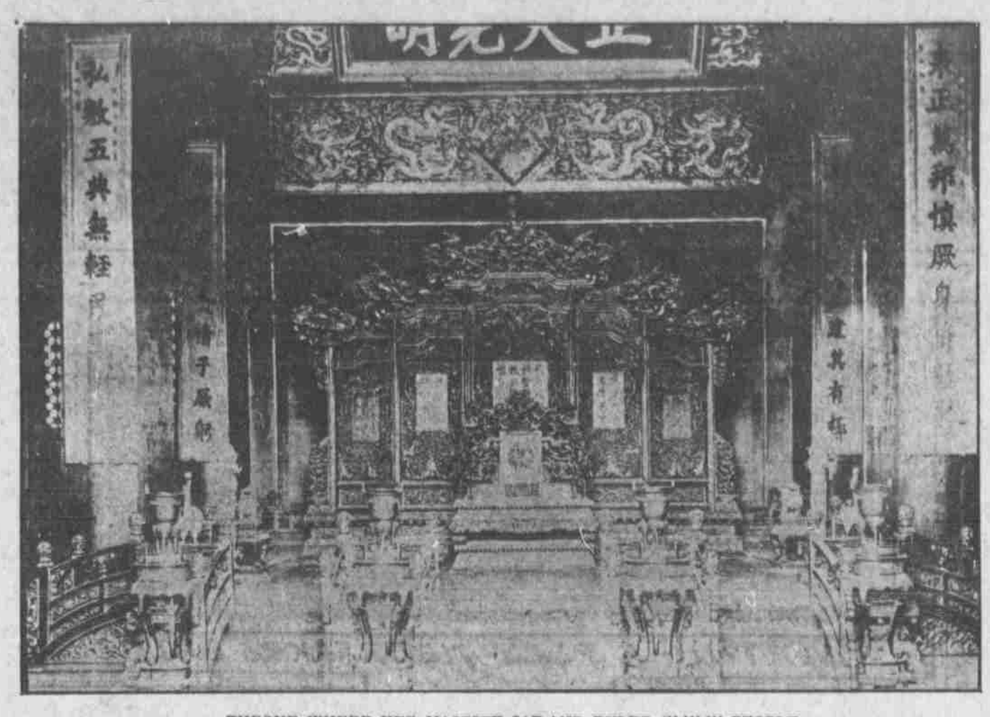
Where the Great Dowager of China Lived and Died and Will Sleep

TWO MANCHU PRINCESSES OF THE DOWAGER'S COURT—THE CHILD IS ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS PU YI, THE BABY EMPEROR.



THRONE WHERE HER MAJESTY SAT AND RULED 400,000,000 PEOPLE

HER MAJESTY IN A GARDEN WITH HER MAIDENS AND THE CHIEF EUNUCH.

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PEKING, China.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—The body of the great empress dowager is still in Peking. It lies in one of the palaces of the Forbidden City, in a coffin of cypress wood almost a foot thick, bound with rawhide and covered with lacquer. It will rest there for several weeks yet, and will then be carried to its final home in the eastern tombs. The preparations for the funeral are now making. Its cost will run into the millions; and the road to the imperial cemetery will, figuratively speaking, be paved with gold.

Richest Woman in Asia.

The great dowager had luxurious tastes, and was fond of pomp in all of her doings. She spent money like water, and used fabulous sums to keep up her palaces. During the last year of her life she had planned a new home at the summer palace, and had ordered the architects to draw the designs. The buildings were to cost 4,000,000 taels, or about $3,000,000, and the work was to have been begun in 1909. The plans were made, but, owing to the dowager's death, they will not be carried out. I am told that her majesty gave equally elaborate directions as to her mausoleum, and that it is being constructed on a magnificent scale.

The great empress dowager is said to have been the richest woman in Asia. There is no queen living who has had such sums at her command. At the time of her sixtieth birthday a hint was sent out to the various officials that each should give the old lady a present, and money rolled in from all parts of China. Altogether something like $70,000,000 was sent to Peking.

