

The "Memoirs" of Li Hung-chang

—the Story of A Non-translation

By Albert G. Hess

Suchau. Governor's Temporary Yamen. December 8, 1863.—Last night, to please the Wangs, I invited them to a council of peace and a banquet, and it was interesting the way we settled old scores in words. I spent, too, a large sum upon the foods, and the table was well set. There was much merriment and good-nature, and I, too, enjoyed meeting these men—Long-Haired Rebels though they were. But I made a serious mistake in not having a strong guard placed about the east gate, at which my large boat was lying, and before the banquet was ended a great horde of lawless fellows, some of them Imperialists, but a majority of them drunken fellows of the Wangs' army, poured through the gate, killing and assaulting. I was one of the first to hear the great uproar, and, believing the marauders might be intent upon dispatching me,—for threats had been made in many quarters,—I made my escape from the barge and hurriedly entered the city. Ching also managed to escape from the hands of the rioters, and followed me to the landing and into the town. Immediately I sent orders, by officers we met, to get troops as soon as possible and arrest all the rioters; but the orders were not quickly obeyed, and a scene of wholesale slaughter occurred upon the barge. (*Memoirs*, 1913, p. 69)¹

THE ABOVE description of a scene from the Taiping Rebellion is one of many dramatic accounts in a book entitled *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*, edited by William Francis Mannix, which fascinated the Western world when it appeared in England and America in 1913. Viceroy and Grand Secretary of State of China, Li visited

The writer is indebted to many individuals and organizations, whose names are omitted here due to lack of space, for their assistance and cooperation in the research and preparation of the paper on which this article is based. These include journalists in New York and Oregon, and librarians, historians, and archivists in a number of national and regional institutions in the United States.

¹"The Wangs", as explained elsewhere in the *Memoirs*, was the collective name by which Li Hung-chang allegedly called the Taiping Rebellion leaders in his "diaries". These included the general variously named "Muh Wang" and "Mow Wang" who would not

surrender and was killed; and "Chung Wang" and "Lar Wang" and other rebel generals, who were defeated by the Imperial forces and the "Ever-Victorious Army" under the command of the British General Charles Gordon, and who surrendered the rebel stronghold of Suchau (Soochow). "Ching" was "General Ching", described as Li's lieutenant. After the victory, Li Hung-chang was supposed to have recorded, he proposed a feast in celebration "on board my own private boat" to which the Wangs were invited. According to the *Memoirs*, Li wrote later that Gordon, who had been at odds with him, had made the "grievous mistake" of accusing that "I had treacherously caused the murder of the Wangs upon my own barge."

the United States and other Western countries in the 1890's and was still vividly remembered. Abroad, interest in China was keen after the revolution of 1911 had abolished the venerable institution of the Chinese Emperor. International events such as the America-initiated opium conferences of Shanghai (1909) and The Hague (1912) had also focused attention on that country. In the literary field, books on the Dowager Empress Tz'u Hsi (Bland and Backhouse, 1910) and by one of her entourage (Princess Der Ling, 1911) had paved the way for the present *Memoirs* which recalled Li's brilliant career from the Imperial examinations up to the time when he became statesman and military leader.

Recorded here were the young Li's literary ambitions—the "autobiography" was interspersed with his poems—his outlook on Christianity that had matured over the years from primitive hatred to well-tempered rationale; the cruelty of Li's actions against the rebels of the Taiping Rebellion in 1863 and those of the anti-Christian riots in Tientsin; his role with regard to the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and in the subsequent peace negotiations at Shimonoseki; his trip to St. Petersburg on the occasion of the coronation of Czar Nicholas II, his travels to Germany, France, England, and the United States; and finally his actions in the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1900) which may have saved the integrity of China.

An array of colorful personalities in contemporary history made their appearance in the book. These included the American adventurer Frederick Townsend Ward (1831-1862), soldier of fortune, who led the Chinese Government forces against the Taiping Rebellion; his successor, British officer Charles George ("Chinese") Gordon (1833-1885), under whom these forces became the "Ever-Victorious Army," and who was later killed in the Sudan; Marquis Ito, Japanese Prime Minister and Li's counterpart in the peace negotiations at Shimonoseki; the Czar and the Czarina of Russia, Bismarck, Krupp, the British Inspector-General of the Chinese Customs Sir Robert Hart, Prime Minister Gladstone of England, Presidents Cleveland and Grant of the United States, Governor Hastings of Pennsylvania; and—last but not least—the American Secretary of State John W. Foster, adviser to Li at Shimonoseki, who wrote an Introduction to the *Memoirs*. In it, Foster praised the *Memoirs* "as a valuable contribution for the better understanding of his (Li's) character and services," and lauded Li as "the greatest man the Chinese race has produced in modern times."

The book was pervaded by what the early twentieth century Western mind conceived of as "Oriental atmosphere." This was conveyed to the reader by elaborate quotations "translated" from the "diary" Li was supposed to have kept over the

years containing his expressions of filial piety toward his mother and descriptions of his visit to the shrine of "Lady Yuen Fi," goddess of rice and industry in order to pray for the Empress Dowager, of the Empress' outbursts of bad temper, and of Li's philosophizing over his own acts of alleged cruelty.

