Tufts Seen Through Chinese Eyes

By Chi-Chen Yang '33

From my childhood, I have been constantly hearing others talking about life and activities of the American colleges, which I have never seen. I have been very much interested in it. However, it was extremely hard for me to realize the real interest until I had experienced it myself. When I began to learn the English language and understood an American teacher in the Canton Christian College, Canton, China, my uncle spoke to me on one day, "Teachers and books are but representations of the American idea concerning life. If you really want to go deep into the subject, nothing is more valuable than to go to the New World and experience yourself." Since then, my uncle began to be built and my sole ambition was to wind up my college education in America. The sun of my longing hope began to shine brightly when I was successful in the entrance examination of the Tung Hua College, Peking, China, an institution under the directory of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and honored by the American Returned Boxer Indemnity Fund. Year after year, parties of students are being sent over here to pursue higher education and practical works. I must not fail to mention here that it is only through the generous action of the United States Government in returning their share of the Indemnity with which so many of our Chinese students are enabled to experience the actual life in America.

The 1919 Party sailed from Shanghai by a Pacific Mail Line on the 17th of August, passing through Japan and Hongkong, and reached San Francisco on the 11th of September. The long journey was by no means tedium, for our minds were continuously refreshed with renewed things. Upon our arrival at San Francisco, we found that we were entirely in a different atmosphere. Elevated buildings towering over the sky and congested traffic accompanied by human throng crowding the streets made me realize the smallness of my own being. I congratulated myself inwardly that my dreams were about to be realized. Having stayed there for three days, the Party was broken up, and each proceeded to his own destination according to his own choice. Mr. H.C. Chen and I, considering the fact that big universities are too bewildering for strangers, made up our mind to go to the University of California at Berkeley. The kindness which our professors and fellow students have shown to us makes us feel satisfied with our proper choice.

Travelling across the Continent furnished us with another valuable experience. I could hardly imagine the wonderful workers which the American universities have done in railroad construction. In Utah, if I remember correctly, there is a place where the whole train is transported from one side of a lake to the other by means of a steamboat. Many of such works have not been done in China so far. After seven days of arduous journey, we arrived at our long-expected destination—the historic city of Boston. Being too anxious to see our new home, we directed our taxi to arrive as soon as possible and the station in spite of our dirty suits after such a long journey. I am sure that Prof. Morgenstahl and some of his professors did notice the similarities of our appearance at that time and of our attitude, which was not unlike any other American college students. When we came to arrange our accommodations, we found it was quite a new experience for us. In China, all students are in the room in the college. But out here, because accommodations being limited, only those who have longer legs are privileged to have them. As we came so late, we had to hunt for an apartment somewhere in the vicinity. It was a hard job especially for newcomers. That day was rainy which made the situation so much the worse. We went from house to house with the natural shower above us. The evening was dark, and all our efforts were in vain. At last we gave up for the time being and went down town to the sight. Early next day, we turned in again. Luckily, a room in the beautiful Dean Hall which was previously occupied was just discharged, and we were just in time to get hold of it. We considered this to be very fortunate, for it saved us so much of our trouble and at the same time gave us the facility of mingling with our friends all the time.

Excellent Situation

Undoubtedly the situation of Tufts was well chosen. It is not in the city, which is liable to be too noisy for study, and yet it is near enough to Boston to be everything conveniently settled. On bright and sunny days, the famous Bunker Hill Monument is completely visible which reminds us ever so much of the patriotic deeds of the American forefathers.

The marked difference that I have observed more distinctly than any other thing, which exists between a college in America and that in China, is the close relationship among teachers and students. I am strongly inclined to think that it is through the close touch with the teachers that a student gains most of his knowledge. Lectures and books are not sufficient, what I have seen here is that the students are so wide and distantly separated that they have practically no chance to come in contact with each other. For this reason, it is extremely hard for them to work together for the welfare of the college.

Tufts Spirit Runs High

I have never seen any phase before where the college spirit is so high as that in Tufts. In giving the college yells and singing of college songs, everyone exerts every bit of their strength to shout in order to show their loyalty to the college. Teachers as well are no less enthusiastic than the students. Unquestionably, it is through the effort and zeal of the teachers and students here to make every college activity a wonderful success. Clubs, societies and fraternities are working zeal and mind for one and the same cause, which is the keeping up of Tufts fame.

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Judging from the systematic management of their work together with their previous records, I am totally convinced to say that their loyalty toward Tufts is unpassable. It is the result of their co-operation and sacrifice which they have given to their work. The Tufts men must be proud of their children and the Tufts men are proud of their college. What a stranger is mostly interested in when he gets to a foreign land is the customs and the habit of the place. Certainly I have found many new phases of college life which I never knew before.

Greetings are given whenever they meet: warm claps are shown whenever they have gatherings. Freshman traditions are kept to preserve the real fun in school; concerts, debating parties and all sorts of social gatherings are held as often as chance permits. All these are means of drawing everybody close to each other. Of course, they seemed young in age to me at the beginning, but the stories are different from our life at home. But a careful study teaches me that they are very valuable to us. I discovered in them the great significance of friendship which is hidden. As the cultivation of friendship is indispensable, I consider myself especially fortunate to learn them now. Up to here, I feel it is my duty to tell my readers something about schools in China as a whole.

In reference to what I have said before, I wish to add that the teachers there do help the students but not in such a familiar way as here. In recent years, quite a number of universities have been established which are more or less after the model of an European institution, not only in courses but also in all kinds of activities. Fraternities, literary societies, clubs of all branches of science, glee clubs, dramatic clubs, publications, military drill and all sorts of athletic teams are arranged by students under the supervision of teachers which result in marked success. Though the Chinese athletics have been deeply interesting, students are excessively enthusiastic about Chinese athletics. There are no longer any absorbing their whole minds in books and books only, as the recent student movement guarding against the Sinophile question here had long been stopped. When in stage of reformation, I hope they will hereafter adopt the American college system. Taking it as a model, I am assured that success is inevitable.

I was in the gymnasia the other day where I was able to see the numerous trophies and cups which our predecessors had won in different athletic contests. I can well imagine the brave and faithful work they had done to maintain the reputation of the Brown and Blue. The spirit still prevails to the present time. The fields are densely engaged every afternoon in training our heroes for future battles.

Expressions of Gratitude

Taking this opportunity may I express my gratitude to the kindness of the American friends shown to the Chinese students. I still remember distinctly how my mind was stirred with curiosity and fear when I knew I was actually going to come to my long expected country. I was wondering how I could get along with the people of another race, how they would treat me, and how I could miss my home and my friends? Then my father said to me pacifyingly, "Kindness wins kindness. If you go about your-mindedly, making every consideration to others, you will find the Americans just as good to you as your own folks and kin." His statement has certainly been proved true. The warm welcome and the close friendship of the Tufts men have been so readily given to me that I have not had a chance to return them with smiles. I began to realize that the differences between races are but skin deep. If you skin off the surface, they are exactly the same. It is but natural we should admire the universal brotherhood of mankind.

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