

Upon the Fairy Raft – Exploring Yichang

Yichang lies over 1,100 miles (1,770km) from Shanghai and during the 19th century it acted as a gateway to the remote western provinces. The city was an important transshipping port since it lay at the head of steam navigation on the Yangtze River. Henry was released from his training in Shanghai on March 10th and departed for Wuhan on the steamer *Kiang-Tung*, reaching the Hankow district of Wuhan some nine days later. Hankow was then one of the busiest ports on the Yangtze and a major tea distribution centre. The district possessed the finest bund in China, though like other towns along the river it was prone to flooding, and travel from house to house had to be carried out by means of sampans. After a brief stay in the city, he set off on a smaller craft on the last leg of the journey and Yichang was finally reached at 8pm on April 16th 1882.

Yichang lies on the left bank of the Yangtze not far from the eastern mouth of the famous Three Gorges, at an altitude of only 21m (70ft) above sea level. It is at this point, having travelled through thousands of kilometres of rugged mountainous topography that the Yangtze suddenly descends onto China's eastern plains and sprawls to over a kilometre wide. The countryside immediately surrounding the city is broken into low hills which are more or less pyramidal in shape. To the east, these hills gradually merge into a great plain that extends all the way to the east coast. To the north, south and west of Yichang they are mere foothills to ranges that rise from 1,500 to 3,050m (5,000 to 10,000 ft) in height, these spurs being the most easterly extensions of the mighty Himalayan range.

Yichang became a treaty port in April 1877 and continued to be the furthest inland treaty port for many years, since large passenger and merchant vessels were at that time unable to navigate the gorges upriver to Chongqing. At Yichang, cargo was unloaded from large boats plying the Yangtze and was reloaded onto smaller junks running between Yichang and Chongqing. Six steamers regularly traded between Yichang and Wuhan and the many thousands of native crafts lined up along the banks of the river attested to the city's importance as a trading port.

Yichang was then a walled city with narrow cobbled streets lined by low traditional buildings with mud walls and tiled roofs. About 30,000 people lived there, of whom a large number made their living from the enormous trade of goods shipped up and down the Yangtze. The principal exports were items of *materia medica* transported down the gorges from Sichuan and Tibet and from the mountains north of the city. This trade consisted largely of medicinal rhubarb root, *Rheum officinale*, of which enormous quantities went to Europe, and items like elk horn and dried centipedes. Other exports included raw silk and musk. There was also a large import trade of Manchester goods like cotton, long-cloth, figured prints and velveteen.¹ All this trade passed through the hands of the Customs Service officials.

Fishing was also an important industry and enormous specimens of the Chinese sturgeon, *Acipenser sinensis*, weighing anything up to 500kgs (1,100lbs) were captured in nets. On the opposite bank of the river was a small village, known to the European residents as "otter village" because of the fact that the natives had trained otters for fishing. These otters could be seen at any time of day tied up in the bows of sampans and appeared to be quite tame.

When the Yangtze was low in winter and early spring, beggars could be seen inhabiting the shallow caves scooped out by the action of the water on the riverbank. There they just about existed, in a miserable state, skinning and cooking dogs and cats, or anything else they could lay their hands on for food and they were often treated with terrible cruelty by the richer inhabitants of the city.²

A small foreign compound had been built near Yichang in 1877 along the river front south-east of the city walls to accommodate western residents. On the opposite side of the Yangtze River to the foreign settlement lay a conspicuously pyramidal-shaped hill known to European residents as "the Dome". This hill was supposed to exert a baneful influence over the town and it was held responsible for Yichang's poverty of local *literati*. It was not until the Taoist Tungshantzu Temple was built on a higher crest behind the town, sufficiently high to overlook the Dome, that this evil influence was counteracted. The same year as the Tungshantzu Temple was completed a local student passed the provincial examinations with high honours thus proving the beneficial effects of the building.³ The temple was said to have been one of the most strikingly conspicuous objects at Yichang and was richly endowed. Geomancy enters largely into Taoist customs, and following the principles of Feng Shui, local officials believed that the area along Yichang's riverbank, between the Dome and the Tungshantzu Temple, had good *chi* or energy, and so it was chosen in 1877 as the site for the foreign compound.