Out of "the equivalent of some one million six hundred thousand English words," Mannix pointed out in his Editor's Preface, "over one hundred and seventy thousand words of the Viceroy's memoirs were translated and diligently compared." He gave the translator's name as "Major R. Emmet Roberts, Secretary of the late Viceroy, assisted by Drs. Wang, of Peking, and Hsiu-Tsai, the Elder, of Canton." According to the Preface, the source material for the book came from manuscripts dispersed over "half a score of cities of China." These had been "collected by a provincial governor of the two Kwangs provinces, a nephew of Li's, and deposited in the palatial residence of the former Viceroy at Canton."

There, "with the permission of the Imperial Government . . . and the consent of the trustees and heirs of Li Hung Chang's estate," the documents had been examined and "carefully translated."

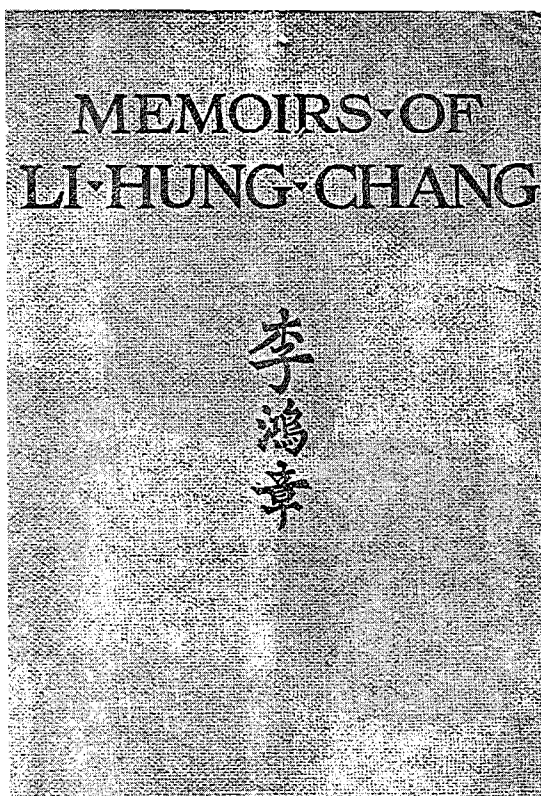
The editor made it a point to stress his careful approach to the manuscript material and he gave a

Two Literary Forgeries

In his book *Hermit in Peking*, Hugh Trevor-Roper, the Oxford historian, in a masterpiece of literary sleuthing, reconstructed the "hidden life" of the fabulous China scholar, Sir Edmund Backhouse (1873-1944). Backhouse had collaborated with J. O. P. Bland, the *Times*, London, correspondent, on *China under the Empress Dowager*, long regarded as a standard work of Chinese history, until it was found that the "firsthand documents" on which the book was based were a forgery. Among the multitude of fascinating details uncovered by Prof. Trevor-Roper is Backhouse's warning to his friend Bland, "that the memoirs of Li Hung-chang, which had just been published . . . were a fake." Bland, who was about to embark on a biography of the Chinese statesman, was "grateful for the warning, which proved that Backhouse was a skilful detector of forgeries."

Besides being an interesting case of the pot calling the kettle black, this brings to mind the object of Backhouse's scorn, a book "translated" from the Chinese and "edited" by one William Francis Mannix and first published in October 1913 by Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston and New York. It was a classic American contribution in the field of literary hoax, pre-dating by a half-century Clifford Irving's attempt at forging the autobiography of Howard Hughes.

Albert G. Hess, who teaches and writes in the history of crime and delinquency, has been at various times a staff member of the United Nations Crime Prevention Branch and the (U.S.) National Council on Crime and Delinquency, and has conducted studies in Hong Kong and Japan, and in Australia as consultant, on crime prevention and related problems. He became interested in the case of Mannix and *The Memoirs of Li Hung Chang* as part of his research in literary forgeries. The result was "The Dynamics of Literary Forgery: The Case of William Francis Mannix", a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology in 1977. In the following pages we have asked Prof. Hess to retell the Mannix story in a way that would be especially edifying to the readers of *Renditions*.



FRONT COVER of original edition of *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*, published in Boston and New York, in 1913.

good deal of detail about this. Since he had found it impossible to publish the entire existing writings by Li, he had made selections and had grouped together these selections under appropriate subject headings, at the same time arranging the material chronologically.

Mannix first published selections from Li's *Memoirs* in the *New York Sun*. He then received a letter from the London *Observer* asking for more such material. Finally he assembled all the "translations" into a book.

When the book appeared, the reviews were generally favorable. The *New York Times* devoted almost a full-page to an article about the *Memoirs* which consisted almost entirely of quotations from the book. The article concluded:

The book is full of interest, from cover to cover, and not least in those parts which reveal Oriental customs and habits of thinking.²

²*New York Times*, October 26, 1913, p. 3.

