

## A WOMAN TYRANT OF CHINA.

Empress Wu, to Whom the Present Empress Is Compared—  
China's Most Remarkable Woman.

Tse Hsi, the Empress Dowager of China, has been called a second Empress Wu. While the woman who has brought the Empire to the verge of dissolution may not deserve to be ranked by the side of one whose rule, however, arbitrary, was nevertheless beneficent, still the fortunes of Tse Hsi do bear a curious resemblance to those of the Empress Wu, who has been described as the most remarkable woman China has produced.

Taitong the Great, the second monarch of the Tang dynasty, died A. D. 650 after a reign of twenty-three years. He left to his son Kaotsong an empire composed of five or more recently independent and hostile kingdoms, whose conflicting interests were likely to cause a relapse of the Empire into its original elements, unless the imperial authority should be exercised with both delicacy and firmness. Over a state thus lacking in coherency, and threatened by China's standing menace, the barbarians of the north and west, Kaotsong enjoyed a prosperous reign of thirty years. This was due rather to the monarch than to his personal exertions, for he soon gave himself up to a life of pleasure, leaving state affairs to the able hands of his wife, the Empress Wu.

Wu Tse-tien was born in the year 624, of humble parentage. The story goes that the amiable couple having reached the age of 50 without being blessed with offspring, the husband at his wife's suggestion, took to his house a concubine, a maiden named Chang, the daughter of a carpenter. From this alliance sprang Wu, who developed great beauty as she grew in years. The Emperor of China fills his palace from time to time with the choicest of the beauties among his subjects. There are several ranks of these ladies of the palace, the Emperor being permitted to have one Empress, three queens and many wives of inferior degree; besides some hundreds of concubines. Those who belong to the lowest rank of imperial consorts are called tse jin, 'talented ladies,' and are usually the daughters of obscure parents. At the age of 14 Wu Tse-tien was admitted to the harem of Taitong as a talented lady. From this position she rose to be a wife of the Emperor, and at his death was sent with the rest of his secondary widows to an honorable confinement in a Buddhist convent.

While she was still in the palace the heir apparent had become enamored of her, and meeting her at a state ceremony for the worship of his ancestors some five years after he ascended the throne, he determined to make her his wife. His Ministers stoutly opposed the project, not because Wu was his father's widow, but because it was beyond all rule and precedent to remove her from the convent. Wangshi, the reigning Empress happened at that time to be jealous of the Emperor's favorite concubine Leasushu, and thinking only of weaning his affections from this obnoxious rival, she gave the weight of her influence and advice in favor of restoring Wu to the palace; and by praising the beauty and amiable qualities of the royal recluse she so inflamed the Emperor's passion that he determined to carry out his will in spite of the opposition of his Ministers. This is the last case on record of Kaotsong's having his own way. Wu was restored to the palace as one the Emperor's secondary wives. Alas for the Empress Wangshi! In order to overthrow a rival she had invited a far more dangerous enemy into the fortress.

Hardly was Wu's position in the palace secure when she succeeded in supplanting Leasushu in the affections of their master and began to scheme for the downfall of the Empress and the elevation of herself to that station. The two former rivals joined forces in the face of this their common peril, but not for one moment was the issue of the contest in doubt. 'Wu' means 'warrior' and well did the name suit its present owner. She was not over-cruel in the choice of her weapons. She killed her first born child, a girl, and reported to the Emperor that Wangshi had done the deed. Infanticide is common in China, and the murder of a female infant was no such great matter. But this was the Emperor's own flesh. Still, Kaotsong was of an easy disposition and reluctant to resort to harsh measures. Wu then bore to the ear of the Emperor a tale, the truth or falsity of which does not appear, of how Wangshi had been disrespectful to the Emperor's mother, the most heinous of offences to the Chinese mind. Wangshi must be punished. She was first disposed and then both she and Leasushu were im-

prisoned in the palace, and Wu was raised to the height which her ambition coveted.

But the danger was not yet wholly past. The Emperor was one day walking in the palace near the room where Wangshi was confined, when he heard the plaintive voice of the former Empress lamenting her captivity. He asked her what she wished.

'Only,' she replied, 'to be set free that I may look once more upon the sun and moon before I die.'

The emperor promised that her prayer should be gratified. But the Empress Wu had already learned the value of spies, and when one of her faithful servants brought her the news of the conversation, she met the emergency with a remedy as effective as it was barbaric. The hands and feet of both her former rivals were cut off, and the unfortunate women were then drowned in casks of wine.

