

Written for this Paper.

OUR DIPLOMATS IN CHINA.

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THE WAR IN CHINA and Japan has radically changed the position of our diplomats in the far east. The legations in China, Japan and Corea are now among the most important in the service of the United States, and every American consul on

the Asiatic shores of the Pacific ocean is to a certain extent responsible for the lives of a number of the citizens of the United States. Bad judgment and mistakes are liable to bring the United States into trouble as never before, and it is interesting to look at the men who now represent us in these countries at this critical time. One of the most important positions is that held by Col. Charles Denby, the United States minister to Peking. He has held his office for the past ten years, and he has proven himself to be an able man and a successful diplomat. He comes from Evansville, Ind., and he was appointed largely through the influence of the late Senator Joe McDonald. He is an old friend of Secretary Gresham's, and he was for years known in Indiana as a great lawyer before he was made minister to China. As a lawyer he often came in contact with Benjamin Harrison, and at the time of Harrison's election to the presidency Denby thought he would have to leave China. He and Harrison had had some little trouble during a lawsuit some time previously, and Denby knew that Harrison strongly believed that Republicans should be the leading officials in a Republican administration. He was aware, however, of the inflexible honesty of President Harrison's character, and he knew that if he could persuade him that he was the best man for the place, and that he could fill the office better than any Republican, he would probably hold it. He attempted to do so and succeeded. As soon as Harrison's election was announced, letters began to come to Indianapolis from China. The business men of the different ports wrote asking the president-elect to retain Minister Denby. The American missionaries sent in long petitions, and both Protestants and Catholics requested that Col. Denby be retained. Li Hung Chang wrote a letter through his private secretary, and high Chinamen in Peking got down on their knees, metaphorically speaking, and wrote to the president. At the same time the campaign was carried on all over the world. Every foreigner in China who had a friend likely to help Col. Denby, at once wrote to him and had him write to the president. Some of the highest church authorities of England—I am not sure but that one was not the archbishop of Canterbury—sent in letters in behalf of Denby, and such a spontaneous uprising in favor of this foreign minister appeared that President Harrison very wisely con-

cluded that there must be some foundation for the desire for his retention, and he said that he should stay. At any rate, he was held on and on until the time of the injudicious appointment of Blair of New Hampshire, who had made speeches against the Chinese in the past, and who was not acceptable to the Chinese government. After this mistake, President Harrison concluded to let Col. Denby stay the remainder of his term, and President Cleveland very wisely continued him to the present time.

OUR LEGATION AT PEKING.

The position of minister to Peking is by no means a bad one. The pay is \$17,500 a year, and at the present value of silver this is equal to nearly \$35,000 a year, as far as spending power is concerned. I was told in China that the position could be kept up very comfortably on about \$10,000 a year, and if this is true there is a clear annual saving of \$25,000 in silver, or more than \$12,000 in gold. Peking is off of the regular lines of travel. Only a few Americans get to it in the course of a year, and service and eatables are cheap. Wines are much cheaper in Shanghai than in Washington, and you can give a dinner in Peking for half the sum that the same feast would cost here. I am not sure, but I think the government pays the rent of our diplomats in Peking. The legation buildings are surrounded by a high wall of blue bricks, and Col. Denby's own quarters consist of a number of low houses of blue brick, and his rooms are large and airy. The parlors of the legation are as well furnished as any you will find in Washington. Old rugs cover the floor. Magnificent Chinese embroideries hang upon the walls. Tiger skins and leopard skins and bits of rare porcelain and cloisonne are to be found here and there. Some of the furniture is of teak wood, which is as hard as ebony and more beautiful than polished mahogany. There is a piano on one side of the room, and the latest books with English, French and American magazines, which are not more than two months old, lie upon the table. In addition to his quarters for himself and his family, he has a little wing which contains several guest chambers, and he is surrounded with all the comforts of an American home. As to service, he is far better off than he could be in America. During the visit which I paid to him about six years ago, Col. Denby gave a swell dinner in honor of the dean of the diplomatic corps, who was then just leaving for Europe. About fifty guests sat down at the table, and the dinner was as well served and as nicely cooked as any you can get up in Washington. All that Col. Denby had to do in order to bring about this result was to say to his Chinese cook:

"John, wanchee number one dinner, fifty piecee men, three days from now, all proper."

The Chinese cook made out the menu, did all the marketing, arranged the wines and decorated the table. All that Col. Denby had to do was to put on his dress suit and take his place at the head of the table. During this dinner he made a speech in French, and he is, by the way, a very well educated man, and speaks and writes French fluently. His father was, I think, consul to Marseilles when he was a boy, and a part of his education was gotten in Paris. He has especially distinguished by the num-

ber of good reports which he has written during his ministry.

THE LEGATION FAMILY.

The legation family consists of the minister, his secretary of legation and the official interpreter. The first secretary is Col. Denby's son, Mr. Charles Denby, Jr., who has done very good work during the present trouble, and who has been acting minister to China during the greater part of last year. He is a young man—I judge not more than thirty years of age, but he has been with his father during the whole of his service in Peking, and he is, it is said, a good Chinese scholar. The salary of the secretary is \$2,625, which at the present value of silver is more than \$5,000. There is a house in the legation compound for the use of the secretary, and the position is by no means a bad one. The interpreter of the legation is Mr. Fleming D. Cheshire, a young man who is somewhere between forty and fifty years of age. He is an American who has lived in China for eighteen or twenty years, and who speaks Chinese fluently. He has been connected with the legation at Peking for years, and much of his Chinese he learned in Peking. He found that the only way to learn the language was by living among the people, and while he was studying it he shaved his head and wore a Chinese pigtail, dressing in Chinese clothes. He kept this up until he mastered the mandarin and common dialects, and he is now an indispensable part of the legation. He is a dark-faced, black-mustached, very intelligent young man, and he has a house near that of the minister, in which he keeps bachelor's hall.

SIR ROBERT HART AND HIS OFFICIAL HAT RACK.

Quite a number of Americans are connected with the imperial customs of China. The duties on exports and imports are collected by foreigners under an inspector general, the famous Sir Robert Hart. There are about 3,000 men in the customs and these are scattered all over China. They receive good salaries, but they are entirely subject to Sir Robert Hart, and they are more afraid of losing their offices than our government clerks were before our civil service rules were inaugurated. They tell a story in Peking in the illustration of the arbitrary way in which Sir Robert Hart makes his changes. They say he has a great board fastened against the walls of his hall, in which there are pegs, each of which bears the name of an official. The holes are marked with the names of the different positions, and if John Smith's peg is in the Shanghai hole it shows that John Smith is in charge of the customs at Shanghai. Now and then the inspector general comes home very late. He may have been out to dinner. He may have taken a little champagne, and upon entering into his own hall he may bunglingly use his board as a hat-rack. In doing so he may knock down a number of pegs, which his Chinese boy sticks back at random before his imperial highness gets up. When he comes out in the morning—so the story goes—he looks with a little surprise at the appointment board.

"Ah!" says he, "John Smith has been changed from Shanghai to Hankow. I had forgotten all about that. I must send off the order at once."

And off it goes. Tom Jones, who was getting \$5,000 a year at Tien-Tsin, is