The *Contemporary Review* praised the book for bringing "before us in very excellent fashion the personality and the idiosyncrasies as well as the manifold activities of Li Hung Chang," who was admired for his "strong character, his intense shrewdness," as for his "essential humanity," the "relentless directness of his mind" and his political skill in keeping China intact in spite of all foreign pressures.³ O. D. Wannamaker of *The Dial* wrote: "Li's style, even in the translation, is never uninteresting, and his humor adds much to the relish of the book." He cited Li's good character features but also drew attention to his "uglier side," especially his cruelty. He also raised an eyebrow about the Viceroy's "low and coarse" conception of woman, writing: "It is without the least sense of shame that he refers to his father's concubines."⁴

³*Contemporary Review*, No. 105, March 1914, p. 448.

⁴*The Dial*, Feb. 16, 1914, pp. 142-143.



FRONTISPIECE in original edition of the book showing Viceroy Li in London in 1896, after his attendance as special envoy at the coronation of the Russian Czar. Li is flanked by British Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Lord Salisbury and his nephew Nathaniel Curzon who was assigned as the Chinese visitor's honorary secretary.

The publishers of *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*, Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston and New York, must have been satisfied with its reception, because the book was issued again in 1923 in a new edition. In this new edition, however, the title-page had been changed drastically. No more was Li Hung-chang the author. This honor now went to William Francis Mannix himself, the former "Editor" who, as it turned out, had fabricated Li's entire autobiographical writings, including the diary entries and the poems. Foster's "Introduction" had been replaced by "The Story of a Literary Forgery" written by Ralph D. Paine, sportsman, adventurer, author of books on ships, war correspondent, who had been Mannix's colleague on the staff of the *Philadelphia Press*.⁵

⁵ *National Cyclopaedia*, 1936, 25, p. 408.

What had happened, and who had committed this hoax of a "translation" from supposedly valuable Chinese biographical sources into a popular book in English?

The Making of a Non-translator

In the following we shall attempt to reconstruct briefly the life history of the perpetrator of this literary hoax. In doing so, we are obliged to make many reservations. Biographical data on a crook—even one whose crimes were largely limited to those of a facile pen—are usually, and understandably, scarce and not always fully reliable. Mannix's vita does not appear, to my knowledge, in any of the biographic encyclopedias, nor could his obituary be found in the *New York Times*, although he was this newspaper's correspondent

in the Cuban Rebellion during the last years of the 19th century. Some of the incidents reported about him in various sources contradict each other.

This account of the highlights of Mannix's career is based mainly on two short biographies: the aforementioned expose of the famous literary forgery by Ralph D. Paine, his friend and sometime companion; and an article originally written by A.B. Virkler Legate for the *Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times*, in which Mannix was identified as "a native of Northern New York."⁶ Paine, it appears, was more trustworthy in reporting his personal recollections about Mannix but may not have been so reliable in matters that required research. I have therefore supplemented these two sources, as far as possible, with bits and pieces of documentary material collected from the public archives, historical societies and newspaper files in various cities in Eastern United States and in Astoria, Oregon, in the Far West.

William Francis Mannix was the youngest of five sons of Edward J. Mannix, who had immigrated from County Cork, Ireland, as an infant and grew up in Boston. The elder Mannix, who had volunteered during the Civil War and reached the rank of a Captain, later settled in Malone, New York, near the Canadian border, and raised a respectable family. Neither William's birthplace nor the year of his birth is ascertained. Depending on what records were available for consultation, Boston, Malone and Belmont, N.Y., compete as his native town. According to a local newspaper article, he died in Astoria, Ore., on August 31, 1920, at the age of 47.⁷ This would lead to a birthday in 1873, but other sources had him born in 1870 or 1875. Paine described Mannix as "past 50 years of age" around 1911, which would bring his birthdate closer to 1860. Imposters frequently

mystify their past, and it is conceivable that even Mannix's wife and children did not know his exact birthplace and birthdate when he died.

What was to develop into an international journalistic career of some note began modestly around 1892 when young Mannix started the *Adirondack Pioneer* in Saranac Lake, N.Y., a paper serving the socially prominent vacationers in that scenic area. He also reported to big-city newspapers the names of socialites staying in the resorts there. For this he was paid space rates, and he would report the same persons at the same time as staying in different hotels to raise his income.

In the fall of 1895, at the outbreak of the Cuban revolution, he persuaded the Spanish Consul General in New York to pay his passage to Havana so that he could write as the correspondent to "a syndicate of newspapers" (among them the *New York Times* and the *Philadelphia Press*) about the struggle between the Spanish Government and the Cuban rebels. After his arrival in Havana, he dispatched to the *Times* vivid and colorful reports which stood out among the stories filed by other American correspondents. One such dispatch began:

HAVANA, CUBA, Dec. 11.—Your correspondent was a witness to the fight on the Remedios Road, between the villages of Iguara and Taguasco, in the province of Santa Clara, Friday morning last . . . ⁸

This was an "eyewitness" account of a Spanish army mule train, "laden with arms, ammunition and provisions" and escorted by a cavalry detachment, that was ambushed in a deep and narrow ravine by rebel forces. "The 200 mules and their attendants crushed together, and animals and men were trampled to death under the hoofs of 2,000 cavalry horses." The fighting was described as "indeed fierce", with "rebel machete and Spanish sabre being wielded with terrible effect at close quarters."