Wu could now have her way without let or hindrance, for it was said that the emperor dared not even speak the truth in her presence if it was in opposition to her will. She exerted all the force of her marvellously able mind, not only to make herself the real ruler of the Empire, but to discharge for the best interests of the state the difficult functions which her self-imposed duties devolved upon her. The public offices were filled with her family and friends; her son was proclaimed the heir apparent, the nobles and ministers whom she suspected lost their offices and oftentimes their heads, and the dagger and poisoned cup were ever at hand to rid her of a real or fancied foe. It may be that the Chinese historians, in their desire to blacken her character have magnified both the number and the nature of her crimes, but there can be no doubt that the daring woman did not shrink from any act where her own security or the welfare of the state demanded the sacrifice of another's life or liberty. She is even charged with having murdered two of her sons.

On the other hand, the Empire would have fared but ill under what Dr. Wells Williams styles the 'indolent imbecility' of Kaotsong, if it had not been for the energy, foresight and real statesmanship of the Empress. Her efforts were at first confined to assisting her husband in grappling with the difficulties of his position, but as he discovered her knowledge of statecraft and the skill with which she solved the problems for which his duller wit was unable to find an answer, the case-loving monarch left the conduct of affairs more in her hands. She was 41 years of age when Kaotsong married her, and for forty years she controlled the destinies of China in a masterly manner. During this time wars were carried on against Tibet, Corea and the tribes of Central Asia. Wu did not appear to take a lively interest in the Tibetan war, and the Chinese arms met with but indifferent success. She threw all her force into the ten years struggle with the Coreans, and Corea became a Chinese possession. In this war the Coreans were aided by the Japanese, being the first instance on record of the interference of the islanders in the affairs of China. The allies were defeated by the forces of Wu in four engagements, and the Japanese ships to the number of four hundred were destroyed. The imperial authority was also maintained over the tributary states of Central Asia, and the Empress showed her wisdom by refusing to interfere in the conflict which was then raging between the Mohammedan hordes from Arabia and the Asiatic States which they were overrunning. By this precaution Wu saved China from subjection to the followers of the prophet.

While the Empress was busy herself in warding off danger to the State from beyond its borders, and in extending the imperial sway over new territory, her enemies at home were not sleeping, and perils were gathering fast around her. In the year 683 Kaotsong died, and Chongtsong, son of the Emperor and Wu, succeeded to the crown. Wu was not disposed to allow this change to alter her position, while Chongtsong showed signs of an intention to take the reins in his own hands. In a trial of strength Wu had never yet come out second best, and she despatched and banished her son after a reign of only a few days. In China a woman cannot legally reign although she may rule, and the Empress put forward Prince Litan, another son of Kaotsong, as nominal Emperor, while she asserted still more than during her husband's life her absolute authority. Having long possessed the substance of sovereign power she now assumed its form, in the eyes of a Chinaman a much graver offence. The

historian Bulgar says: 'The Empress transacted all public business, received petitions and disposed of the chief offices in the Empire. She erected temples to her ancestors, wore the robes of state restricted to an Emperor, and offered sacrifices to the great God of all.' The last three acts constituted high treason, the last one indeed being treason in a most aggravated form; the first act of a rebel who aspires to the throne being to offer the sacrifice which is prohibited to all save the sovereign.

While thus offending against the letter of the law she carried out the spirit of the traditional policy of the Empire. But it is the letter of the law which kills, and those who would willingly have obeyed the most arbitrary command if issued in the name of the Emperor, refused to lend their support to a course of conduct which, to their notion, detracted from the dignity of the imperial throne. Wu paid but little heed to the murmurings about her; she even added fuel to the flame by changing the style of the dynasty and giving it her own family name, while she continued to heap favors upon her kinsman. However, when insurrections broke out she acted with her usual promptness and vigor, and always defeated her opponents, who paid the penalty of rebellion with their lives. The condemned were usually executed in the public streets of the capital, hundreds being led to the block at a time. Not only was such an object lesson afforded to the people to teach them the might of their ruler and the danger of opposing her, but she caused books to be written in her praise, and ordered the priests to recount her virtues to the people, while her name and titles were written in large characters in the courts and temples.

But such a state of affairs could not continue. Able as was her rule, her enemies were multiplying and her strength declining. Her head was bowed with weight of 80 years when the plot was formed which caused her fall. Being confined to her room by illness, suddenly at midnight the conspirators appeared before her with 500 armed men and demanded that she should abdicate the throne. She could not well refuse a request preferred in this manner, and therefore delivered over the imperial seal and other insignia of royalty, saying, 'The Government shall immediately revert to the hands of my son.' A few months later she died in her room at the palace, having maintained her queenly dignity to the end.

One weakness Wu possessed in common with all her sex; she showed her femininity by her infatuation for a Buddhist priest, while she also showed her unfeminine wisdom in not allowing her lover to influence her public policy.

