

TAKE AMERICAN IDEAS TO CHINA

Wong Back How, Sub-Prefect to His Majesty the Emperor, Is Spending the First Half of His Life in Portland to Learn the Ways and Manners of the People—Hopes to Start a Gas Plant When He Returns to His Native Land

By C. E. Hogue.

STUDYING day and night, learning the innermost secrets of American manufactures, civic improvement, and the law of the nation, Wong Back How, sub-prefect to his majesty the emperor of China, hopes that he will not be long before an official call comes from his government summoning him to the Flowery Kingdom to take some high official seat from which he will be enabled to aid in the modernizing of his mighty home land. Wong Back How is probably the best-known and most popular Chinaman in Portland. His clear-cut, intelligent features attract attention at first glance, and his mastery of the English language, combined with his sage oriental wisdom, are delightfully impressive.

When Wong Back How is called home by his government he will go prepared to do real good for his country. He has mastered the secrets of English schools, industries which will prove profitable to China, and believes that some day his knowledge will be of infinite value to his country. For several years he has been making of gas and a plant for its manufacture will be one of the first things he will urge. He is conservative in his views and refuses to discuss his ambitions at length, but it may easily be seen that he dreams of great things for China.

Born in Canton.

"No, I was not born in America," How replied to a questioner who could not understand how a celestial, unless a native of the United States, could be so thoroughly familiar with American customs and language. "I was born at Canton, but went to Melbourne, Australia, when I was 13 years old. My uncle took a cargo and I accompanied him so I might attend an English school. I studied there until I was 16 years old, then came to America. I came directly to Portland and have lived here since. This is a beautiful city, a beautiful state, a beautiful country. I would like to have you make it clear that I love them. But I also love China. Each is beautiful."

Wong's father was the cause of his pilgrimage to the United States. It was his parents' dearest wish that his son learn the English language and accumulate such knowledge of modernism as would enable him to mount high in the government. His father, a high judge, an official of considerable degree, his father is a lawyer and Wong Back How is already sub-prefect.

Holds Honorary Position.

Sub-prefect to his majesty the emperor is apparently more of an honorary position than might be supposed. It seems that the government has a sort of official waiting list, upon which all men of rank are placed until such time as their country needs them in active service. This list is composed of men of different rank, and sub-prefect, it appears, is the last step before the call for actual official duty is sounded.

Wong Back How is not penurious. He is liberal to a fault, but this very characteristic won for him his favor with his government. He generously fits to fellow countrymen in distress were brought to the attention of high officials at home and after that life was a path of roses. Appointment followed appointment until he reached the rank of sub-prefect, which is on a par with a circuit judge in this country.

Gorgeously embroidered robes fall to the lot of men of Wong Back How's rank. Other Chinamen of lower degree are not accorded the privilege of wearing the insignia which appears upon the official's dress in the accompanying picture. The small ball, on top of his cap, is also significant, showing him to be above the common class.

Father Selected Wife.

After he arrived in Portland Wong Back How's father notified him that he had selected a wife for him, under the Chinese custom. How left school temporarily and returned to his native land. There, for the first time, he met the beautiful young woman, who was to become his wife. She was a girl of very young age, and although he is little more than 34 years old now, he has a son who is already well along with his education.

How returned to this country with his bride and she remained here for five years. At the end of that time How, at

her request, sent her to his home near Canton to care for his aged mother and await his return. Three times since her return to China How has crossed the ocean, to spend six or eight months at a time with her. Three children are the pride of the celestial's life, two sons and a daughter. The latter is an American, having been born in Portland.

Knows Chinese Conditions.

Wong Back How knows China as well as he does America. He improved his time during his visits at home just as he is improving it during his residence here. He has thoroughly familiarized himself with conditions there and it will be no strange land he returns to when his government calls him.

Although he was born at Canton, How's home now is about 40 miles inland from that city. There he has vast acres of fine farm land, which his cousin is tilling during his absence. Wong refuses to attempt to estimate the number of acres he owns there, indicating with a broad sweep of his arm that there are large rice fields in one direction, tea gardens in another, silk worms in another and indigo in still another.

When How was a boy this farm was far from the city. Today it is almost on the outskirts. The railroad has worked the miracle. The line of the San Nang Sung railway runs within a quarter of a mile from How's place and a puffing steam engine eat the distance like hungry monsters which formerly was wearily tramped by footsore coolies bearing sedan chairs for the travelers.

Financier and Diplomat.

Wong is something of a financier as well as being a born diplomat. He owns stock in the railroad which runs past his home, nets a good income from his farm, and also has an extensive mercantile business in the local Chinatown. Doubtless when the first gas plant is erected at Canton he will be one of the pioneer stockholders in that.

The gas business has a strange fascination for Wong. Through the kind-

ness of H. C. Leonard, who took a deep interest in the celestial and aided him in his studies of the industry, he secured a vast amount of information on the subject. When asked if he expected to see gas plants in China soon, Wong replied: "I hope to. I have studied gas. Mr. Leonard taught me many things. He is my best friend. I will remember him all my life."

