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LI HUNG CHANG AND OUR COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH CHINA.

To any thoughtful observer of Li Hung Chang, the distinguished statesman, who is at present the guest of the United States government, it is evident that whatever diplomatic purpose may lie behind his visit, it is largely prompted by the desire to examine our commercial and industrial conditions, and compare them with those of England, Germany, and France.

It must be said in passing that the great Chinese statesman is one of the most striking and picturesque personalities to be found in the wide world to-day, and easily takes rank with these two aged statesmen in Europe, Bismarck and Gladstone.

Li Hung Chang, moreover, comes among us as the author and chief—we had almost said solitary—representative in high places of the party of reform and progress. For nigh upon twoscore years he has striven, amid discouragements which would have brought dismay to a less courageous heart, to introduce the best features of western civilization into China.

The war with Japan was the best thing that could have happened for the party of progress in China. The logic of hard facts has brought home to the government, if not to the people, the urgent necessity for following the example of Japan, and adopting the best features of western civilization.

The question naturally arises—and it is being asked by every manufacturing country through which the Viceroy has passed—who is to lay out these railroads, erect these bridges across the great rivers of China, and provide the millions of tons of steel rail, and the vast equipment of locomotives and cars which will be required?

But most weighty reason of all for the adoption of the American in preference to the European style of railroad building is found in the fact that our methods of railroad building are well adapted to the rapid construction of a large system.

The question is just now a most important one to this nation. A period of stagnation has followed upon the remarkable activity of the past decade. The capacity of our industrial establishments is larger, in many cases much larger, than the country's demands, and it is necessary for us to look abroad for new markets.

We think that this country, and for that matter the European nations also, have failed to realize how mighty a factor in the industrial and commercial world China will become, so soon as Li Hung Chang, or, if not he, the party of progress which he has formed, shall have brought its 400,000,000 of people into close touch with the outside world.

The Big Boats on the Lakes.

Another steel steamship 400 feet long has passed a successful trial off the Chicago lake front, adding, says the Chicago Record, to the very considerable number of these modern vessels, which have marked such progress in the conduct of lake traffic.

To the average landsman the comparative size of these vessels when ranged by the side of a big Atlantic liner is not comprehended. For example, the Mari-copa, which cruised the Chicago lake front recently, is 426 feet long, 48 feet beam, and 28 feet moulded depth; the American liner St. Louis, one of the large Atlantic liners, is 554 feet long, 62 feet beam, with an extreme depth of 42 feet.

On the Casting of Steel.

At the Obouchoff Steel Works, St. Petersburg, great inconvenience was felt for a long time in casting large round ingots of five tons and upward for forging guns. The stream of steel falling from a considerable height into the mould from the 30 ton ladles of the Siemens-Martin furnaces gives rise to a considerable quantity of splashes, which in return produce cracks on the surface of the ingots.

A Cabot Celebration.

A St. John's, Newfoundland, dispatch says that the idea of a Cabot celebration in the colony next year is taking definite shape. The British man-of-war Buzzard goes north to make a survey of Bonavista Harbor, with a view of reporting on the best site for a pier and a monument to Cabot.