

CHINA'S GREATEST MAN.

VICEROY LI HUNG, whose recent visit to Canada and the States has caused more than ordinary interest, is the Grand Old Man of China, just as Mr. Gladstone is the Grand Old Man of England. During Li Hung's sojourn in England these two grand old men were photographed together at Hawarden Castle, the residence of Mr. Gladstone. It may be explained that Li is the Viceroy's family name, whilst *Hung Chang*—meaning "vast ornamentation"—is merely a personal name, or, rather, the official form of his personal name. He uses it when he addresses the Emperor, and the officials use it when speaking to the Emperor of him, otherwise it is improper for colleagues to use it in his presence; it is also printed on his visiting-cards. His literary name, however, is *Shao-ts'un*, or "young spice," and this is the one by which he is known to his friends, and by which he is spoken of in the native press. He is also a *Chung-Tang*, or "central hall," which is the complimentary title of a grand secretary.

The following article on Li Hung by John W. Foster appeared in the last number of *The Century*. The article is not only attractive as a clever character sketch of a remarkable man, but it affords an opportunity for learning something of the condition of court and public life in China.

Li Hung Chang is of pure Chinese extraction, having no Manchu blood. Although seventy-four years of age, he is in fair degree of health and vigour, of fine physique. Fully six feet in height, of commanding presence, erect and stoutly built, with dark, piercing eyes, and a face that is strongly moulded and indicative of strength of character, and that would command attention in any foreign circle. Dressed in his party-colored silken flowing robes, and his hat decorated with the three-eyed peacock feathers, he presents a figure which would be distinguished amid the glitter and pageantry of any European court.

For nearly half a century he has been in the public service, but this is the first time he has ever visited the nations of the West, and the second time he has been outside his native land. Only last year, it will be remembered, he was called by his sovereign to undertake the important and difficult mission of a journey to Japan to negotiate peace. On that occasion, although going as the representative of the defeated party, he was not unmindful of his country's greatness, or of the Oriental fondness for display, and the two merchant-steamers chartered for the voyage carried a retinue of one hundred and thirty-five persons, among whom were two Chinese ex-ministers to foreign courts, four secretaries of rank speaking English or French, a score of translators and copyists, a Chinese and a French physician, a captain and a body-guard, with a mandarin chair of highest rank, and its bearers, and cooks and servants in liberal numbers. The interesting and tragic circumstances attending that embassy, and the manner in which he discharged his high trust, added greatly to his prestige abroad, and make his present visit to the West the more attractive. Doubtless he will be received in its capitals and leading cities, not only with great curiosity, but with demonstrations of sincere

respect, because he is the most distinguished visitor which the great continent of Asia has sent to Europe during this generation. Shahs, princes, rajahs, statesmen, and generals have come and gone, some mere puppets of power and others persons of distinction and merit; but none who so fully represented power, and combined the qualities of a successful soldier, an able statesman, an accomplished diplomatist, and a trained scholar.

In addition to his appointment as Viceroy of the Province of Chihli, he was named imperial tutor, grand secretary of state, minister superintendent of trade of the northern ports, and a noble of the first rank. These high titles and offices made him from that time to the present, a period of twenty-five years, the first official and statesman of the government under the Emperor. He has often been styled the prime minister of China, but, as a matter of



LI HUNG CHANG.

RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE.

fact, there is no such official in the imperial government. It is nominally an autocracy, the Emperor being regarded as the Son of Heaven and the source of all authority. But his person is held so sacred, and he is kept so secluded in his palace, that he has little or no contact with the world, and by personal observation has no knowledge of his kingdom. Its affairs are conducted by a series of boards, constituting a very cumbersome and complex system, and no one man stands at the head of affairs and directs its movements.

Added dignity and importance over that of other vicerealties attach to that of Chihli in that it is the metropolitan province, Peking being within its limits, and its viceroy is the guardian and protector of the Emperor. In the present case the office of imperial tutor conferred upon its occupant still further and more intimate duties in connection with the imperial

household; as, for instance, when His Majesty, a few years ago, made his visit to the tombs of his ancestors, we find the hero of the Taiping war, and the first noble of the empire, giving his personal attention to the details of His Majesty's journey. Another and unusual duty became attached to this vicerealty. Li Hung Chang had shown such aptitude for diplomatic duties in his negotiations respecting the Tientsin riot that henceforth he conducted, or participated in, every important treaty negotiation or diplomatic controversy of his government. Having his residence at the seaport of the capital, for the last quarter of a century he has stood as a sentinel on the outpost of the forbidden city, and for his secluded Emperor has held intercourse with the outside world. Although not holding that position, he has acted as the virtual head of the Chinese Foreign Office, and has shown himself a match for the most astute of the trained European diplomatists. While in this capacity he has been the jealous guardian of his country's interests, he has always secured the confidence and esteem of the foreign ministers with whom he has conducted important negotiations. Probably no living man has received such signal marks of respect from his diplomatic antagonists as he.

Little is known of the viceroy's father beyond the fact that he was a respectable member of the gentry, or literati; but his mother was a woman of more than ordinary strength of character, and evidently had a marked influence on her son's life. She was the mother of eight sons, the eldest of whom also rose to distinction, and was for several years the viceroy of the two provinces of which Canton is the capital.

No living man of Asia has been so much the subject of discussion and criticism as Li Hung Chang. Much of the criticism has been unfavourable, and his critics are often unfair. It is hardly just to him to estimate his character and attainments according to the standard of Western nations. His education is exclusively Oriental, and his entire life has been spent in China. His knowledge of our civilization is such as could be acquired in the motley society of a treaty-port. As a statesman he has had to deal with a very conservative and bigoted constituency, and with associates prejudiced against and ignorant of foreign nations. Judged in the light of his education, his experience, and his surroundings, he must be regarded as the first of living statesmen of Asia, and one of the most distinguished of the public men of the world.

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