

An Early American Hero in China

(Frederick Townsend Ward, 1831-1862)

AN ADDRESS

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE PILGRIMAGE TO GENERAL WARD'S TOMB AT SUNGKIANG, CHINA, "MEMORIAL SUNDAY," MAY 29, 1921.

BY CHARLES SUMNER LOBINGIER



AMERICAN LEGION

Frederick Ward Post No. 1

Shanghai, China.

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The Post and Party at General Ward's Tomb.

THE OCCASION

Frederick Ward Post No. 1 was organized in 1919 and a happy thought of its first Commander. Major Arthur Bassett, was a pilgrimage to the tomb of its namesake. Circumstances prevented the execution of the plan during Major Bassett's term but it was pursued by his successor, Major John Hervey Ross, and after several tentative dates it was decided that Memorial Sunday would be the one most appropriate for the pilgrimage. The weather on that day was ideal and nearly one hundred Americans. mostly from Shanghai, journeyed to Sungkiang where those who came by rail were met at the station by a local committee of the Chinese gentry and by the American residents. The entire party then proceeded to the Ward shrine which is but a short walk from the station and where an appropriate program was carried out before an audience which left little standing room in the Memorial Temple while a still larger crowd had to be content with assembling outside.

As each speaker was called he took his position in front of the altar which was surmounted with two massive candelabras holding wax tapers. Commander Ross presided and after fitting words of welcome introduced Comrade Clinton J. Bushey who is engaged in mission work at Sungkiang and who offered the invocation expressing the thought that the exercises would be appropriate to the Sabbath day. Brief addresses were then given by Consul General Cunningham and Commander H. I. Cone, U.S. N., of the U.S. Flagship Huron, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Asiatic fleet, representing Admiral Strauss who was unable to be present. Commander Ross then introduced Judge Lobingier who delivered the oration of the day after which the benediction was pronounced by the Rev. A. C. Bowen, of the M. E. Church (South) mission at Sungkiang.

The audience then passed through the temple to the enclosure containing General Ward's tomb upon which a wreath was laid, in behalf of the post, by Mrs. Eisler and Miss Emens acting for Comrades Eisler and Wright. Three volleys were then fired over the tomb by the Marine Firing Squad of the "Huron" after which the bugler of the same ship sounded "taps" followed by the "mess call."

The spacious public library building at Sungkiang is but a short distance from the tomb and the Chinese authorities graciously installed on the lower floor tables to accommodate all of the visitors most of whom had brought basket lunches. After a bountiful repast served under the direction of Mrs. Bowen and Miss White of the local M. E. Church mission, representatives of the Chinese gentry briefly expressed their appreciation of the visit and their desire that it be repeated. Their felicitations were reciprocated by Commander Ross after which the visitors dispersed in charge of guides who showed them the sights of Sungkiang until train time when they started on the return journey with the universal feeling that they had experienced a memorable day.



Mr. Commander, Comrades of the American Legion and Friends :

Sixty years ago last month began the titanic struggle which we call our civil war. For nearly four years the fate of our nation hung in the balance while the question whether we should remain one people or become two peoples was left to the arbitrament of arms. Happily, as all now acknowledge, the decision was in favor of unity and our country emerged from the ordeal of battle, stronger and more united than ever. And Memorial Day, which was born in the wake of that frightful cataclysm, which we are to observe to-morrow and to which this is a fitting prelude, thus became an occasion for honoring the memory of those who made possible that auspicious outcome.

But not all of our national heroes during those fateful four years were fighting in the homeland. Some were carrying the flag to distant seas and at least one ¹ was maintaining the best traditions of his country by valiant service on foreign soil. Had he been at home he would doubtless have joined those who fought to preserve the union just as his forbears had fought in almost every war in which our nation had engaged.

But, tho our China hero had left his native land before there was any serious thought of civil war, and tho he himself was engaged in a great struggle here, he did not forget the needs of his suffering country. In probably the last letter he wrote he offered Minister Burlingame to contribute ten thousand taels to the Union cause. And Secretary Seward, replying in the midst of our civil war to the Imperial Edict which eulogized our hero, said:

The "most complete and authoritative account" of Ward's life is by Rantoul, (Robert S.), entitled Frederick Townsend Ward, First Commander of the Ever Victorious Army in the Tai Ping Rebellion (Salem, 1908) 64 pp., being Essex Institute Historical Collections Vol. XLIV. Other works consulted are cited in the following pages.