In another report datelined "IN THE FIELD, near Calmito, Havana province, Cuba, Jan. 20", he described how he crossed lines from the territory held by the Spanish Army into that of the insurgents. In the no-man's-land between the two

⁶Ralph D. Paine's article "The Story of a Literary Forgery" occupies 72 pages (vii-lxxviii) in the front-matter of the 1923 re-issue of *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. The Legate article was published in the *Watertown Daily Times*, December 31, 1953. An adaptation, under the title "The Amazing Mr. Mannix: A Life of Deception and Fraud" appeared in the *New York State Tradition*, Winter 1968.

⁷*Morning Astorian*, September 1, 1920.

⁸*New York Times*, December 15, 1895, p. 5.

armed forces, machete-carrying cutthroats called *plateados* belonging to neither side killed and robbed for their own profit. Nevertheless, Mannix pressed on fearlessly, knowing *plateados* do not carry firearms, "while your correspondent was well provided with the latter, and rode a good horse."⁹ In several dispatches he reported detailed interviews with insurgent leaders, and finally transmitted an "Appeal to the People of the United States" by Salvador Cisneros-Betancourt, the President of the Provisional Cuban Republic.¹⁰ For this he was expelled from the country by the Spanish Government and shipped, under protest, to Tampa, Florida.

While the U.S. Secretary of State did not take any action to protect Mannix, his expulsion suddenly became a *cause célèbre*. This sanction against an American correspondent was widely considered an infringement on the rights of a free press, and Mannix was admired as a hero. The *New York Times*, which had previously not identified him by name, now revealed on the front page that the expelled "Capt. Mannix" was the *Times*' correspondent.¹¹ It is not known, though, where his Captain's rank came from.

In 1898 the Spanish-American War broke out after the sinking of the *Maine*. When Havana was taken and the American correspondents swarmed into the city, they learned to their amazement that Mannix had never been present at any battles during the time of the rebellion and that he also had never crossed lines. As Paine told it:

He had agreeably passed the time in the café of the Hotel Mascotte in Havana. Comfortably sprawled at a table, with a drink at his elbow, he had concocted all those thrilling, persuasive narratives of battles and forays and marches. His friends were Cuban spies and loafers filled with windy tales and rumors.

Following his Cuban exploits, Mannix became a reporter for the *Philadelphia Press*, but he was soon fired. Assigned to investigate the rumor of an embezzlement in a Philadelphia bank, he reported

⁹*New York Times*, January 26, 1896, p. 5.

¹⁰*New York Times*, February 10, 1896, p. 1.

¹¹*New York Times*, February 12, 1896, p. 1.

the crime as having occurred in the wrong bank. The latter was promptly stormed by its creditors, and the *Press* was sued for damages amounting to a million dollars.

Earlier, while the war was still going on, Mannix struck up a friendship with Pennsylvania's Governor Hastings, who gave him a commission as Lieutenant in the Third Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment. For a time Lieut. Mannix swaggered around grandly in uniform, but the armistice soon ended the Spanish-American War and Mannix's career as a lieutenant. After that his life became miserable. With his record on the *Press*, no newspaper would hire him. He took to drinking. "He was a seedy borrower of small amounts, cheerfully bestowed." He tried selling encyclopedias, and filled order blanks with forged signatures so that he could collect his commissions.

There exists no known photograph of Mannix, and the information we gather about his appearance from official documents are few and often contradictory. His eyes were blue, his hair brown; his complexion was described on one occasion as "light" and on another as "ruddy"; and his height was variously given as 5 ft. 8½ in. and 5 ft. 10 in. Fortunately, Paine gave us a vivid description of his appearance and manners at the time (circa. 1897) when both journalists participated in the voyage of the *Three Friends*, one of the many filibustering ships that carried volunteers, arms and supplies to the Cuban coast. He wrote:

(Mannix) had somewhat of the aspect of a soldier of fortune. The martial mustache, the strong jaw, the scar on the chin suggesting the man who courted war like a mistress. He talked fluently, but without bravado. One swallowed it without blinking when he casually mentioned having written much of the first draft of the constitution of the Provisional Government of Cuba, at the request of President Estrada Palma, while they had been in conference in the remote mountain capital.

And now we come to Mannix's first—and as events were to show—only brush with China. On August 21, 1900, he enlisted as a private in Company M of the Ninth Regiment of the U.S. Infantry. He was sent to the Philippines and, during the Boxer Rebellion, to China, where he may have participated in his Regiment's main battle, the assault upon the walled city of Tientsin

on July 13, 1900. Mannix wrote a poem in commemoration of that day, entitled "The Yellow Peril".¹²

This poem, datelined "Pekin, China", expresses some stereotyped prejudices of the Westerners at that time which saw the expedition against the Boxers mainly as a struggle between Christianity and the "barbaric" Orientals. It may come as a surprise that Mannix followed such crude thinking in this poem while on the other hand revealing, in the *Memoirs*, a considerable amount of "feel" for Chinese thought and Chinese atmosphere—although that book is not completely free from prejudices either. One explanation may be that he had a strong feeling for what his readers wanted to read. It seems to be a peculiar gift of imposters to size up accurately those with whom they have to deal—and Mannix was certainly an opportunist when it came to what he thought his audience wanted. The poem was written for the consumption of ex-soldiers to whom he offered old clichés mixed with patriotic sentimentality. The *Memoirs*, published a dozen years later, addressed themselves to the "general reader" and had to face the China scholars and the literary critics of the big-city newspapers, a much more sophisticated audience.

