



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

There are many strange things in this world, but nothing is more strange than man's propensity to make extravagant claims about his discoveries. The Russians, for instance, claim that they discovered, or created, the potato when it has been, absolutely, confirmed that this vegetable was introduced to Europe by the Iberians, who found the tuber, during a visit to New France (now known as Canada). The concept of crop rotation is attributed, in European history, to George Washington Carver, when, in fact, it was the Chinese, who developed that idea, back in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 A.D.). According to recorded Chinese history, Emperor Tang Ming Wong, in about 688 A.D., sent a messenger from Shaanxi, a province of East-Central China, which was the cultural and political centre of China, in those days, to Canton (which was an area, known to be barbaric in nature, its peoples, being without education and not used to following the Emperor's orders) in order to bring back some lychees for Emperor Tang's beloved concubine, Yeung Kwei Fei. The messenger rode day and night, wearing out many horses, but, in a matter of weeks, he returned back to Emperor Tang with some lychees and the news that the lychees of Canton were not doing well, that year. So the wise emperor said: 'Then, let the barbarians eat loong ngan while Concubine Yeung Kwei Fei will eat lychees!' The order was sent to Canton that, every five years, thereafter, the barbarians must grow loong ngan in place of lychees, with the exception of certain lychee bushes, which must be moved to higher ground and maintained for the pleasure of Concubine Yeung Kwei Fei. Thus, crop rotation was, by design of Emperor Tang Ming Wong, started in the seventh century after the birth of Christ. George Washington Carver, therefore, was at least one thousand three hundred years too late to make the claim that he discovered and/or developed crop rotation. Canada and the US may have discovered the humble potato, but it was the Chinese who discovered and, then, perfected, crop rotation. Only the best things come from China, you know. Opium – which was known as tincture of laburnum in Victorian England – was introduced to China by the British traders in the Nineteenth Century, during the reign of Emperor Henry Pu, who was the last emperor of the Ching Dynasty and, therefore, the last emperor that China ever had. The British, led by the bosses of that ignominious trading company of that period, known, simply, as Jardine Company, wanted to subjugate the Chinese and to steal all of the goodies from the country. And so, by stupefying the majority of the population of China, the British traders were able to control much of the commerce to and from Europe and Asia. That is how England stole Hongkong from China in 1842, you know.

China, also, was, in times of yore, the greatest seafaring nation in history. It was the Chinese who discovered New Zealand in about 3 A.D., you know. Our ships had been sailing the Bass Strait long before British Explorer George Bass was even a twinkle in the eye of Mrs Selwynn Bass. Chinese explorers, looking for new lands and new herbs in order to give the empress more years of production, and in the spirit of adventure, discovered New Zealand, many years before Captain James Cook landed on New Zealand's east coast in 1769. It seems only too clear, now, that the Maoris of the Cook Islands hitched a ride on a Chinese junk about thirty two years before the birth of Jesus Christ because the Cook Islands did not have enough water and the Maoris were thinking of emigrating to a place where water was plentiful. That is the reason that some Maoris, today, have a Chinese name. The Chinese settled in Christchurch, on the southern island of New Zealand, and taught the Maoris how

to rotate crops and to develop new strains of rice and bak choy. Then, they brought back the vegetables to China, along with some of the Maoris and herbs. The Maoris liked China so much that they married some Chinese women. That is the reason that some Chinese, today, are a little darker than others: Maori blood, you see. Captain James Cook was a braggart, who did not know how to navigate properly and placed New Zealand as being Longitude 185 degrees West. Such nonsense! Every Chinese of the First Century A.D. knew better because the Chinese invented the compass and the first chronometer. Everybody thinks that the first chronometer was discovered by John Harrison in 1759. But the Chinese had had a very accurate timing device in service as far back as First Century A.D. As for the compass, the Chinese, using a single grain of rice, floating in a bowl of water, could tell which way the wind was blowing and which way was up and which way was down. At sea, after determining the exact latitude of a junk, the crew would eat the rice, which, by that time, had become soft and easy to digest. That was the beginning of congee, which the English stole and called it porridge.

And, now, we, the descendants of those great Chinese explorers and inventors of past centuries, have come the full circle, with the Government of China, having reclaimed Hongkong, with a Chinese, back in charge of these four hundred and sixteen square miles, at the bottom of the greatest country the world has ever known. Grandpa just said to me, the other day: 'I hope that I can live up to the great tradition of my country and can bring my people to feel the joy of belonging to the Motherland, where lychee and loong ngan grow and where the Yellow River rises from the Kunlun Mountains and flows three thousand miles to the Gulf of Bo Hai.' It was at about that time that the poor dear fell asleep in his chair – again. Greatness! Ah, where is the credit that we deserve? Time for bed.

Love you.

The Chief Lady of Hongkong

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