"He fell while illustrating the fame of his country in an untried, distant, and perilous field. His too early death will be deeply mourned by the American people."

Surely it cannot be out of place to pay a tardy tribute to such a character!

Sixty years ago China was likewise in the throes of a civil war. A vast section of the Chinese people, never fully reconciled to Manchu rule, had then been fighting for nearly a decade to overthrow it. There was some reason for that movement. The Tai-pings were not all bad. Their early camps were noted for sobriety and discipline ² and their leaders knew something of at least the externals of Christianity. But all this must not blind us to the real character and results of the Tai-ping crusade which have thus been described in a monumental work on China.:

"The once peaceful and populous parts of the nine great provinces through which his hordes passed have hardly yet begun to be restored to their previous condition. Ruined cities, desolated towns and heaps of rubbish still mark their course from Kwangsi to Tientsin, a distance of two thousand miles, the efforts at restoration only making the contrast more apparent. Their presence was an unmitigated scourge, attended by nothing but disaster from beginning to end, without the least effort on their part to rebuild what had been destroyed, to protect what was left, or to repay what had been stolen. Wild beasts roamed at large over the land after their departure, and made their dens in the deserted towns; the pheasant's whirr resounded where the hum of busy populations had ceased, and weeds or jungle covered the ground once tilled with patient industry. Besides millions upon millions of taels irrecoverably lost and destroyed, and the misery, sickness, and starvation which were endured by the survivors, it has been estimated by foreigners living at Shanghai that, during the whole period from 1851 to 1865, fully twenty millions of human beings, were destroyed in connection with the Tai-ping Rebellion. " $^{\rm s}$

It was when this gigantic upheaval had reached its height that the Chinese government turned, as it often has before and since, to foreign aid. Li Hung Chang, the foremost Chinese of that day and pronounced by General Grant one of the three greatest men whom he had met in his travels around the world, was keen enough to recognize the genius and secure the services of a youthful American whose courage and dash were to vitalize a counter

2. Williams, The Middle Kingdom (Rev. ed. 1907) II, 594.

3. Id. 623, 624.

movement, which was to stem the tide of destruction and eventually crush the rebellion.

II

Frederick Townsend Ward was a native of old Salem, that venerable New England town which, tho almost the farthest of any part of America from China, had for several generations the closest connection with it. Ward's ancestors were seafarers and fighters, one having served in the French and Indian war, another in the Revolution and a third as a naval officer in the war of 1812. Frederick's father was a shipmaster and the son took naturally to the sea. As a boy he sailed the waters adjacent to his native town and at an age when most boys are still at their toys or books, he entered upon the larger schooling of the sea. A second mate at fifteen! It seems almost incredible; but it was at that age that he made his first voyage to China, watching the quarter deck of the clipper Hamilton, making a record for efficiency, and arriving soon after the treaty of Wang Hia had opened China to Americans. In 1849, at the age of eighteen, Ward shipped as first mate on the Russell Glover for California, then receiving its first rush of gold seekers, and two years later he was again first mate of a ship sailing from San Francisco to Shanghai. And between these long voyages ne was gaining military experience-serving first in South America where he came in contact with Garibaldi, later with Walker in Nicaragua and finally it is said, 4 with the French army in the Crimea. In 1859 he completed his last voyage to China.

On a previous visit here Ward had served for a time on a river boat watching for opium smugglers. He now became an officer on a Yangtse steamer and distinguished himself by repelling a formidable attack of pirates after his captain had lost hope. Next we find him as first officer of the Chinese gunboat *Confucius* where his brilliant exploits brought him eventually to the notice of Li Hung Chang.

The first result of this contact was a commission from the Chinese government to recruit a force for an expedition against Sung Kiang then strongly held by the Tai-pings. And such was Ward's daring that with no more than a hundred foreigners, re-

4. Paine, Ships & Sailors of Old Salem (1912) 455,472.

cruited in and around Shanghai, and without artillery. he led an attack on the huge rebel force intrenched so strongly behind the walls of Sung Kiang. Naturally the assault failed but Ward was undaunted. He paid off the remnant of his first company and started at once to raise another. This time he anticipated history for his new force consisted largely of Filipinos. Just as, about a generation later, American officers like Allen and Harbord organized the Philippines Constabulary from the same material and made it an effective force; and just as other officers have trained the Philippine Scouts until they have become a powerful auxiliary of the United States forces in the Far East; so this youthful American of sixty years ago gathered around him the "Manilamen" of Shanghai and drilled them for service. Thruout his later career his bodyguard was composed of Filipinos and one of them, Macanava, became his devoted aide-de-camp and was the first to enter Tsing-Pu at its final capture. 5

