Urbana, Illinois
March 9, 1905

My dear sir:

Inclosed please find a copy of a memorandum which I laid before the President of the United States a short time ago, and which is under consideration by him and his advisors at present.

I think the American people does not fully realize the immense opportunity which is now before it to influence in a very marked degree one of the greatest social, intellectual and industrial movements now going on in the world, namely; the regeneration of China.

We shall be dragged into this movement in some form or other whether we will or not. It is possible for us at this time to plant ourselves distinctly on the side of those nations which propose to use intellectual and moral force, rather than brute force, in affecting the development of events in that mighty empire. The memorandum contains suggestions as to one of the lines of possible influence.

If you approve the underlying thought, I am sure that editorial endorsement of the same in the columns of your paper will have a marked influence in advancing the project.

Faithfully yours,

[Signature]
Memorandum
Concerning the Sending of
An Educational Commission to China.

EDMUND J. JAMES
President of the University of Illinois.

The recent developments in the Orient have made it apparent that China and the United States are destined to come into ever more intimate relations, social, intellectual and commercial. The Chinese will come to this country for the purpose of studying our institutions and our industry. A striking evidence of this fact is afforded by the work of the Chinese Commission now in the United States. Our own people will go to China for the purpose of studying Chinese institutions and industry. Anything which will stimulate this mutual intercourse and increase mutual knowledge must redound to the benefit of both nations.

A great service would be done to both countries if the government of the United States would at the present juncture send an educational commission to China, whose chief function should be to visit the Imperial Government, and with its consent each of the provincial governments of the Empire, for the purpose of extending, through the authorities of these provinces, to the young Chinese who may desire to go abroad to study, a formal invitation on the part of our American institutions of learning to avail themselves of the facilities of such institutions. The appointment of such a commission would draw still closer the bonds which unite these two great nations in sympathy and friendship.

SOME CONSIDERATIONS IN FAVOR OF THE ABOVE PLAN.

China is upon the verge of a revolution. It will of course not be as rapid as was the revolution in Japan, if for no other reason, because of the enormous numbers of the nation and the enormous extent of its territory. But it is not believed that this revolution which has already begun can ever again suffer more than a temporary setback and reaction.

Every great nation of the world will inevitably be drawn into more or less intimate relations with this gigantic development. It is for them to determine, each for itself, what these relations shall be,—whether those of amity and friendship and kindness, or those of brute force and the mailed fist. The United States ought not to hesitate as to its choice in this matter.

The nation which succeeds in educating the young Chinese of the present generation will be the nation which, for a given expenditure of effort, will reap the largest possible returns in moral, intellectual and commercial influence. If the United States had succeeded thirty-five years ago, as it looked at one time as if it might, in turning the current of Chinese students to this country, and had succeeded in keeping that current large, we should today be controlling the development of China in that most satisfactory and subtle of all ways,—through the intellectual and spiritual domination of its leaders.
China has already sent hundreds, indeed thousands of its young men into foreign countries to study. It is said that there are more than five thousand Chinese studying in Japan, while there are many hundreds in Europe—three hundred in the little state of Belgium alone.

This means that when these Chinese return home from Europe, they will advise China to imitate Europe rather than America,—England, France and Germany instead of the United States. It means that they will recommend English and French and German teachers and engineers for employment in China in positions of trust and responsibility rather than American. It means that English, French and German goods will be bought instead of American, and that industrial concessions of all kinds will be made to Europe instead of to America.

Now it is natural of course that the great majority of Chinese youth should go to Japan to study rather than to European countries or the United States, owing to its proximity, to racial affinity and to the smaller cost of travel and living.

On the other hand, the Chinese are in many points jealous of the Japanese, and, other things being equal, would often prefer to send their young people to other countries.

Among all these countries, the United States would be the most natural one to choose, if it had not been for our anti-Chinese legislation, and still more for the unfriendly spirit in which we have administered this legislation, for the Chinese Government at any rate, never really objected to our legislation directed toward preventing the immigration of Chinese laborers, but only to the manner in which we passed such laws and the way in which we administered them.

We are the natural friends of the Chinese. We have been their real political friends. We have stood between the Chinese Empire and dismemberment; we have come more nearly giving them the square deal in all our relations in the East than any other nation. They are consequently less suspicious of us so far as our politics are concerned than of any other people. Their justly sore feeling over our treatment of Chinese gentlemen in our custom houses, will yield quickly to fair and decent conduct on our part.

It is believed that by a very small effort the good will of the Chinese may now be won over in a large and satisfactory way. We may not admit the Chinese laborer, but we can treat the Chinese student decently and extend to him the facilities of our institutions of learning. Our colleges and universities are today far better adapted for giving the average Chinese student what he desires in the way of European civilization, than the schools and colleges of any European country. We need but to bring these facts to their attention in order to secure their attendance here, with all the beneficial results which would flow from such an opportunity to influence the entire current of their thought and feelings.
If a commissioner with one or two assistants were sent to China representing the American Government in a formal way in the field of education and should extend to the Chinese people through the Government at Pekin and through the provincial governments, (this is necessary because the provincial governments are in a certain way almost independent of the Imperial government) a cordial invitation from the United States and from the institutions of higher learning in the United States, to avail themselves of these advantages exactly as they would if they were their own institutions, it is probable that a great impression might be produced upon the Chinese people. The Chinese appreciate, as well as we, the compliment implied in sending a formal commission of this sort to another country. It is a recognition such as any country might be proud of, and the Chinese are a singularly proud and sensitive people in everything that concerns their dignity.

Such a commission going to each of the provinces would have an opportunity to give the Chinese Government much information about the United States and its educational institutions; and as the inquiries of such governments would not be limited, of course, to education and educational institutions, so the information spread abroad throughout China would not relate simply to educational matters, but to industrial and commercial as well. It would be possible through this method of coming in contact with influential Chinese to recommend directly to them in response to their requests American teachers, engineers, and other people whose services they might like to obtain.

I mention this point especially because I know that the leading Chinese statesmen are anxious to get just the right kind of men from America and Europe as assistants in all sorts of business and governmental enterprises, having had myself during the last year, four inquiries from different Chinese Governments for young men who would be willing to spend five or six years in the Chinese public service in responsible and influential positions.

In a word, the visit of such a commission would exert a manifold and far reaching influence exceeding greatly in value any possible cost of the enterprise. It would have results in many unexpected directions out-running all our present anticipations and showing new and surprising possibilities of usefulness in the fields of education, business and statesmanship.

The extension of such moral influence as this would even in a purely material sense, mean a larger return for a given outlay than could be obtained in any other manner.

Trade tends to follow moral and spiritual domination far more inevitably than it follows the flag.

It is probable that the sum assigned to the United States to defray its share of the expenses of the Pekin Expedition will prove to be larger than was the actual outlay. This excess should, of course, be returned in some form to China. Such a commission might properly make a careful investigation as to the manner in which such return might be most advantageous to the Chinese.