In the *Memoirs* he gave the impression that he interviewed Li Hung-chang on October 19, 1900.¹³ This interview appears, like the rest of the book, freely invented. His old friend Paine, who covered the Boxer Rebellion as the correspondent for the *Philadelphia Press*, met Mannix again in Peking as a private. It would have been extremely unlikely that the Grand Secretary of the Chinese Empire would have granted an interview to a simple soldier of the lowest rank. For the rest, Paine reported of this meeting in Peking with Mannix only that he had to save Mannix's top-sergeant whom our friend tried to cheat out of \$200 by telling a story about a large treasure that had been hidden in China during the war.

During the first decade of the 20th century Mannix developed into a petty but notorious criminal. He was in and out of jail—in his old

stamping ground of Malone and Watertown; in other up-State New York cities like Redwood, as "Saint Lawrence River correspondent" for several newspapers, Schenectady, Harrisville, and Carthage—mainly for passing worthless checks, forging signatures, and sundry small business frauds. Whether as journalist or imposter-at-large, he left a trail from Vermont to Montreal to the famous Tombs Prison in New York City.

One episode deserves special mention, however, and that was in the summer of 1907, following his release from a Vermont prison, when he settled at Lake Bonaparte near Harrisville, N.Y., as a public relations man for the Hotel Hermitage (also referred to as "Levis House"). There Mannix wrote a story about "Joseph Bonaparte's Court in the Adirondecks" which appeared on June 9, 1907, in the *New York Herald*.¹⁴ This story, based on an alleged diary by Count Jean de Balmat, also has been considered a fake. The ex-King of Naples and Spain had emigrated to the United States in 1815 and had built a house on a tract surrounding Lake Bonaparte. But to this writer's knowledge, Balmat's diary has never been found. Mannix's feat in this instance is interesting because it prefigures the diaries of Li Hung-chang that he was to "edit" some years later.

In 1910 he had moved West again. He was married in Boise, Idaho, where he passed another worthless check on the Presbyterian minister who officiated at his wedding, and he was wanted in Oregon for forgery. Shortly after, we find him in Honolulu, on the staff of the *Advertiser*. The locale, rather than his occupation, is noteworthy—because it is here that Mannix conceived and brought to artistic fruition his *chef d'oeuvre* in a genre which, for want of a better term, we call "non-translation".

In Honolulu, again, Mannix passed a forged check, in the name of none other than the publisher of the *Advertiser*, Lorrin A. Thurston, and was sentenced to one year in the Oahu County jail. By that time he had acquired a lot of new friends, including Thurston himself, who unsuccessfully tried to help him by not pressing

¹²F. R. Brown, *History of the Ninth U.S. Infantry, 1799-1909*. Houston, Texas, 1909, p. 810.

¹³*Memoirs*, 1913, p. 227.

¹⁴First published in the magazine section of the *New York Herald*, June 9, 1907; reprinted under the title "A Literary Hoax—The Royal Court at Lake Bonaparte" in the *New York State Tradition*, Winter 1968.

charges. Another was Governor Frear of the Territory of Hawaii. Feeling sorry for the misfortunes of this handsome intellectual from the Mainland, these Honolulu friends offered to provide him with reading material while he served his jail term. Mannix requested a number of books that dealt with China. Governor Frear also sent him a typewriter from his office. Later, he pardoned Mannix after the latter had served eight months.

It was during his eight-month stay in jail that he prepared the manuscript which was eventually to be published as the *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*.

The Uncovery of the Forgery

According to Paine, the uncovering of Mannix's forgery began with a letter written by a certain Mr. Drew who had been in the service of the Imperial Chinese Customs and who had accompanied Li Hung-chang on the latter's tour around the world. Drew read the *Memoirs*, and his particular attention was attracted to a section in the book where Li was described as looking over San Francisco Bay on his last day in the United States before embarking on his trip from San Francisco back to China in 1896. Seeing the Golden Gate and the Pacific for the first time, he contemplated about his return to China and expressed his longing for "the supreme joy of kissing the earth of my native land."¹⁵

Drew who had been on the scene remembered that the embarkation had taken place in Vancouver, not San Francisco, and that the Chinese statesman had spent the last day resting in a hotel in that city. This led to Drew's discovering other factual inaccuracies, mainly concerning Li's trip to the Western countries, and he then wrote a letter to the publishers and also, according to Paine, to the *Nation*. However, this writer has been unable to locate the letter to that magazine in any of its indices for the years 1911 to 1914. Paine seems to have had access to the files of the Houghton Mifflin Company concerning Mannix, and apparently he also had seen Drew's letter.