Near the base of the Dome, the European community had a small cemetery and their greatest difficulty was preventing the local Chinese from desecrating the graves. The Dome was approached through a very picturesque glen called the Monastery Valley in which there was a temple and cave. The summit of the hill lay at 183m (600ft) and allowed panoramic views of the city, the nearby foreign compound and the Yangtze.

The Customs House was based within the compound and it was to become Augustine Henry's home for the next seven years. Besides the customs and the British and German Consulates were two missions and buildings belonging to a few European businessmen. The Protestant mission, belonging to the Church of Scotland, was in the charge of the Rev. G. Cockburn who was the oldest foreign inhabitant at Yichang. His wife was the first European woman to live in

the city. The Roman Catholic Franciscan mission was presided over by Bishop Benjamin and there was also a small convent. Behind the compound lay paddy fields and areas in which vegetables and cotton were cultivated. To the rear of these were burial mounds and a number of large ponds.

Yichang was considered a healthy place to live. Summer temperatures often rose to 30°C (86°F) while winters were cold and snow lay on the ground. A free ferry service was operated across the river. The small foreign community was regarded by locals with suspicion and often with open hostility. Rumours existed at Yichang that foreigners ate children who disappeared, or used their bodies to prepare precious charms and medicaments.⁴

The Three Gorges and the Yangtze

Above Yichang lie the famous Three Gorges, one of the most famous landscapes in all of China. For over two thousand years the Yangtze has been a vital trade artery for inland navigation and the means by which products have been transported to and from the less densely populated western provinces. Originating on the Tibetan Plateau, the Yangtze is the world's third largest river and has a course of 6,380km (3,964 miles). To contemporary Chinese, it is the *Chang Jiang* – the Long River or Eternal River. The name used in the west, the Yangtze, means 'Son of the Sea' and is an old name for the river's tidal waters near the East China Sea.

The Three Gorges begin in eastern Sichuan province and extend along the Yangtze River for 196km (122 miles) and cross into Hubei province before terminating above the city of Yichang. The Yangtze's last great obstacles before Yichang are the famed Three Gorges, one of the great geological wonders of the world. Over millions of years the river has incised an incredibly deep channel into the folded rocks of the Wushan mountain range in Sichuan forming the first of the gorges, the Qutang Gorge. With peaks soaring to over 1,220m (4,000ft) the gorges have inspired China's most famous landscape artists and moved poets and scholars to reflect on the magnificence of nature.

The shortest and the narrowest of the gorges, the Qutang Gorge extends for 8km (5 miles) and is known locally as "the gorge of the bellows" since furious winds from nearby mountains are rapidly funnelled through its cliff walls. Enclosed by peaks that rise over 1,000m (3,280ft) above the river, this gorge is well known for its soaring cliff walls of carboniferous limestone and overhanging precipices. As a consequence, sailing through this spectacular stretch of river has been likened to travelling along an underground cave. In places the channel of the river is only 50m (164ft) wide and it is said the river at that point is of an appalling depth and on its floor are the countless remains of sunken vessels. According to E. H. Wilson soundings were taken by British gunboats in the Three Gorges in 1900 and these gave 63.5 fathoms (116m) of water depth in two places, at Yichang the depth was less than 1.8m (6ft).⁵

On exiting the Qutang Gorge and entering the confluence of the Daning River (a tributary from the northern side), the Yangtze enters the Wu Gorge, named for the nearby town of Wushan. The *Wu Xia* or "Witch's Gorge" is longest of the Three Gorges, and extends for over 45km (28 miles) from the mouth of the Daning River near Wushan in Sichuan to beyond the city of Badong in Hubei. At this point the Yangtze follows an erratic zigzag course and often blindly approaches cliff walls before turning sharply to flow onwards through some of China's most wonderful scenery. The landscape here is hauntingly beautiful. Cliff faces rise sheer out of the water to over 610m (2,000ft) above the river and above them soar the massive peaks of the Wushan Mountains, with names like "Flying Phoenix" and "Climbing Dragon". It is through the Wu Gorge that the provincial frontier is crossed before finally meeting with the last great obstacle on the Yangtze, the Xiling or Yichang Gorge.

