

Written for this Paper.

FELLOW JACKETS AND PEACOCK FEATHERS.

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Li Hung Chang

I HUNG CHANG has been given back his yellow jacket and his three-eyed peacock feather. The emperor has called him to Peking, and he should by this time be on his way to Japan and to aid in the settlement of the war. His career shows the ups and

downs of Chinese officials, and a look at it will give some idea of the queer ranks and orders of nobility with which the empire of China is honeycombed. Li Hung Chang is a self-made man. His father was a poor scholar in the province of Anhui, and he had to scratch around and skimp himself in order to pay for Li's education. Li passed the examinations of his own province and those of the district in which he was located, and when he was still in his teens he went to Peking and wrote his essays in the big examination halls there. Seventeen thousand other students of all ages, from eighteen to eighty, were being examined at the same time, and Li came out the highest. This gave him his start, and he was put on the staff of one of the generals, who were acting against the rebels in the famous Taiping rebellion. This war occurred in China about the time Franklin Pierce was president. It cost the country 10,000,000 of lives, and it was largely through Li that it was put down. Li Hung Chang is a diplomat, as well as a statesman, and he worked his way up from one position to another until he got to be commander-in-chief. He took Chinese Gordon into his confidence and made him one of the generals. Gordon drilled the Chinese according to foreign tactics, and together they vanquished the rebels. The result was that Li became the greatest man in China. He was given one big office after another until he became only second to the emperor. This is the position he occupies today. He is superintendent of northern trade, and controls the commercial matters of all North China, numbering more than 170,000,000 of people. He is the governor general of the province of Chili, and is practically the secretary of the state. He has for years been the chief medium of communication between the Chinese and foreign nations, and he is the most progressive Chinaman in the empire. It was he who introduced the telegraph into China, and the wires that ran into his palace at Tientsin connect him with every court of Europe and with every part of the United States. He is said to be a very rich man, and his income ranges between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per year. No one knows how much he has made outside of his office. I heard it said in Tientsin that he was worth \$50,000,000, and on the other hand his friends claim that he is not worth more than \$2,000,000 or \$3,000,000. Whatever he has must come from his own idea of his share of the receipts, for the Chinese government pays small salaries

and expects the officials to steal the balance.

PEACOCK FEATHERS IN CHINA.

Li has risen in rank as well as in power. He is now an earl, and when I saw him last summer at a banquet in his palace his head was decorated with a cap out of the back of which stuck his three-eyed peacock feather. This last is even a greater distinction than the yellow jacket. It is one of the greatest things an emperor can give, and is usually conferred only on princes and nobles of the highest degree. The feather was about two feet long and was fastened to a big cap with a turn-up brim by a great button, which rested on the center of the crown of the hat, and which was also a mark of high rank. The feather stuck out behind the hat and quivered as Li Hung Chang put his yellow fists together and bowed low in saluting his guests. There were other peacock feathers upon some of the Chinese high officials among the guests, but Li Hung Chang was the only one who had a three-eyed peacock feather. The double-eyed peacock feather is a much lower honor, and the single-eyed peacock feather is worn by many ordinary officials, and it is possible to buy the right to use it. Even lower than this is what is known as the blue plume or the crow feather. This is conferred as a reward for services upon officials below the sixth degree of rank, and is worn by the Imperial Guards.

YELLOW JACKET.

As to the yellow jacket, this is only to be used when the man who has it is in personal attendance upon the emperor in the field or upon journeys. It is a sort of a riding cape, and it has been awarded to two Europeans, one of whom was General Gordon and the other a Frenchman named Giquel, who established the arsenal at Foo Chow. Li Hung Chang has been getting all sorts of presents from the emperor right along. I have before me the lists of the gifts which he received on his seventh birthday. This was about five years ago, and all the officials gave him presents. He had cartloads of silk, a ton or so of gilt scrolls and jewelry and other stuff valued at a million of dollars. Both the emperor and empress dowager sent him valuable presents. The emperor gave him sixteen pieces of costly satin, one dragon robe, an image of Buddha and a lot of autograph proverbs signifying good wishes and good luck. The empress also wrote him a lot of autographs, and gave him a statue of Buddha. She donated him twelve pieces of satin and a robe which was made of the throat skins of saibies, which are in China considered the most valuable of all furs and can only be worn by the special permission of the throne. At another time the emperor gave Li Hung Chang \$10,000, and he has already received more honors than any other Chinaman who has not noble blood in his veins.

THE NOBILITY OF CHINA.

Few people have any idea of the nobility of China. The country is divided up among the officials and it is generally supposed that offices are only given on account of literary merit. The truth is that the best places are given out through influence, and every Chinese state is surrounded by intriguers. There is no court in the world at which there is so much plotting as at

that of Peking, and there is none which has so many nobles and officials of different rank. The emperor is, of course, at the top. He is the son of heaven, and is supposed to hold communion with the gods. All of his relatives are nobles, and the imperial clan has a court of his own, which holds secret meetings and regulates matters concerning the family. There is a genealogical record kept in Peking and at Mukden, and this contains a record of all the branches of the emperor's family. Each of its members has an allowance from the government, but they have not a great deal of power. The emperor is supposed to be supreme, and he can appoint his own successors, choosing which of his children shall succeed him. He is supposed to make this selection in secret and the announcement of his choice is not made until his death. The present emperor has a number of relatives who are known as princes, and among these are Prince Ching, who is now at the head of the bureau of foreign affairs, and who is said to be somewhat progressive in his tendencies. These princes have their own rank, and there are twelve different orders of nobility among the members of the imperial household. The highest princes get about thirty thousand dollars a year, and they each have a retinue of three hundred and sixty servants and an allowance of rations, so that it costs the government about seventy-five thousand dollars a year apiece for them. The highest princes are the brothers or sons of the emperor. Next to them are his majesty's cousins, who get about forty-five thousand dollars a year, and the other relatives get less, until the lowest of the imperial nobility are paid about four dollars a month and rations. In addition to these there are dukes, counts, barons and marquises, which ranks are conferred by the emperor and not a few of which are sold. The Manchus or Tartars have a nobility, and the different ranks are conferred upon the Chinese, as well as the Tartars. The empress must be a pure Tartar and all the ladies of the imperial harem are of Manchu blood. It is not necessary that they be of royal blood, and a pretty Tartar girl, even though her father be a plowman, has a chance of getting into the palace. The mother of the Emperor Hieh-lung was a keeper of a fruit store. She was very beautiful, and one day the prime minister saw her and took her into the palace. She was taken up by the emperor and made his favorite concubine and in due time became the mother of the succeeding emperor.

SOME QUEER PRINCES.

Some of the members of the emperor's family are very poor. I was told of a number of princes who live in Peking and who are chronically hard up. I heard of others who delight in going about through the city in disguise, and who do all sorts of curious things. The emperor's father is now dead. He was a great noble, and when he was alive he was a man of considerable influence. The empress dowager has more power than any other person in the country. She educated the emperor and she winds him about her finger. He has not yet been able to cut loose from her apron strings, and she governs him also through his wives. She picked out the women who compose his imperial harem, and she has the whole court under