Americans should be glad that there is a prospect of the establishment of gas plants in China, according to Wong. He explains that if they are erected there it will be necessary to come to America for supplies. American manufacturers will be called upon to furnish gas pipe, tanks, meters and machinery for the



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MISS WONG BACK HOW, BORN IN PORTLAND.

MRS. WONG BACK HOW.

show, and by the time his course is completed in 1910 will probably put some of his white classmates to shame.

Ready for Call.

Although his present course of study will not be concluded until 1910, Wong is holding himself in readiness for the expected call from the government. Should it come tomorrow he would drop his scholarship in the local school and prepare to sail. But in such an event he would not abandon his studies in China. Wong is a bright man; his proficiency in American law he would be certain to thoroughly master before abandoning his studies.

Wong Back How has his own opinions on the exclusion question. He hopes that in the future the American gate will be swung a little wider open to his countrymen and that a lasting bond of brotherhood will be established between China and the United States.

All Nations of One Blood.

"God made all nations of one blood," he exclaimed, "and all should be brothers. We should treat face to face like brothers. In American law he would be certain to thoroughly master before abandoning his studies."

"America has no better friend than China. We are the Americans' friends inside, and that is better than a false show of affection."

"Whatever agreement our governments make will be just. I am sure of that, but personally I would like to see

Revision of Laws.

Improvement in the laws of his native land is another dream which Wong cherishes. He carefully explains that he does not believe the laws of his country to be bad—far from that. But he realizes that no country's laws can be perfect and that there is always room for improvement over anything.

In recent years China has been selecting the best English and American laws and adopting them for its own use. Wong hopes to be able to recommend further adaptations.

With this purpose in view Wong has entered the University of Oregon law department. At all hours of the day and night he may be found pouring over volumes bound in sheepskin, strug-

gling with the problems presented in the course of criminal law. He is a good scholar, as the records of the school will

ELLEN TERRY TO PRODUCE A NEW PLAY

By Hayden Church. LONDON, Jan. 15.—If it be true that "keeping everlastingly at it brings success," then the day surely is coming when fame as a dramatist will be possessed by Miss Gladys Unger, who was born in San Francisco, but has spent most of her not very lengthy existence on this side of the Atlantic. Up to now, however, despite many efforts, this American girl has failed to score a really big bull's-eye, such, for example as those that have been "plummed" by another young Anglo-American playwright who is identified with her native city, Hubert Henry Davies, who gave us "Cousin Kate."

If, however, Miss Unger has not yet succeeded in writing a money-making play, she cannot complain of any difficulty in getting her stage pieces produced, and by prominent actors, too. For example, her first really serious effort, "Ethelwyn," was produced by Seymour Hicks, her "Mr. Sheridan," by Arthur Bourchier last season, and if one mistakes not a comedy actress for a tragedienne, she was tried at home by Frank Worthink. All these just failed to "hit it off," however, and up to date the nearest that the young author has come to scoring with a little two-act piece called "The Lemonade Boy," which seems to have had quite a friendly reception when produced in Boston, Massachusetts, about a year ago, and which won decidedly encouraging comments from the London critics when produced by the late Grant Allen's son, Gerrard Grant Allen, at the London "Criterion."

The same manager recently has been touring a melodrama by Miss Unger called "The Knave of Hearts" in the English provinces, but the piece does not seem to have made a particularly good record, and its production in the metropolis, as was intended. Far from being discouraged, however, the young authoress has spent the last few months in writing a new play, and this has just been accepted and will be produced in Dublin next month by no less a person than Ellen Terry, who will be supported in it by her American leading man (and husband), James Carew.

Two Players.

These two players, who scored so emphatically on both sides of the water in "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," are to reappear in the Shaw piece at the king's theatre, Hammersmith, on February 10, and then will start on tour. Miss Unger's new play, a "romantic drama," which as yet is not named finally, is to see the light in the Irish capital on February 27.

The part of its heroine, the famous Elizabeth of York, will, of course, be played by Miss Terry, and incidentally it is the longest she ever has undertaken. Miss Unger's story, however, though concerned with the adventures of historical personages, has only the slightest foundation in fact. The action takes place during the turbulent period of the wars of the roses, or at the time when the heroine of the play was just a person called Ellen Terry, who will be supported in it by her American leading man (and husband), James Carew.