The Xiling Gorge extends for some 66km (41 miles) from Zigui, a town located in the valley of the Xiang Xi River, to the Nanjin Pass near the Cave of the Three Pilgrims, a few kilometres above Yichang. The scenery there is ruggedly enchanting. Above a coffee coloured, silt laden Yangtze rise canyon walls so colossal as to block out the sun's rays and the river flows often bounded on either side by perpendicular cliffs almost 610m (2,000ft) high. In the 19th century it was this gorge that achieved notoriety for its violent rapids and dangerous shoals that took a heavy toll on vessels and on the crews who worked them.

The main gorge system through which the Yangtze flows is joined by numerous tributaries, which flow through glens and ravines of outstanding beauty. These streams almost always fill the floor of the glen and are bounded by massive limestone cliffs 305m (1,000ft) or more sheer, on which vegetation is rampant and following the wet season waterfalls are everywhere to be seen.

In the 19th century, during the month of September, thousands of tiny lamps were floated down the surface of the Yangtze. They extended for several miles and were released a short distance above Yichang. These lights were offerings to the deity for the souls of those who had lost their lives by drowning in the turbulent rapids and consisted of a cup with a little oil into which a wick was extended. The wicks were made from the pith of the common rush, *Juncus effusus*, which was harvested further up the gorges and in which there was a considerable down-river trade.

Life on board a junk in the Three Gorges was hard and often entailed dangerous work. The largest of the junks had crews of up to eighty men and the heaviest work was done by trackers on the riverside who had to haul crafts of several tonnes upriver over fierce rapids and whirlpools. These immense whirlpools caused extraordinary destruction and once a junk was caught in their reaches it was tossed around like a cork. Up to four hundred men pulling bamboo ropes in unison across these terrifying obstacles was a common sight in the gorges. Very often, all these trackers had to work with were recessed towpaths barely 45cm (18ins) wide that had been cut into the cliffs 30m (100ft) above the river. Should the boats make a sudden outward sheer and if these coolies lost time in disengaging themselves from the tracking rope they were very likely to be dragged to their deaths off the cliff face and be swept away in the violent currents of the river below. The Yangtze was at its most dangerous in autumn and winter when the level of the river was low and when many of the huge granite boulders projected 6m (20ft) above the surface. A single rapid of only 200m

(220 yards) could take an entire day to cross, giving some indication of how slow and difficult navigation was in the gorges during the late 19th century.

Early days as a botanist and plant collector

Augustine Henry's training as a medical doctor would have given him a basic knowledge of botany. An interest in plant identification and botany would also have been stimulated through his work in the Customs Service. One of his routine duties was to compile lists of plant and animal derived products of *materia medica* that regularly passed through the treaty ports. This was no easy matter. While he could locate the common Chinese name of a plant it was impossible to get its botanical equivalent and it occurred to him that the only practical means of solving this problem was by forwarding specimens to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. On March 20th 1885, Henry penned a letter to Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911), then in his final year as Director of Kew. Enclosing seeds of the varnish tree (*Rhus verniciflua*) he penned the following lines:

I beg to forward you a packet of seeds of the Chinese varnish tree ... in the hope of their proving interesting. The tree grows in the mountains about here, and also occurs in Chekiang and other provinces of China. According to Bretschneider it is only partially known to botanists ... I hope to be able to obtain the flower and leaf this year. I have not seen the tree growing, as I have not made a sufficiently long excursion into the mountains.

A good number of medicines are grown about here, and there seems to be a fair number of interesting plants; and as this part of China is not very well known to botanists (at any rate, as compared with the south and also the northern and maritime provinces) interesting specimens might be obtained. I know very little of botany and have scarcely any books of reference. However, I should be very glad to collect specimens and forward them to you if you think they would prove useful. In this case any hints would be very acceptable ...

Note. The seeds ought to succeed if planted in London. The natives say the tree will not grow on the hot plains, but requires a cold climate. The varnish is got by incising the bark. Out of the seeds an oil is expressed which is used in making candles. Other particulars I shall try and ascertain when I get an opportunity of making an excursion into the mountains. Two kinds of primrose are now in bloom here. Two kinds of soap tree also occur here. In the hills raspberries, strawberries and blackberries are also to be met with.