This letter must have been received at the

magazine before the *Memoirs* were reviewed in the issue of January 29, 1914, of the *Nation* by an anonymous critic:

It is not . . . the amazing frankness or the naivete of these pages that excites suspicion as to their entire genuineness, but the frequency with which statements occur in them that are not in accordance with known facts. Amid so many discrepancies it is noteworthy, more over, that the editor not only refrains from comment in the case of new material, but fails to substantiate the authenticity of certain papers included here which were gravely impugned when they appeared in the newspapers some years ago

The reviewer mentions besides the San Francisco scene, two other episodes described in the *Memoirs* that never took place: Li's visit to Windsor Castle in England and his attending the execution of the Tientsin rioters in the presence of representatives of foreign governments on October 18, 1870.¹⁶

It is interesting to note that the above observations did not lead the reviewer to bluntly declare the *Memoirs* as a fake.

Either the translator is much at fault or Li had a romantic contempt for accuracy that renders his testimony upon events in which he was an actor a source of fresh anxiety to future historians.

And then the critic discusses in detail Li's association with the Dowager Empress quoting verbatim from the *Memoirs*, thus indeed implying that at least the cited passages are trustworthy source material.

The publishers wrote to a "William G. Leonard", General Manager of the Pacific Associated Press, an organization created in the fertile mind of Mannix during his residence in Honolulu with himself as President. To Mr. Leonard (actually one of Mannix's many aliases listed on the company's letterhead) Houghton Mifflin Co. now sent a copy of Mr. Drew's letter, asking that it be forwarded to Mr. Mannix for clarification. In reply, they were informed that the peripatetic editor was in China where he was working on Li's manuscripts in order to select material for a second volume of the

¹⁵*Memoirs*, 1913, p. 210.

¹⁶*Memoirs*, 1913, p. 178 and p. 39.

Memoirs.

In reality Mannix was not in China, but had moved from Honolulu to Los Gatos, California. It is from there that he conducted—as Mr. Leonard—this correspondence. His reply showed indignation; he tried to minimize Mr. Drew's accusations and evaded the questions raised.

Inquiries in China by the publishers re-enforced the suspicions. Li Ching-mai, the only surviving son of Li Hung-chang, wrote that he could not remember having ever encountered a Major Roberts—one of the three alleged translators—in his father's service, adding that "my father never kept any diary whatever in his lifetime." The two other translators, "Drs. Wang of Peking and Hsiu-tsai, the Elder, of Canton," turned out to be equally unheard of.

In spite of all this, the *Memoirs* were actually never fully discredited until the appearance of the second edition (with Paine's "The Story of the Literary Forgery") in 1923. Mannix himself continued to call himself "Editor of the *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*," whenever he had an article published. Like the reviewer of the *Nation*, many persons, although they knew of the suspicious features of the book, continued to believe nevertheless that at least parts of the *Memoirs* were genuine and that the editor had access to some sort of authentic documentary material. Mannix conformed well to what was known of recent Chinese history, and the "atmosphere" and tone conveyed by the book gave it a certain trustworthiness. After all, Li's personal friend Secretary of State Foster and "several authorities on Chinese affairs" whom the publishers had consulted before publication had found no reason to question the genuineness of the work.

Mannix had, it turned out, made good use of his stay in the Honolulu jail by reading a great deal about China. It will be recalled that he had been given the privilege of obtaining books from the Honolulu public libraries and two local librarians, Elizabeth M. Richards and Ruth A. Benedict, checked the books taken out on loan by Mannix at that time and compared them with the *Memoirs*. This comparison revealed indeed strong connections between these books and the *Memoirs*.

Techniques Used in "Translation"

Mannix was neither the first nor the last literary forger. In fact he had a long line of illustrious predecessors. What is in our days still the basic work on the theology of the angels in the Catholic Church goes under the name of Saint Dionysius Areopagite, who lived in the first century and who was converted to Christianity by Saint Paul. However, nobody doubts nowadays that these writings, such as *The Celestial Hierarchy* and *The Mystical Theology* were written centuries later by an unknown author who attributed his work to this Saint, most likely out of piety, and pious attributions were by no means uncommon in the Middle Ages. William Henry Ireland (1777-1835) became famous for his fabrication of two of Shakespeare's plays *Vortigern and Rowena* and *Henry the II*. He also forged a number of other Shakespearian documents such as contracts and a love letter.

In recent years, the most notorious forgery was the alleged autobiography of billionaire Howard Hughes by Clifford Irving. Also denounced as a fabrication were the *Memoirs of Chief Red Fox*.¹⁷ More germane to our subject was Mannix's immediate precursor, indeed his contemporary, in China authorship, the British "sinologist" Sir Edmund Backhouse, who co-authored the two books, *China under the Empress Dowager* (1910) and *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (1914). The former was mainly based on the controversial "Ching-shan diary", an eyewitness account of the Court during the Boxer uprising, which Backhouse claimed to have personally discovered in 1900 and "translated" for his book. Years later, Western and Chinese scholars settled in the negative the question of the authenticity of the diary and other firsthand documents

