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TWO TECHS ABROAD.

IN FIVE CHAPTERS.

CHAP. I.—ON THE YANG-TSZE.

WHAT is a "Tech?" The term is "short" for technologist, and is applied to students and graduates of technological institutes.

The "two Techs" whose travels I will relate were, first, Mr. Justin Wright, C.E., and second a person who shall be nameless. We left the Institute theoretically civil engineers, with the world before us and an ambition to go to the ends of it, if the successful practice of our profession should take us there.

At our class supper at graduation, our old engineering professor dropped in. He was called upon to give his parting word. He was not an orator, but a true man from top to toe nevertheless. What a drill he had given us! the best he had. His soul was in his teaching, and his classes the apple of his eye.

"You are the missionaries," so he ended his speech—"missionaries of science. You go forth to make the earth a better habitation for mankind, to build its railroads, to drain its swamps, to irrigate its waste lands, to light it with electricity, to make it healthy. Your vocation is something more than merely practical; it is ennobling.

"I would not say a word slightly of those self-sacrificing men and women who go forth into foreign countries with the Bible and hymn-book in their hands. Their spirit is worthy of all reverence. I only say that you have it in your power to emphasize their work, and to illustrate the Christianity they proclaim. You will find—as they do—that the world is full of disease, poverty, filth and misery, because the conditions of life are bad. It is your business to better these evil conditions. Go ahead and do it. Do it vigorously and well. God bless every one of you! Good-by!"

It will be seen that the professor took a broad view of the mission of science, and had great faith in his "boys"—a faith which I fear few of us will fully justify. In short he is an optimist—one who believes in or hopes for the best of all things. Such persons are laughed at by pessimists—those who have no hope for anything good in the world.

Wright and I soon found such a man on the other side of the world; for we had made a plan in accordance with the professor's advice, and soon set off on a tour with our eyes open for improvement in our profession.

Leaving home on the first of September, we crossed the continent to San Francisco, and afterward sailed for Yokohama and Shanghai. Here we remained two months, learning what we could of railroad projects for China—for we had an idea that we might secure contracts for building sections of the proposed roads.

One day early in March we embarked on the Yang-tsze passenger steamer *Tai-Wo*, and went up the great river to Nankin, where we fell in with a fellow-countryman named George Frost, who had been in China two years. Frost was an American of a class which the traveller and tourist is now likely to meet with in every country—the class of pushers and schemers.

He was a companionable man—genial, shrewd,

experienced in many kinds of business enterprise, and full of "go." He had no technical education, but he had been almost everywhere, and acquired much practical knowledge.

He had got out red cedar lumber on the west coast of Florida, and mahogany from San Domingo and Honduras; he had been sealing in Bering Sea, and had introduced patent rabbit exterminators in Australia. Money he had made and lost time now and again, but failures, which he termed "throws," depressed him little.

At this time he was in the employ of a Chinese gentleman of the mandarin class, who lived sixteen hundred miles up the Yang-tsze River, near

the confluence with the Min, in the Province of Sz'chuen. For reasons which will appear I prefer to conceal the real name of this Chinese grandee, and will speak of him as Lee Wung. Frost had come down to Han-kow, and later to Nankin, in a steam launch for the purpose of procuring, secretly, a small steam boiler and engine.

"Railroads?" said he, quizzically, in reply to our enquiries. "You are all wrong. Don't waste an hour more on trying to build railroads. It's no go. The Chinese won't have them."

"Why not?" we asked.

"Oh, well, because they're Chinese. Take my word for it; they won't build them—not in



REED WARBLERS.