In April 1885, Henry received a letter from the famous English botanist, Henry Fletcher Hance (1827-1886), then vice Consul at Huangpu (then Whampoa) in Guangdong province in south-east China. Hance was a leading authority on the flora of China and had helped several botanists and plant collectors in their work there. At the time of his death, just a year after writing to Henry, his private herbarium amounted to 22,437 species.¹³ Hance suggested to Henry a number of botanical works to help him in his endeavours, including Franchet's *Plantae Davidianae*, which had been published in Paris that spring.

In a later letter Hance advised Henry on how to protect his specimens from the ravages of insect damage and how to properly press, dry and preserve a herbarium specimen. Hance passed on much valuable advice to Henry including the following very valuable tip, "I will tell you (what no manual I think does) that so long as a specimen strikes cold to the palm laid on it, it is not sufficiently dry". The same methods of preserving plants in the field described in this letter are still employed today.

Henry was not the first person to collect plants around Yichang. Thomas Watters had arrived in Yichang as Acting British Consul in April 1878 and began collecting plants, which he sent to Henry Fletcher Hance in Guangdong and also to the herbarium at Kew. The greatest authority on Buddhism of his time, Watters was described as a quiet, unostentatious gentleman, a genial Irishman with a good sense of humour, and one of the ablest and most learned men who ever went to China.¹⁴ Thomas Watters hailed from Newtownards in County Down and Henry had met his sister, Martha, while studying at University College, Galway.¹⁵ Augustine Henry became a regular visitor to the Watters' home and he soon fell in love with the young lady. He proposed marriage to her but the offer was declined. Despite this, both remained good friends and kept up a lively correspondence during Henry's years in China.

Watters' interest in plants may have stemmed from an appeal from Kew, sent out to Irish and British residents based in China, for material relating to the economic botany of China. Watters was not to become as prolific a collector as Henry, but he discovered many interesting plants around Yichang. One of the most important of these was *Primula obconica*, now a common and popular houseplant in Europe and North America. In the gorges above Yichang it grew on the steep slopes and cliff faces in hundreds of thousands, so much so that the same cliffs became a sheet of colour in early spring. In fact it was so abundant there that Augustine Henry later dismissed it as a weed. Another important find by Watters was the very beautiful *Viburnum utile*, a large evergreen shrub carrying broad corymbs of white, scented flowers in early summer. The stems of this shrub were made into pipe stems by the local peasants, hence the specific epithet, *utile* – useful. Thomas Watters' most beautiful find, however, has to be *Rehmannia angulata*, a short-lived perennial similar to our native foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and a common cliff plant in the gorges.

Watters probably advised the English plant hunter, Charles Maries (1851-1902) about the best locations to collect plants on his arrival at Yichang in the spring of 1879. Maries had been employed by the famous British nursery firm, Veitch of Chelsea with instructions to collect plants on their behalf in Japan, Taiwan and China. Maries did not fare well with the locals at Yichang however. He was often threatened by them and had his baggage robbed on a number of occasions. As James Veitch was later to state 'Maries had enthusiasm, but lacked "staying" power'.¹⁶ Maries has gone down in

botanical history for having narrowly missed discovering one of the richest temperate floras in the world. Even Ernest Wilson found this incredible:

... He found the natives there unfriendly, and after staying a week was compelled to return... For some curious reason or other he concluded that his predecessor, Fortune, had exhausted the floral resources of China, and, most extraordinary of all, his conclusions were accepted! When at Ichang, he could but have gone some three days' journey north, south or west, he would have secured a haul of new plants such as the botanical and horticultural world had never dreamed of. By the irony of fate it was left for two or three others to discover and obtain what had been almost within his grasp.¹⁷

Despite have missed being the person to expose the enormous wealth of the flora of Central China Maries did however manage to introduce a number of plants to cultivation from Yichang and the gorges including *Primula obconica* which must have made the Veitch firm a small fortune over the years.