¹⁷New York, McGraw-Hill, 1971. The *New York Times* (March 10, 1972) reported that a work entitled *The Wounded Knee Massacre: From the Viewpoint of the Sioux*, by James H. McGregor, a former superintendent of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, had served as the basis for the bestseller *Memoirs of Chief Red Fox*. Some 12,000 words, according to the *Times*, were reprinted almost verbatim in the McGraw-Hill book. The company later agreed to pay damages to the estate of the original author.

used in the books. It remained for the English historian Hugh Trevor-Roper to prove conclusively that the so-called "Ching-shan diary" was a masterpiece of literary forgery for which Backhouse alone was responsible.¹⁸

Two modes of operation are frequently used in literary forgery. One of them is when a document is forged and claimed to be an authentic source for the work in question. Thus, Ireland faked Shakespearean documents, using a special ink which gave the impression that the writing was old. Backhouse invented a fantasy surrounding his rescue of the valuable "diary" from a burning house, and even had specimens of the document written in Chinese script, in the difficult "grass-hand", to prove that it was genuine.

The other is that of plagiarism; an existing and usually obscure writing is copied verbatim or almost verbatim. The aims of both the forger and the plagiarist are quite similar, *viz.* to enhance the credibility of the literary product as "old" and as "authentic." If the document in question is an "autograph," this conveys credibility to it because its contents are allegedly written by the author himself, while a plagiarist attempts to give the impression of genuineness by presenting facts known as truthful, particularly intimate details.

Mannix uses neither the techniques of document forgery nor plagiarism, although, no doubt, he was an experienced check forger, but as far as it is known, his writing of false checks and his other petty frauds ceased, before the *Memoirs* got on its way.

Plagiarism, when it is discovered, is usually identified by "funny coincidences," *i.e.* by *verbatim* similarities between the forged product and its literary model. How many such forgeries are being committed is impossible to say, but it appears that there are probably many more than meets the eye. One American magazine regularly publishes such "funny coincidences," but Mannix did not employ plagiarism any more than he

forged documents.

It is true, to be sure, that he used ample source material on China; as we have seen, he had spent his jail term profitably in Honolulu in studying books on China. A friend from Hawaii—who in reality was a spy for the publishers and who visited Mannix later in California—reported to Houghton Mifflin Company as follows:

I said that the book [*i.e.* the *Memoirs*] had deeply interested me, and I had wondered what books read while in confinement had given him the information which he had embodied in the *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*; that if time allowed I should like to consult these books and would be very glad to have him tell me which ones had been of the greatest use to him and where else he had secured material for the 'Memoirs'.¹⁹

Mannix "readily explained" his sources to him, though not without some falsehood attached. He claimed that a series of articles on Li Hung Chang in the *Review of Reviews* that he had used, had been written by his eldest brother Joseph T. Mannix. The two Honolulu librarians, who compared the *Memoirs* with the books and magazines loaned from the local libraries to Mannix while in jail, identified a lot of material that Mannix had used but no "funny coincidences":

The extraordinary talent of the "editor" had changed their texture and woven them together in a finished fabric of imposture. Here, he had taken a mere suggestion and adroitly expanded it; there, he had borrowed a fact and clothed it in the language of Li Hung Chang. It was done with infinite pains and finesse. The raw material was sedulously concealed. It was the method of the historical novel unconsciously adopted.²⁰

For example, a statement in one of the sources mentions that the Empress with the princesses had visited the Forbidden City during the silkworm season in order to offer prayers to the deity of the silkworm. This sentence became the basis of an entire chapter "At the Shrine of Lady Yuen Fi".

¹⁸ *A Hidden Life: The Enigma of Sir Edmund Backhouse*, by Hugh Trevor-Roper. Macmillan London, Ltd., 1976. Published in the United States of America under the title *Hermit of Peking: The Hidden Life of Sir Edmund Backhouse*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1977.

¹⁹ Ralph D. Paine in *Memoirs*, 1923, p. lv.

²⁰ Paine, *Memoirs*, 1923, p. lvii.

The principal method which Mannix used to disguise his literary forgery, was his pretense or claim that it was a "translation" from Chinese. (In this he and Backhouse unwittingly shared what must then have been considered a "fail-safe" technique for literary forgery.) This pretense helped him as much to conceal what he wanted the reader not to know, as to impress on the reader the genuineness of his book. Even to the present day the Chinese language is for the average Westerner the epitome of inaccessibility and strangeness. When they hear something absolutely incomprehensible, they say: "This sounds Chinese to me." In Mannix's days hardly more than a handful of missionaries and foreign diplomats knew Chinese or could read the Chinese script. Thus practically nobody could judge how well the original had been rendered into English, and Mannix's version was in fact the only means to appraise the "original." Therefore it is not surprising that hardly any of the book reviews questioned the quality of translation of the *Memoirs*. When finally the critic of the *Nation* timidly began to raise the question of how accurate the translation had been, it was only after certain facts presented in the book had been denounced as untrue, and in a peculiar situation that justified doubts. The reviewer was not yet ready to denounce the entire book as a forgery.

