



At left—Mr. Yu Chen-Chou, Manager of the College Farms, the first Chinese student to be graduated in agriculture under Walter E. Chamberlain. Goats are widely raised throughout China as milk animals. The one in the picture, however, is an importation from Switzerland.

Below — Walter E. Chamberlain, head of the Department of Agriculture, Yenching University, Peking, China.

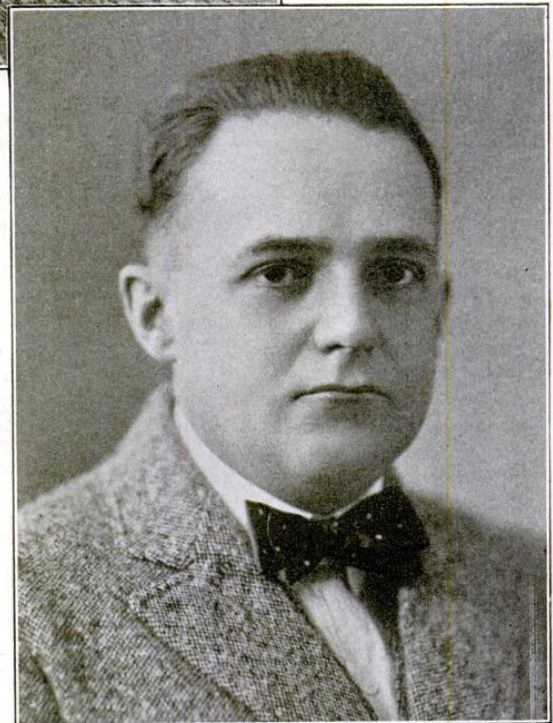


Photo: Hartung's, Peking.

Scientific Training for Chinese Farmers

By *Vernon Nash*

ONE of those traditional bits of misinformation which float about uncontradicted is the assertion that the Chinese farmer is one of the best in the world. Usually such statements can be traced back to some half-truth. In this case the truth is that the Chinese are excellent gardeners. As a sample of their skill in the truck farming line may be cited the fact that a city like Peking is never without its fresh green vegetables produced and marketed locally. But the Chinese peasant is not a good farmer; the erroneous idea of their superiority perhaps arises from the fact that they are still getting a kind of living off of land which has been under cultivation continuously for more than four thousand years.

When Object Six of Rotary found one of its most recent manifestations in the formation of a club in Peking, China, on the charter roll was inscribed the name of Walter E. Chamberlain. Mr. Chamberlain was one of the sponsors of the new organization, represent-

ing "education" and the 85 per cent of China's millions which is rural. For almost five years since his graduation from a New Hampshire rock farm and Cornell University, Mr. Chamberlain had been demonstrating that there were many things which the Chinese peasants needed to learn and that some farmers at least were eager to learn them. He is at present in America on furlough year from Yenching University, Peking, in which he is head of the department of agriculture.

The writer is a newspaper man. His one conscious dissatisfaction with his job grows out of the fact that the general public is chiefly interested in the spectacular rather than in the significant. Unfortunately these two phases of life are, in the main, mutually exclusive. No better current exemplification of this is to be found than in the news which Western countries are getting from China. The supremely vital

things in China today do not have to do with militarists and civil wars but with stupendous increases in literacy and the consequent broadening and deepening of all the process of education.

Mr. Chamberlain's first two years in China were almost a complete "wash-out" due to circumstances beyond his control, yet at the end of five years he leaves a staff of four American-trained instructors in a full-fledged program of agricultural training of college grade, a demonstration farm of over three hundred acres operated at a profit, a fine collection of pure-bred livestock, an orchard established with all varieties of American fruit to supply grafting scions, a small cannery for both fruits and vegetables manned entirely by stu-

dents, a model dairy, and many of the other experimental prerequisites of ordinary agricultural training and extension work.

This record is far more impressive when it is realized that it has been built from nothing and (for a time at least) with nothing. Chamberlain went out to Peking in full expectation of having everything which an agriculturalist could wish for. His contract was a joint one with the North China Farming and Stockraising Corporation, which had been formed to colonize large areas in Mongolia, and with Yenching University in co-operation with which the corporation was planning to maintain an agricultural school and experiment station in Peking. Most of the supporters of the enterprise, however, were members of the political faction then in power; when Marshal Wu Pei-fu seized the national government everyone did the usual Chinese marathon into the nearest foreign concession area. One supporter was able to hang on for a time, offering the use of a farm south of Peking. This looked like something at least, but that very summer there was a terrible drought in North China followed swiftly by the great famine. The former ruined the crops and the latter the business of this one last supporter so that he too had to drop out.