This was about the time of the Chinese-Japanese war, and some of the money was spent to pay the expenses of that calamitous struggle. The then bad condition of the Chinese navy is said to have been partially due to the avarice of the old empress. As the story goes, the government had set aside $15,000,000 for new warships. The old dowager said it was a pity to waste so much money that way, and she took the naval appropriation and built a new palace. The officials remonstrated. They said the money had been voted for the navy and must be accounted for.

"That is easy enough," replied the great dowager, and she straightway had carved on the gates of her new buildings an inscription which read: "These are the palaces of the navy."

Dowager's Head Squeezer.

Since the empress dowager died I have heard many stories about her majesty's champion squeezer, the famous eunuch, Li Lien Ying. He was for a long time her body servant, and later, her minister of finance and collector of bribes. He invested her moneys for her in pawnshops, and in loans at high rates, and at the same time took such a goodly rake-off for himself that he is now said to be worth tens of millions of dollars.

No one outside of China can appreciate the bribery connected with public office. Every official who came to the palace had to pay something to this cobbler's son and even Li Hung Chang was once held up outside the gates for three days because he would not submit to his extravagant demands. I am told that it cost to pay the palace expenses during the life of the dowager something like $30,000,000 a year, and a great deal of this came from such squeezes.

When the treasury grew low the dowager sent out collectors, who traveled from official to official over the empire and demanded gifts. One of these collectors was named Kang-Yi. He was sent on a squeezing tour south, having been ordered to bring back at least 200,000 ounces of silver. When Kang-Yi visited Shanghai he demanded that the Chinese Merchant Steamship company, then under the control of Sheng Kung-Pao, should pay the government $200,000 per year. Sheng complained that the business would not stand it, and compromised at half the sum.

The viceroys of Nanking and Wuchang were heavily bled by Kang-Yi, as were also those of Tientsin and Canton. The squeezing in the latter place was probably aided by a brother of Li Hung Chang, who was an official there. He was a friend of the dowager, and he squeezed so much that the people nicknamed him "The Bottomless Bag."

Was She a Demon?

One hears all sorts of stories about the empress dowager. All acknowledge her ability and say she will rank among the great queens of all time. There is no question as to her strength of character. Some exalt her to the skies as an angel of mercy and light, while others say she was a demon incarnate, and they compare her private life to that of the Russian empress, Catherine the Great. As to her demoniac character, her detractors say she poisoned her husband, the Emperor Hsien Feng, and thereby became ruler in connection with another empress whom he married before her. They suspect that the death of that empress was caused by the dowager's machinations and plots, who then reigned supreme during the minority of her son, the Emperor Tung Chieh, who was a baby when chosen.

When Tung Chieh had reached the age of 15, at which time he might aspire to rule independently, he died of smallpox, and there are some malicious enough to say that his mother, the empress dowager, assisted him on the fairy ride to a far country. They allege that he had begun to resist her domination, and that the smallpox was really an overdose of opium pills. They say also that after his death the suicide of his wife, the empress, who threw herself into a well, was assisted by this same great woman, and that other crimes of a similar nature may be laid to her charge.

Take, for instance, a story which is whispered among the officials here at Peking. It relates to Kwang-Su, the late emperor, and to a favorite concubine of his whom the great dowager thought was inciting him to rebel against her. She ordered the emperor to come before her and then had his sweetheart brought in. When the two were kneeling she charged them with treason, and said to the emperor:

"I shall now show you how I treat traitors."

She thereupon gave a signal and her executioners seized the concubine and with a silken cord strangled her to death before the eyes of her imperial lover.

The power of the great dowager was supreme. A word from her could slice off a head, and her followers knew it. They trembled in her presence and dared not resist her. When her majesty lay on her deathbed some of the grand councilors proposed to raise to the throne another prince than the one she had selected and to make Prince Ching regent. Thereupon the great dowager gathered her strength and rose up, saying:

"You officials think you can humbug me because I am old. Verily, I think the time for your death has arrived."

Possibly an Angel.

Such is one view of this great ruler's character. On the other hand, Miss Carl, who wrote a book giving her experiences in painting the empress dowager's portrait, says that she was kind and sweet and good. Mrs. Conger, the wife of our former minister, speaks of her as a scholar and an artist, and there are many who will tell you that the charges of her being an assassin are false and malicious. I know the story about her being a slave girl is untrue. She came from one of the best of the Manchu families. Her father was Duke Chao, a military man, who was beheaded after she had married Emperor Hsien-Feng.

