acquaintance of the following: Messrs. Tsai Shou Kie, Y.T. Woo, Y.K. Kwong, Shen Chia Shu, and M.T. Liang, living in Tientsin; Messrs. Ouyang Kang, Tsai Ting Kan, and Woo

Ying Ko, in Peiping; Messrs. Tong Shao Yi and Chung Mun Yew in Shanghai. To these distinguished gentlemen he owes much, not merely for help in gathering material about the “Senior Returned Students” but more especially for the inspiration and encouragement to him in his belief in China's future, in the part the youth of today will play in the China of tomorrow, and in the welding together of the great family of nations the world over.



NOTE: Corrections in the above article would be greatly appreciated by the writer, as well as additional information pertaining to the Chinese Educational Commission and the lives of the students and officers. Such material, which might well include photographs, written or printed articles in Chinese or English, etc., should be sent to Arthur G. Robinson, American Board Mission, Hopei, Tientsin, and will be carefully returned, if so request. It is planned to publish a complete history of the Commission both in English and Chinese, with brief biographies of many of the students, largely with their descendants in mind, and members of their families are especially urged to cooperate in the undertaking.

Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained from the Tientsin Press, Ltd., 181, Victoria Road, Tientsin @ \$.50 each.