Thus at the end of his second year in China, Chamberlain took stock and found himself possessed only of a class of students in agriculture but without an ounce of dirt on which to demonstrate what he was seeking to teach. These darkest days for Walter dragged on into months before he began to get the "breaks." The university, an inter-



A class of Chinese students receiving training in scientific slaughtering.

national Christian institution, had been formed only a short time before by a merger of three small colleges in or near Peking. Its operating budget was not only in the state typical of most mission institutions—heavily overloaded—but it was also just entering upon the large task of securing a new site and plant four miles northwest of Peking, the missions having retained the properties of the former constituent colleges to house their various secondary schools.

The securing of the deeds for the new site opened up a farm of more than one hundred acres for use until the new buildings were completed. The one loyal supporter from the old corporation, being in still more straightened circumstances, next came through with an offer to give his equity in a farm of 212 acres just outside

Peking provided the university would assume a mortgage thereupon. Here at last were agricultural "laboratories" but where is the experiment station that makes any attempt to show a profit. Chamberlain had been assured again and again that the Chinese farmer was to good to be taught much concerning his own problems, yet here was the necessity of operating the college farms so that they would not only be profitable but would actually support the experimental work being done upon them—all this in close competition with peasants who operate on apparently non-existent margins.

Two more long years he played a lone hand successfully against these odds before his next and biggest "break" materialized in
(Continued on page 50)



Walter E. Chamberlain, Peking, China (right) and Bransford Ubank, instructor in animal husbandry, Yenching University, with a pair of Shropshire sheep from the ranch of Mr. R. E. Martin of Bozeman, Montana, U. S. A.

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(Continued from page 23)

the shape of a small endowment from surplus famine relief funds. The commission responsible for the latter wisely decided to invest this surplus in ways which would as nearly as possible prevent the recurrence of such a calamity. One of the methods chosen was to endow training for Chinese in scientific agriculture. This good fortune for Mr. Chamberlain was accompanied by a growing interest in the project among some famous stockmen in America, who contributed cattle, sheep, hogs, poultry, etc., for the stocking of the farms.

The surest way to start Walter Chamberlain fuming is to tell him that old story about the Chinese gentleman watching foreigners at tennis who inquired why they did not hire coolies to do such work for them. For Walter in his early days had to hear all the changes rung on the idea that he would never succeed in getting Chinese students to shed their silk gowns and soil their delicate hands. There is nothing which any farmer boy in America does from day to day as a normal part of

his work which Chinese students in Chamberlain's department have not also done regularly as a matter of course. Thus in so brief a time has the old silk-gown argument been decisively answered.

If you should meet up with Chamberlain during this year that he's home in America on furlough, here's the question which will automatically produce all that you'd like to know of his life in Peking and the wherefore of his enthusiasm for it: "Why have you as a Rotarian found your chief 'Service' satisfaction in helping Chinese farmers?" Judging from my experience, he's likely to answer somewhat as follows:

"Because I have never known any other group of people who were doing so much to help themselves. To those who know them well, Chinese peasants seem among the most deserving persons on this earth. They are industrious, intelligent, self-respecting; about the only help they want or will accept under normal conditions is to be shown better ways of helping themselves.

"Because I believe Roosevelt was right in suggesting that we have now entered upon the Pacific era; that John Hay spoke truly when he suggested that the determining factor in the history of the next 500 years would be the relationship of the United States with that other republic opposite her whose peoples embrace almost a fourth of the world's population.

"Because the nightmare which so many people have of the possible union of China with Soviet Russia against the rest of the world remains only a bad dream so long as the Chinese peasant retains his present character and outlook. It is clearly to the selfish advantage of Americans to do all they can to prevent Chinese farmers from losing the poise and sanity which has been and is so characteristic of them. If there were no personal and unselfish satisfaction in the work I am doing, I would still believe it justified as a wise statesmanlike measure toward helping to assure the future peace and stability of the whole world."



Glossary

- (1) Walter E. Chamberlain = Chamberlain, American, was Head of the Department of Agriculture, Yenching University (燕京大學). He was one of the 22 charter members of Peking Rotary Club (北京扶輪社) -- the third Club formed in China -- which was admitted to Rotary International on 30 August 1924, Charter No. 1814. The Club was finally terminated on 25 June 1951 due to the Club's own decision to disband after not successfully went through the registration and incorporation requirements by the government authorities.
- (2) Object Six of Rotary = That was the 1921 version of the "Object of Rotary" stating 6 objects. The Object Six: "The advancement of understanding, goodwill and international peace through a world fellowship of business and professional men united in the ideal of service".
- (3) Marshal Wu Pei-fu = 1924年9月第二次直奉戰爭「討逆軍總司令」吳佩孚，中華民國政府追贈陸軍一級上將。

This article was edited by Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian) on 1 October 2015 in observing the Rotary Month of "Economic & Community Development".