There is no doubt but that she was true to her friends, and that Pu Yi is now on the throne is a living evidence of that trait of her character. The inside story of how this baby became emperor is yet to be told. One of the highest officials gave me the bones of the matter as we chatted together last night. Said he:

"It had its birth in the coup de'etat of 1898. Kwang Su, the young emperor, had entered upon his course as an imperial reformer, and had planned the put the great empress dowager out of the way. In company with his advisers, Kang Yu Weh and others, he had planned to have her majesty and her most influential officials executed. For this purpose he commanded Yuan Shih Kai, who then had charge of the only modern army in the empire, consisting of about 5,000 well drilled troops, to come to Peking. As Yuan kneeled before him in the palace, the emperor ordered him to march his army to Tientsin and slaughter the General Yung Lu, the great dowager's friend. After that Yuan was to march on to Peking, surround the imperial palace and capture the empress dowager herself. General Yung Lu was the viceroy of Tientsin, and as such was commander-in-chief of the army of which Yuan Shih Kai was the general. Yuan bowed low as the emperor gave him these orders, and then begged that the command might be put in writing. This the emperor refused, saying that a verbal order from him was good enough, whereupon the Chinese general acceded and left.

"As Yuan Shih Kai started back to his army, which was near Tientsin, he began to reflect on the respective ability and forces of the emperor and empress dowager, and decided in favor of the latter. He went to General Yung Lu and revealed the plot. Yung Lu at once took a special train and came to Peking. He drove out at night to the summer palace, where the great dowager was living, and before daybreak she had raised an army of her eunuchs and servants and sent them to Peking and made the emperor captive. Her majesty then declared that he was not fit to rule, and made him send out an edict begging her to again take the throne. He was then confined in a building in the middle of a lake inside the Forbidden city, and he had no more power to the day of his death."

How Pu Yi Became Emperor.

In the meantime, the old empress dowager did not forget her good friends Yuan Shih Kai and Yung Lu. Yuan Shih Kai at once became the most influential man in the empire, and he remained such until the great dowager died. He has since been disgraced, but he has many friends, and may again come to the front.

As to General Yung Lu, the dowager rewarded him by making his daughter empress, and his grandson the ruler of China.

There is a pretty story in connection with this. According to it the empress dowager said to Yung Lu:

"I have just had a vision in which I have seen your descendants on the imperial throne, and I think the vision is bound to come true. Here is Prince Chun, the brother of the emperor, and the most likely scion of the imperial line. Now you have a daughter of the right age for marriage. We will join her with Prince Chun, and the first son shall be Kwang Su's successor. Yung Lu gladly acceded. The two were married, and the baby, Emperor Pu Yi, was the fruit of their union. Just before the old dowager died she grace." wrote the edict carrying out her part of the contract with Yung Lu, and thereby his baby grandson has ascended the throne."

How the Dowager Died.

The last hours of the great empress were full of terrible pain. According to etiquette, the doctors dared not touch her and could not experiment to find out her disease. I am told they watched her on their knees and saw her struggle and fight as death came on. The edicts sent out by her gave but little idea of her illness. Nevertheless, they are pathetic. Here is one that was published the middle of last November, about two weeks before her death:

"From the beginning of autumn our health has been poor. The officials and governors of every province have been ordered to send us physicians, but their prescriptions have not availed. Now the negative and positive elements in us are failing. We have ailments external and internal. Our breast is stopped up, our stomach rebellious, our back and legs painful, our appetite failing. Upon moving our breath fails, and there is coughing and panting. Besides, we have chills and fever. Sleep is far from our eyes, and the strength of our body is failing. The viceroys, governors and generals are urged to send us physicians, and any who succeed in aiding us will receive special

LATEST PHOTOGRAPH OF THE GREAT DOWAGER.

The edict was sent out and a new corps of doctors brought in. They likewise failed, and other edicts which were published about three days later stated that they were degraded and would work for some time in the future without pay as a punishment.

During her last days her majesty lived almost entirely upon woman's milk. She had a large corps of wet nurses and went back to the customs of her babyhood for nourishment. This is a common prescription for members of the imperial family.

Chats About the Great Dowager.