Whatever judgement may be passed upon her crimes Empress Wu must receive the credit of having wisely administered the government she usurped, and of having united, enlarged and strengthened the Empire. In other respects, that is, in its more evil aspects, her remarkable career is about of a pattern with that of the Empress Dowager Tse Hsi.

### A Philanthropic Disappointment.

A woman newspaper reporter, who is now a well known author, once called upon Miss Grace Dodge, the millionaire organizer and head of the New York Working Girls Clubs, who is also the author of A Bundle of Letters to Busy Girls. The servant looked sympathetically at the reporter, invited her into the house, took away her wet rubbers and shoes and brought dry ones, an act which filled the visitor's heart with joy. Then she brought a cup of tea and some biscuits.

After a long wait Miss Dodge came in. 'Are you a reporter?' she asked the newsgatherer. 'Yes? I am very sorry you should have come up here this rainy day to see me. You know I never talk about my plans for publication, but we can have just as nice a time talking about books and pictures. Won't you have another cup of tea? Must you be going? I am very sorry. Wait a minute and the coachman drive you to your office or your home. Come up some day when we can have more time and I'll tell you all about the Working Girls Clubs, but of course you won't print any of it.'

The reporter rode home, but she didn't call again—at least, not on business.

### The Name that Stumped the Tagals.

Major Samuel B. Jones, of the Regular Army, is now Quartermaster at Boston. He served with distinction until recently in the Philippines.

A curious local custom in Luzon authorizes a native to take and use a foreign name, generally Spanish, in addition to his own Tagal patronymic. This accounts for the multitude of such sonorous names as 'Agramonte,' 'Uriarte' and 'Polobiesja.' The Major had won the gratitude of a native, who announced his determination

to adopt the American family name of Jones before it occurred to him that there is no equivalent for 'J' in either Spanish or Tagal. He had it written out for him by a soldier, to whom he gave a box of cigars for the trouble, and then departed from the camp. Some time afterward the native came into camp and was addressed by his new name. He looked worried and called his interlocutor aside and explained to him his troubles.

'Please don't call me by that name,' he said plaintively. 'You see, I took that written name home to my village and showed it to my relatives. They were very much pleased, but when they tried to read it no two pronounced it alike. Rather than have trouble in the family I am looking for a brave American whose name is comprehensible.'

### POKER IN POVERTY HOLLOW.

Run of Luck of Korpstein the Undertaker, Mayor Connolly Stirred up.

The cabinet of the Hon. Pat Connolly met without him yesterday to discuss plans for providing a new mayoral office, the present one being doomed to make way for the East River bridge approach, and after a game of poker the meeting broke up in a row. If Connolly had been in his seat there wouldn't have been any poker and consequently wouldn't have been any row, for the Mayor of Poverty Hollow though he believes in playing Forty-Fives, is unalterably opposed to poker on the ground that it is demoralizing to the mind and the pocket. But Connolly had been hurriedly summoned to attend a meeting of the Emerald Oom Paul Secret Relief association, and left a letter to explain.

'Patriotism above me own interests. Poverty Hollow is only a small place. Whin ther fate of nashuns hangs in ther balance Oi go where duty calls me. Oi'll be wid yer next Sunday.'

'Vell, if der Mayor ain't here den I move dot we play a game of poker,' remarked Charlie Wagner, the dry goods man, when Charlie McCrone had read Connolly's letter.

The proposal was acceptable and the cabinet went to the hotel of ex-Alderman Eisman at Clinton and Broome streets to play. It was agreed that the limit should be 50 cents and that nobody should be allowed to go shy.

'Is any mans has no money god, he should get out of der game,' announced Wagner, and the suggestion was approved by Eisman, Bismarck Rosco, Korpstein the undertaker, Mike Hannington, the weighing machine man, and Pat Coleman of the Kerymen's Association, who were the others in the game. The party played about an hour and then Korpstein announced that he had lost everything but 10 cents.

'Den get right out of der game,' said Wagner, who was also a loser, and Korpstein became a spectator only. After watching the game for a few minutes he said to Coleman. 'Pat, I vil bed you mine 10 cents dot Wagner vil have haf a higher card den you haf.'

'O'll go yer,' said Coleman and Korpstein won. He repeated the bet on the next hand and kept on betting until he had 50 cents on the table. A fifty cent jack pot was announced just then.

'I vil go in,' exclaimed Korpstein. 'I haf been a loser. I have mine ante here.'

Against the wishes of Wagner and Rosco he was allowed to go in, and although allowed only a show down for his 50 cents, he held the highest hand and raked in \$3. He went into the next game and won again. Then he kept on winning. He exhibited flushes, straights and full hands with regularity and after three hours' play had taken all the money in the party. Wagner was the last man left and when Korpstein gathered in his last chip Wagner exploded.