In the "Editor's Preface" as well as in several "Editor's Notes", Mannix put forward lengthy, seemingly scholarly explanations about his problems in translation, together with remarks about the selection of material, about dating, and so forth. These clarifications done meticulously were aimed at conveying to the reader the idea that the tasks of translating and editing Li's *Memoirs* had been undertaken with the greatest care, and that the book had to be fully trustworthy. The same purpose is served by Mannix's frequent citing of names of imaginary "experts" who either had been his "translators" or whom he had consulted to inquire about the correctness of his edition.

Included in the *Memoirs* is an excerpt of a poem allegedly written by Li in his youth, "An Early Reward of Genius," and Mannix comments:

The poem *in toto* is rather too lengthy for reproduction here, and particularly as the latter portions of it are so involved in thought relating

to the realms and times of the most ancient of the Chinese writers that its rendition in literal English is very difficult.²¹

Another example is his comment on the poem "A Humble Man's Voice" which Mannix claimed had been attributed to the Empress Dowager. His "Editor's Special Note" runs to almost two pages. In it he "proves" that this poem was not written by the Empress but by Li who out of respect had never claimed authorship during his lifetime. In reality, the author of the poem was none other than Mannix himself.

Finally, we quote Mannix's explanation with respect to dating Li's alleged writings:

While the translators found little difficulty in rendering into English the beautifully executed characters of the great Viceroy, they were sorely distracted in the matter of determining dates; for in his earlier years, and up to the time of his appearance as Viceroy at Tientsin, Li marked his manuscripts in a way of his own: in strange cycles and reigns. So confusing was this, even to the Chinese scholars engaged in the work, that they agreed to omit many of them, unanimously asserting that to ascertain with exactness when each entry was made would require a year's time of an expert Chinese historian!²²

Postscriptum

There remain a few more episodes in Mannix's life that are worth mentioning, inasmuch as they relate to China. As we have seen, he had lived in Los Gatos, California before going to Astoria, Oregon and, as far as is known, he never went back to China after the Boxer Rebellion.

On July 26, 1915 two articles appeared in *The Independent* entitled "The Chinese Republic Reports Progress" and "The Chinese Republic Will Stand", both being interviews given by the then President of the Chinese Republic Yuan Shih-kai. The first article carried an editorial preface which explained how Mannix ("editor of the 'Memoirs of Li Hung Chang'") had interviewed the Pre-

²¹*Memoirs*, 1913, p. 11.

²²*Memoirs*, 1913, p. vii.

sident at 1:00 o'clock a.m. "for Chinese officialdom clings tenaciously to the late night hours for the transaction of most affairs." On that occasion Yuan—who soon after ascended the dragon throne for a short-lived reign as Emperor of China—was reported to have shown "an unmistakably Rooseveltian smile." The second interview described as taking place at one-thirty in the morning and lasting two hours was given to a "Carl von Ressinger".

Both interviews were in reality invented and written up by Mannix. Carl von Ressinger was a slightly different version of the name Carl von Ressenger, listed as Secretary on the letterhead of the phantom Pacific Associated Press. In the unsettled political situation that prevailed in China at that time no small amount of excitement was stirred up by certain statements put into the mouth of the future emperor by the writer. Mannix was denounced by the Chinese Government and was referred to as "the unscrupulous adventurer who had fabricated the fictitious *Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*."

In 1918 Mannix (again listed as "editor of *The Memoirs of Li Hung Chang*") wrote a pamphlet comprising 15 pages and entitled "The Avenue of Supreme Peace: Tarvia Gives China's Forbidden City Its First Modern Highway and Makes Roads for Uncle Sam to Travel in All the Regions of the Pacific." It is illustrated by a portrait of President Li Yuan-hung of China and by pictures of a number of "tarviated" roads in China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Hawaii. The purpose of the booklet is to propagate an American product, the highway preparation "Tarvia," from which he

derived the adjective "tarviated."²³

The Avenue of Supreme Peace extending from the Imperial Bridge in Peking's Forbidden City three quarters of a mile, was described as the only street in China covered with modern concrete, i.e. as "tarviated." President Li Yuan-hung, gave Mannix an interview and then led him around showing him many places in the Forbidden City where Tarvia was being used: "Chinese mechanics and laborers were applying a second coat of "TARVIA-B" to an age-worn surface of gray brick, such as was used so largely in the construction of the fancier portions of the Great Wall". The article aimed at giving a good amount of local color. In order to characterize the bad state of roads in China a Buddhist saying was quoted: "He who makes a piece of good road cuts off one thousand dots on the debtor side of his record with Buddha". The President, Mannix reported, did not use the American trade-word "Tarvia," but called the product *sho-lien*, i.e. "long-life-road".

On page 6 of the booklet, where Mannix mentions his "recent interview" with President Li, an unknown hand has asterisked the word "recent" in the copy this writer consulted in the New York Public Library and a scribbled footnote reads as follows:

"Mannix had not been in China, when he wrote this, since 1900. Still mendacious as ever!"

²³The names of three commercial firms appear in the pamphlet: the Barrett Company, apparently the manufacturer; the Dunn Wire-Cut Lug Brick Company, "Licensors"; and the Erickson Co., Inc. as holders of the copyright.