During my stay in Peking I have had chats with many who knew the great dowager. I remember a conversation with one of her ladies-in-waiting, a Chinese girl who speaks excellent English. She represents the empress as having been a bluffer and as knowing how to play off one party or man against another. She was dictatorial and made her ladies dress as an understudy to herself. She would say along toward evening:

"I intend to wear a red costume on the morrow, and on the day following all the girls must appear in red."

The next day the order would be for yellow, or perhaps green, and the court lady who came in wearing the wrong color was punished.

When in her prime her majesty was rather fine looking. During her last days her face was drawn awry from a stroke of paralysis. This can be seen in some of the photographs which I have been able to secure in Peking. Her majesty objected to being photographed and she would not permit photographers to come into the palace. However, one of the court ladies who had been abroad as tehe daughter of the Chinese minister to Paris brought in a camera and made some pictures. In some way the plates fell into the hands of outside photographers, and soon the likenesses of her majesty were sold over Peking. When this was known the girl who owned the camera was dismissed and her family disgraced.

Behind Scenes with Dowager.

This woman tells me that the dowager was fond of pretty things and that she had great artistic taste. She painted pictures herself and wrote Chinese scrolls most beautifully. She supported a school for artists and had something like eighteen scholars in it who worked for her.

As to her penmanship, at an audience which she gave to Mrs. Conger, Mrs. Miles and other ladies when General Miles made his trip around the world she presented each of the guests with a scroll of her own making, saying:

'Some people charge that I do not write these scrolls myself, but I will show you that I do." Thereupon she called for large pieces of red paper, and with a brush, which she grasped tightly in her whole hand, she made some exquisite Chinese characters. I have seen portfolios containing scores of her paintings of flowers. Some of these are owned by Dr. George Morrison, the correspondent of the London Times in Peking.

He' majesty's quarters in the palace contained many works of Chinese art, and among them were some which were exceedingly valuable. At one of her luncheons to the ladies of the diplomatic corps a jade bowl was shown. This was two feet high and nearly three feet in diameter; it was decorated with grapevines cut in the jade. At the same luncheon was exhibited another piece of jade of the shape of a mountain with trees, houses, men, animals and bridges carved upon it. It was five feet high, and more than that thick. When it is remembered that a piece of jade as big as one's thumbnail is worth several dollars, the cost of such work can be appreciated.

The great dowager was fond of children. At one of her luncheon parties she asked the wife of our Chinese secretary, who acted as the interpreter, to bring her little girls with her. Only one came and the empress dowager carried her off to her own bedroom and allowed here to play with carvings of jade and other precious stones. Upon leaving the little girl was given a jade doll baby, which she carried home.

Her imperial majesty was fond of fine dressing. She had as many gowns as Queen Elizabeth of England, and all were of the most beautiful silks, satins and velvets. She wore much jewelry and also wigs and other hair decorations of high Manchu ladies. Her shoes were a Manchu style, each having a big heel in the center of the foot, which raised the wearer five or six inches.

Great Dowager and Modern Reform.

During her latter days the empress dowager was the soul of the reform movement. She knew but little of the condition of her people until the Boxer trouble occurred, when she was forced to flee to a far-off province. The Chinese had no opportunity to prepare the way for her, and she saw for the first time the real poverty of her people. During that period she evidently made up her mind to change things if she ever got back to Pekin. As soon as she returned she advised the foreign office to that effect.

Before arriving at the capital she sent word that if foreigners would like to see the return of the court it could be arranged and thereupon windows were rented along the line of march. The quarters of our legation were in a balcony over a silk shop, and those who saw her majesty tell she she was carried by in a yellow Sedan chair, and that she waved her hand to our minister as she passed.

During that trip the great dowager was very timid. She was upset by the war and the new innovations, and was as near real fear as she ever was in her whole eventful life. A part of the return trip was made on the railroad, when her majesty took her first ride on the cars. When the whistle of the locomotive blew she was frightened and ask what was the matter. She was told that the engineer was merely announcing a road crossing and that nothing was wrong. She thereupon told the conductor that in the future he must send her word every time before the whistle blew, that she might not be frightened.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Eight Good Short Stories Told of and by People of Note and Setting Out Each a Point

Dakota Distances.