Science and Religion. LONDON Correspondence N. Y. Tribune. The death of Lord Kelvin has brought into prominence the fact that religion has recovered its prestige and influence among the highly-educated classes in England. Thirty years ago the most eminent scientific thinkers were agnostics, at war with all creeds as relics of superstition. But William Tyndal and Spencer, with the subtlest intellects of their time, did not conceal their pity and contempt for the childish beliefs of credulous humanity, and were based as the evangelists of scientific agnosticism and a new millennium of free thinking in a new generation of scientific progress the prayer books, the tilt over the Mosaic cosmogony, the fabled substitution of a pair of chimpanzees for Adam and Eve, and Spencer's despairing recoil "from the unknowable" have passed out of mind, and the most eminent thinkers have become fervent investigators of the origin of life. Lord Kelvin's prominence in British science has been unbalanced, and he was a strenuous opponent of agnosticism, which seemed to him as indefensible as modern attacks upon the atomic theory. When the current generalization of an agnostic position that modern science neither affirms nor denies creative power in the origin of life was repeated during his closing years, he resented it, and he has left behind him a great scientific mind. It was an uncompromising declaration that science affirms "creativity" only in the universe, and is compelled to accept it as an article of belief.

SUPERSTITIONS OF SAILORS HAVE NOT YET DEPARTED

Some Weird Cases of Prophecy That Tars on Ocean Going Craft Indulge In

By O. E. Goodwin.

IT seems difficult to believe that the average hard-headed sailing-ship officer and seaman can often be as full of odd and weird superstition as Huckleberry Finn. But this is certainly the case.

Not long ago it was my privilege on a long voyage to be gradually initiated into some of these—most of them so palpably ridiculous in the telling as to make it difficult indeed to be as sympathetic as necessary.

First let me give a solemn warning. I may some day be your fortune expecter to go a long voyage on a sailing ship or steamer. As your boat gradually makes her way south of the line, the desire to shoot some of the many varieties of birds, which from time to time follow the progress of the ship, must be put down with a firm hand. If I don't you may know from actual experience just how Jonah felt. After trossing (and fruitless) practice on porpoise, I once saw a bird at an enormous black cape—a bird but little smaller than an albatross; my aim alas, was only fair. Then began a period of black looks by day and dark sullen murmurs by night, whenever and wherever I approached. Only too soon I learnt that to hope to disturb the quickest and surest way to wreck a ship. There was one way to avoid this, viz., to throw overboard the hoodoo wherever certain music could be heard. I was fortunate to be alive, for that identical ship within a month lost her mast, and in a fortnight only a few days later she was wrecked. Strange to say, though in perfect health at the time this prediction was made, the lady died a month before the end of the voyage.

Another weird case of prophecy is worthy of recall. Carelessly leaning over the side of the ship, the captain's wife dropped her wedding ring, and watched it for seemingly hundreds of feet, slowly fade out of sight. Not more than a week later, a sailor solemnly declaring over the head of the ship, "that he has seen the ring floating by the ship, and I tell you, sir," he added to the captain, "Mrs. Jones will be dead in a week, and you will be a stranger to me." I was fortunate to be alive, for that identical ship within a month lost her mast, and in a fortnight only a few days later she was wrecked. Strange to say, though in perfect health at the time this prediction was made, the lady died a month before the end of the voyage.

Almost everyone is aware that any unclad at sea is practically invariably carried the same day as the death. Particularly is this the case on a sailing ship, where the sailors would go rampant and almost mutiny if the body were kept on board overnight.

An old hard mahogany-looking Scotch mate, who had faced death without a shiver in many a hundred ways, unbent himself one glorious night in the ropes. "Well mister," (the invariable way of addressing a ship's officer) he began, "it was mate in the bar, Dunlop from Newcastle to Seattle in a boat. You must know that in the Sun-Down, the boys'—right? Never one did it move its wings, but one of just hung over us looking like the angel of death. I tell you he was far bigger than the biggest albatross I've ever seen, and every now and again he'd give a great loud caw—as the young ones do when they're in a moment. All of a sudden, he started to die. I kept my eyes on the evil looking thing, when suddenly he just melted



of sight. In half a minute the skipper was on deck to say the boy was dead. Now mister I know that was the devil waiting for that boy's soul—I hope to God he won't wait for me like that."

All the reasoning in the world would not convince my Scotch friend that he could be mistaken, although moment later I heard him berate the steersman for an error of judgment to the full extent of that marvelous vocabulary a seaman possesses.

Later that same night whilst the sail-

ors were about to go aloft to clew up sails, there suddenly appeared on several of the yards and on the tips of the masts those peculiar fireballs known in sailors as "corse candles." With startling unanimity half the crew dropped and crouched on the deck till a normal state of things returned. Exactly their reasons of fright were difficult to make out, possibly they did not know themselves, but they were mightily scared of something which to me was a rather fine pyrotechnic display. Even the sight of a mirage terrified

them for what it might portend, whilst the appearance of a "sun dog" (apparently two entirely different suns in the sky) was a most direful calamity.

Ridiculous you say? Yes, but in the dark, silent wastes of ocean, where a man only works and sleeps, where he only sees a passing ship once a month, it is to be wondered at that the sailor gets these weird, fantastic, phantasies to replace his one-time common sense? Men of all races, religions and tongues, they alike all worship this unknown god of superstition.