With these Filipinos and a few other foreigners, all aggregating less than one hundred, and with only two foreign officers, Ward led a second and successful assault upon Sung Kiang. Attacking by night and surprising the garrison he was able to open one of the gates, the great rebel force was obliged to surrender to this handful of besiegers and Sung Kiang became, and remained thruout the war, as Ward had planned, the Chinese base of operations against the Taipings.

Ward now began to enlarge his force, adding not only more foreigners but many Chinese. His next important objective was Tsing-pu, thirty miles from Sung Kiang and his dauntless persistence was demonstrated by no less than five attacks on that rebel stronghold. The last on February 21, 1862, was successful not only in capturing, but in holding the city.

The "Ever Victorious Army," as it now came to be known, had grown to 10,000, mostly, of course, natives of the country. In September, 1862 it marched to Ning-po which the Tai-pings were threatening. On the morning of the twentieth Ward led a small force against Tsz Ki and while reconnoitering the field with one of his officers,

5. Id. 463, 464.

he was mortally wounded. His troops captured the town but their leader passed away that night and that closing scene might well be described by paraphrasing slightly the lines dedicated by our American poet Halleck to the modern Greek hero Bozzaris:

> " They fought like brave men long and well; They piled that ground with Tai-pings slain; They conquered; but their leader fell Bleeding at every vein. His few surviving comrades saw His smile when rang their glad hurrah, And the red field was won; Then saw in death his eyelids close Calmly as to a night's repose Like flowers at set of sun."

III

What were the achievements of this young life terminated so suddenly and prematurely and in a land so remote from that of its beginning? First of all it was remarkably successful from the merely individual standpoint. Here was a youth without education in the conventional sense; without the support of his own government; without family connections or influence ; without friends or acquaintances evena stranger in a strange land. And yet by sheer merit he rose within a few months to a position of the highest responsibility, winning the implicit confidence of an alien government and the almost fanatical devotion of a motley force of alien troops whose Babel of tongues for the most part he could not even understand. Such a meteoric career has few parallels in history.

(2) Ward conceived and put into execution the strategic plans by which the Tai-ping rebellion was eventually suppressed. Reporting to Secretary of State Seward, in the month following Ward's death, Minister Burlingame said:

"He fought countless battles, at the head of a Chinese force called into existence and trained by himself, and always with success.

Indeed, he taught the Chinese their strength, and laid the foundations of the only force with which their government can hope to defeat the rebellion."

Captain Rhoderick Dhu of the British flagship Encounter wrote in his report to Admiral Sir James Hope:

"During a short acquaintance with General Ward I have learned to appreciate him much, and I fear his death will cast a gloom over the Imperial cause in China, of which he was the stay and prop."

Li Hung Chang's memorial of 1862 recited

"that in the early part of spring of the present year, Sung Kiang and Shanghai were threatened by the rebels, and that the turning away of the danger and the maintenance of tranquility in those places was chiefly due to the exertions of Ward."

And years later at the dedication of this memorial temple the taotai of Shanghai declared

"that the sole credit of Shanghai not having been taken by the rebels was due to General Ward."

But the conclusive tribute to Ward's genius arises from the eloquent facts that for a dozen years before he took command the imperial forces had been meeting continuous reverses, that he himself achieved all objectives and that within two years after his death, by following the lines laid by him and employing the forces he had trained, the mighty Tai-ping rebellion had been suppressed.

(3) But Ward did more than raise and discipline a force for immmediate objectives. He in fact laid the foundations for a modern Chinese army. By him for the first time Chinese soldiers were equipped with foreign uniforms and drilled by modern methods. Under him Sung Kiang became not only a base of operations but a great military school and he was able to demonstrate that Chinese troops, under foreign officers, can be made formidable. One of the Tai-ping leaders complained that Li Hung Chang was using devil soldiers against him and that a thousand of them were keeping in check ten thousand of his. How different would have been the situation in China today if Ward's methods could have been continued ever since and a military force trained and led like the "Ever Victorious Army" were available now to the central government.