I WAS talking with a Dakotan the other day. "Speaking of farms," he said, "we have some sizeable farms out in Dakota. Yes, sir. I've seen a man on one of our big farms start out in the spring and plow a straight furrow till fall. Then he turned around and harvested back."

"Wonderful!" said I.

"On our Dakota farms," he went on, "it's the usual thing to send young married couples out to milk the cows. Their children brink back the milk."

"Wonderful!" I repeated.

"Once," he said, "I saw a Dakota farmer's family prostrated with grief. The women were weeping, the dogs were barking, the children were squalling and the tears ran down the farmer's cheeks as he hitched up his twenty-mule team and drove off."

"Where was he going?" said I.

"He was going halfway across the farm to feed the pigs."

"Did he ever get back?" I asked.

"It isn't time for him yet," was the reply. —The Housekeeper.

Fire-Proof Paper Needed.

To the editor of a little Maine newspaper there came the other day an indignant elderly woman, who waved a slip of paper in the editorial face.

"Look here!" said she. "What does this mean—a bill for the Citizen to my husband that's been dead two years? Ye don't expect his widow to pay debts o' his, contracted long after he's dead?"

"You say he has not been getting the paper?" said the editor after long thought.

"No, ye donderhead!" screamed the women, "I tell ye he's been dead two years."

"Strange," mused the editor. "The Postoffice department has not notified me of his failure to receive them. Quite sure you yourself haven't been enjoying the inestimable educational values of a persual of my sheet?"

"That ain't the point," argued the widow. "You've been sending a noospaper and a bill to a man that's dead. It's your affair, not mine."

"Well," said the editor finally perceiving that he must be a loser, "in the future, madam, I will cause an extra copy to be printed on asbestos, to insure that your husband receives his Citizen regularly."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Bishop Stayed, Gambler Went.

The bishop of a southern diocese was once making a missionary journey through Arkansas and Indian Territory, and on his arrival at Natchez he said to the landlord of a hotel: "I have been traveling for a week, day and night, in a mail wagon, and I want a comfortable room."

"Sorry," said the landlord, "but I don't believe there's a vacant room in Natchez; there's a horse race, a Methodist conference and a political convention in the city, and every house is full up. The only thing I can give you is a shake-down." Then, observing the bishop's tired face, he added: "The best room in my house is rented to a noted gambler who usually remains out all night and seldom gets in before breakfast. If you will take the risk, you shall have his room; but if he should come in there'll be a row, I'll promise you that."

The bishop decided to take the risk. About 4 o'clock in the morning the gambler returned and promptly shook the bishop by the arm.

"Get out of here, or I'll put you out," he shouted.

The bishop, the gentlest of men, raised himself on one elbow, so that it brought the muscles of his arm into full relief.

"My friend," he began quietly, "before you put me out, will you have the kindness to feel my arm?"

The gambler put his hand on the bishop's arm.

"Stranger," he then said, respectfully, "you can stay."—Youth's Companion.

How Howells Sees It.

A reporter once asked William Dean Howells why it was that his novels did not sell nearly as well as those of ——, and here the reporter mentioned a half dozen well known names," said Samuel Neely of St. Louis, at the National hotel last night in telling this story:

"Mr. Howells replied: 'A certain quack stood one afternoon before the door of his rich mansion when a physician of great learning and talent passed. The two men fell into talk, and the physician, a plain spoken person, said, rather bitterly, to the quack:

"'"How comes it that you, without education, skill, or the least knowledge of medicine, are able to live in the style you do? You keep your town house, your carriage, your motor, and your country house, while I, allowed to possess some knowledge, have none of these things and, indeed, can little more than pick up a bare subsistence,"

"'The quack laughted good-naturedly.

"'"Look here," said he. "How many people do you think have passed us since you asked me that question?"

"'"Well," said the other, "about 100."

"'"And out of that 100 how many do you think possess good, common sense?"

"'"Possibly one," was the reply.

"'"Well," said the quack, "that one comes to you, and I take care of the ninety-nine."'"—Washington Herald.

Dr. Hale's Saint.

Dr. Hale and the late Bishop Huntington of New York were fast friends. The latter has been a Unitarian and his shift caused a sensation.