'Dis vas a conspiracy. Id vas a pud up chob to do us out of our money,' he shouted. 'To led a mans go in by a game mit 50 cents to play against mine money. Vot tam fools ve vere!'

'It was your fault,' retorted Hannigan. 'You vos a liar,' replied Wagner, shaking his fist at Hannigan.

'O'll lick any Dootchman thot calls me a loir,' responded Hannigan.

Korpstein started for the door with the rest after him, but he managed to get away. Hannigan and Wagner clinched in the street, but were separated by the bystanders and taken home by separate routes. When Connolly was informed afterward of the trouble over the game he was greatly wrought up.

'O'll git a new set of min as me advisers,' he said, 'Bogorra, it vill never be sid thot Pat Connolly chums wid gamblers. 'Their devil's in car-rds, annyway.'

### We Shouldn't Ask You

To invest your money in a bottle of Adamson's Botanic Cough Balsam if we were not sure it will do you good. Hamburg is a steady element in business. 25c. all Druggists.

## FLASHES OF FUN.

'What's the size of Morocco's standing army?' 'About 25,000.' 'Moor or less I suppose.'

She—Do I talk in my sleep, John?  
He—No. Not when you are asleep, Maria—thank heaven!

'Do you think this nation could civilize the Philippines?' 'Well, we ought to put in some faithful practice on St. Louis first.'

Oldboy—The world is worse than it was fifty years ago.  
Bocker—Yes, you've lived in it just that much longer.

Ma—'Tommy, you seem to love pa better than you do me.' Tommy—'Oh, ma, I don't mean to but y' see pa allus has his pockets full o' nickels.'

'Sara, were you much excited when the President was nominated?'

'Excited? I thought so! Henry threw away my new silk umbrella.'

'What do you think is at the bottom of the ocean, professor?'

'Excuse me, but I have never gone into the subject deep enough for that.'

'You say that you have a wealthy uncle,' said the judge to the colored culprit before him, 'where does he live?'

'In Georgia, sah, an' he's powerful rich—he's a melonaire.'

Mrs. Browne—'Is Mrs. Gabbie at home?' Bridget—'Faith, she is not, ma'am, be great good luck. But ye'd better l'ave yer card an' skeddaddle away fur she's like to be in mosht onny minnte now.'

First Boston Boy—Yes, father punished me severely yesterday.

Second Boston Boy Indeed? Some parents have such radical ideas about government without the consent of the governed!

Mabel—How lovely of you to recognize me at once, when you haven't seen me for over three years.

Maudie (with charming amiability)—Oh, I know you the minute I set eyes on your dress.

Mr. Timmid—I don't suppose it would be proper for me to kiss you on such short acquaintance.

Miss Innit—No, I suppose not; but isn't it too bad we haven't been acquainted longer?

'I told my employer everything else had gone up, and I wanted my pay raised.'

'How did it work?'

'He said he was just about to say to me that as his living was costing him more, my wages would have to come down.'

'Johnny,' said a mother to her greedy little five-year-old, 'if you eat so much luncheon you will spoil your appetite for dinner.'

'Well, I don't care,' answered Johnny. 'I'd rather have a good lunch for my appetite than a good appetite for my dinner.'

'Give me the man who sings at his work!' exclaimed the enthusiastic person.

'Yes,' answered the discouraged looking man. 'I'd be glad to get one who would be content with singing. The last man I had used to stop his work to play the violin.'

'I decided I'd discourage Mrs. Nabbs by never having what she wanted to borrow.'

'Well?'

'I think she has decided to keep on borrowing until she hits on something we have.'

Miss Summit—It's remarkable that Lord Face-Pelham, who married Clara Van Antler, should still be devoted to her at the end of 5 years.

Miss Palisade—Oh, I don't know. You remember her father settled her dowry on the installment plan.

'I am going to sue you for the price of that \$50 dress,' said an irate dressmaker to an actress.

'Put the value of \$500 in the litigation while you are at the it, and then the free advertising I will get will make it worth while,' replied the actress.

'Bro'r Williams, I thought you said de collection was tuck up fer de starvin' heathens?'

'So I did, sub—so I did; but I been wrastlin' in pra'r 'bout it ever since, en it's pow my opinion dat dem heathens is chuck full, en any mo' would give em indigestion!'

'She is one of the most original young women I have talked with in a long time, said the professor earnestly.'

'She doesn't pay much attention to intellectual matters.'

'Perhaps not. But me for a whole half hour with out once asking me if I played golf.'