(4) Ward was also the first to introduce among Chinese troops the customs of modern civilized warfare. When, during the operations around Shanghai, a large force of prisoners was captured by the Imperialists who proceeded to decapitate the former, Ward interfered and stopped the slaughter.

IV

Nevertheless, like all positive and achieving characters, Ward encountered the opposition and jealousy which breed calumny. A biographer ⁶ of General Gordon, links Ward with Burgevine and calls them "two American adventurers * * of an unscrupulous and unattractive type." As to Ward at least the slur is as unfounded as it is uncalled for and it is a pleasure to be able to quote from other writers of the biographer's nationality such expressions as these:

> "Ward was a brave, energetic leader and managed both the force and the mandarins very ably; he was much regretted by every one." 7

And again:

"Ward was undoubtedly a brave man and he had done excellent service for the Chinese government. The news of his death was received with universal regret." ⁸

It is not necessary to disparage Ward in order to give Gordon his due. No reader of modern history can fail to admire the knightly character who, twenty years after the Tai-pings had been vanquished, gave up his life so courageously and yet so needlessly in faraway Khartoum. But in China, Gordon completed the work which Ward had so well begun. Ward was the Moses who led the Chinese out of the wilderness. Gordon was the Joshua who was permitted to enter the promised land of peace thru victory. Let us detract from neither. There is glory sufficient for both.

"Adventurer", Ward may have been in the sense that Columbus was or Sir Francis Drake or Captain Scott. But when did the world forget its debt to the adventurous?

And all the contemporary evidence refutes the charge that Ward was "unscrupulous." "His success in training his men" declares S. Wells Williams ⁹ "was endorsed by honorable dealings with the mandarins who reported well of him at Peking." Li Hung Chang's memorial to the Emperor on the death of Ward recited:

"Such loyalty and valor, issuing from his natural disposition, is extraordinary when compared with these virtues of the best officers of China; and among foreign officers it is not easy to find one worthy of equal honor." 10

8. Douglas, (R. K.) Life of Li Hung Chang (London, 1895), 30.

9. The Middle Kingdom (Rev. ed.) II, 609.

10. Paine, Ships and Sailors of Old Salem, (1912), 469.

^{6.} D. C. Boulger, Life of General Gordon (London, 1893), 83.

^{7.} Hake (A. Egmont), The Tai-Ping Rebellion, (London, 1891), 221.

And the Imperial edict, issued in pursuance of this memorial, characterized Ward as "a man of heroic disposition, a soldier without dishonor." ¹¹

An earlier biographer of Gordon, writing only six years after Ward's death, says:

"Ward was a brave, energetic leader, and managed very well both with his force and with the Mandarins. When the news of his death reached Sungkiang, he was deeply lamented both by his officers and men, and by the people of the city. When his remains entered that place for interment, all the shopkeepers at once shut their shops for the day; several officers of the British army and navy attanded his funeral; the usual volleys for a general were fired over his grave, and he was buried in the Confucian University, which the Chinese considered a great honour, and which place had been closed for many years until that day in September, 1862." ¹²

How idle it is to term "unattractive" one who succeeded as did Ward in winning the attachment of those about him. "More devoted followers no captain ever had," says Paine. ¹³ "It was their pride to be known as 'Ward's disciplined Chinese." And they knew him best for they were with him under the most trying circumstances when, if ever, one's "unattractive" qualities will appear.

That the Chinese leaders were equally attracted to him is amply demonstrated by the respect and confidence they showed him in life, by the honors they paid him at death and by the monument they erected to his memory. The great Napoleon, the centenary of whose passing has just been so fittingly observed, wrote in his will:

" I desire that my ashes repose on the banks of the Seine In the midst of the French people whom I have so loved."

Frederick Townsend Ward wrote no such, wish in his will but those for whom he fought and died assumed that he felt it and sought, in the most enduring way they knew, to carry it out. Here with loving hands they have erected a memorial which, if not so imposing as that surmounted by the great dome of the *Hotel des Invalides*, is yet the spontaneous tribute of a grateful people. Here in

 Id. 471.
Wilson, (Andrew), The Ever Victorious Army (Edinburgh & London, 1808), 90.

13. Id. 464.

movement, which was to stem the tide of destruction and eventually crush the rebellion.

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POST ROSTER, 1921.

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