The Episcopalians have saints assigned to the various days in the year. When an Episcopal minister writes a letter on any day for which there is a saint he always writes the name of the saint at the close of the letter instead of the date.

Bishop Huntington learned all these things quickly, and began to practice them at once. The first time he had occasion to write to his old friend Dr. Hale after joining the church he placed "St. Michael's day" after his signature.

A reply from the doctor came, and after his name he had written in a full, round hand, "Wash day."—Christian Register.

Two of Barnum's Attractions.

It is eighteen years since P. T. Barnum, one of the best known Americans of the last century, passed away, but from time to time passing events recall his shrewd, but peculiar, career. One of these was the death last week of "Major" Nutt, one of his attractions, a person of intelligence and good character and remarkable only for his diminutive statue. Almost on the same day, relates the Boston Transcript, Joseph Lucasie, an Albino, succumbed to dropsy at the General hospital in Kansas City, Mo. Sixty-one years ago Mr. Barnum heard of an Albino named Lucasie, living in Holland, who had married an Albino wife and had two Albino children. This was unusual, as the children of Albinos are usually normal. He secured the family when Joseph was eight years old and his sister a few years younger. They all had a wealth of silken white hair, and the enterprising manager was doubtless satisfied with his venture. But the boy had ambitions beyond the distinction of being a freak and devoted himself to mastering the violin, which gave him a good livelihood upon the death of his father, and he enjoyed the acquaintance of most the professional violinists of the west.

The Chieftain's Little Joke.

Thurston, the magician, had many interesting experiences during hip professional tour of the globe several years ago. He went to all sorts of outlandish places and appeared before rulers of many strange lands and communities. On one occasion his manager had arranged that Thurston should give an exhibition before the ruler of a province called Panga-Panga in the Fiji islands. In the crowd that saw the exhibition were many of the black and yellow slaves of the chiaftain. All the spectators were amazed at the many strange manifestations of the black art that Thurston offered, but no trick appealed so strongly to the assembled retinue and to the chieftain as that in which a white duck was made to appear with a black head and a black duck, after a moment's manipulation, with the head of the white duck. The trick had to be repeated, and then the chieftain engaged in a long whispered conversation with the interpreter. "What is desired?" queried the obliging trick player. The interpreter coughed apologetically and then responded: "Respected sir, our honored sire wishes you to take two of his slaves and put a yellow head on a black man and the black head on the body of a yellow servitor. Our honored sire thinks it would be very funny." "Tell his royal highness," Thurston replied, "that I could give a yellow man a black eye, but I would not like to attempt to make his entire head black."—Philadelphia Record.

When Hill Gave Check to Son.

On one occasion it is related that James J. Hill, master of the Great Northern railroad called his son James to him and handed him a check for $150,000. "You have been a good boy and worked hard," said the old man.

"How about my brother Louis?" asked James. "He has been as good as I have and worked as hard. Have you another check for him, or shall I split this?"

Well James Jupiter Hill gave the grandest exhibition of aerial soaring and oral bombarding the world has ever witnessed. He said that James, jr., was trying to tell him how to dispose of his fortune, was trying to get his money away from him, was ungrateful, dutiful and a good deal of a slob. In the middle of the oration James, jr., shut the door behind him, incidentally breaking all the glass out of it. Hill's private secretary remained as an audience. When the old man paused for lack of breath the secretary insinuated: 'But it's pretty nice to see one brother think so much of another."

"That's so," said J. J. Hill, heartily, "James is a good boy. Make out a new check for Louis."

Why the Dominie Lost.

A newly appointed Scottish minister, on his first Sunday of office, had reason to complain of the poorness of the collection.

"Mon," replied one of the elders, "they are close, very close; but"—confidentially—"the aul' meenister, he put three or four saxpence into the plate hissel', just to gie them a start. Of course, he took the saxpences awa' with him afterward."

The new minister tried the same plan, but the next Sunday he again had to report a dismal failure. The total collection was not only small, but he was grieved to find that his own sixpences were missing.

"Ye may be a better preacher than the auld meenister," exclaimed the elder, "but if ye had half the knowledge o' the world, an' o' yer ain flock in particular, ye'd ha'e done what he did an' glued the saxpences to the plate."—London Globe.