Help from Joseph Hooker and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Back in London, Joseph Hooker must have read Henry's letter from Yichang with great interest. Kew was more than willing to help in any way it could. Ethnobotany had been shaped by imperialistic motives and Britain with its expanding empire needed new raw materials, medicines, fibres, dyes and food sources to transplant to her colonies. Kew was at the centre of all of this distribution and was eager to exploit whatever economically valuable plants-derived products Henry might find. Henry, for his part, spoke Chinese fluently, had a smattering of botany through his medical training and could record common Chinese names and therefore he would be very useful to Kew.

Hooker himself had travelled widely throughout his life, visiting Antarctica, South America and the Himalaya while still a young man, making enormous collections of plants and seeds along the way. He is widely regarded as the greatest botanist of the 19th century and Henry could not have approached a more qualified person from whom to seek advice.

The enthusiastic response from Hooker induced Henry to redouble his efforts. From Kew, Henry also received a pamphlet containing further instructions on how to collect and dry plants, stating the importance of field notes and labelling and numbering specimens in the field. Henry collected up to ten duplicate sets of specimens and in his letters to Kew, he explained that he would keep one set for himself and the others would be forwarded to the herbarium there. All he asked in return was that he be sent a list of determinations with the botanical names of his specimens corresponding with each number. By this means he was able to build up his own correctly labelled herbarium in China and could finally match colloquial Chinese names with western botanical equivalents.

In a second letter to Joseph Hooker, Henry mentioned his plans to lead an extended expedition into the high mountains to the north of Yichang from where many of the famous plant-derived medicines passing through the Customs Station at Yichang were harvested.¹⁹

In November of 1885, Augustine Henry sent his very first consignment of 1,073 dried specimens and 183 items of fruits and seeds to Kew. For the next fifteen years Kew was to receive a continual flow of material. Each specimen was carefully numbered, stating the region from where it had been collected, giving details of the plant's habit, habitat, economic uses, date of collection and Chinese name. The collection arrived in London the following spring and caused great excitement when examined by taxonomists. The consignment was a revelation and proved to be rich in new species and varieties. These were not just botanically interesting, but of great beauty and of enormous horticultural potential. At a time when it had been stated that the flora of China was thoroughly known and had little new material to offer Henry's specimens must have caused quite a stir. In the Kew archives is a note in the handwriting of Professor Daniel Oliver (1830-1916), Keeper of the Kew Herbarium, stating: "This collection is one of the most important which we have ever received from the interior of China."

Badong, Yichang and Liantuo – the 1887 season

Again his collections for the 1887 season were rich in new species. Badong supplied an incredible number of novelties, including *Rhus punjabensis* var. *sinica*, a small tree to 12m (39ft) tall that was known colloquially in Hubei as *hung-fu-yang*. It is rare in gardens though there is a fine tree near the Temperate House at Kew. Its large pyramidal panicles of fruits are very beautiful in early autumn.

An interesting discovery made by Henry's Changyang collector that year was the *du zhong* or *tu chung*, *Eucommia ulmoides*, a new monotypic genus in its own new family. This dioecious tree is the source of the very valuable Chinese drug *tu-chung* and was mentioned by the Emperor Shennong in his herbal. Both the bark and leaves of *Eucommia* contain large amounts of gutta percha, an elastic-like substance, that when snapped and drawn across exhibits a silvery sheen of innumerable threads of gum. When heated they melt and burn with the characteristic smell of rubber.

Eucommia ulmoides was introduced to France by Père Farges in 1890 and seedlings were raised at the Jardin Colonial, in the garden of the Faculty of Medicine and by the nursery of Maurice de Vilmorin near Paris. In November 1897, de Vilmorin presented a plant to Kew, the first to be cultivated in England. By 1901, the Jardin Colonial was growing experimental plots of *Eucommia* in Vietnam and North Africa. At Glasnevin two plants were raised from Wilson's 383, from a collection made from a cultivated tree in Badong in April 1908. One of these trees was 4.5m (15ft) tall by 1921 and the other tree was about 2.5m (8ft) and bushy. The first tree mentioned still exists in the old Chinese shrubbery and is now about 15m (49ft) high.

According to Henry an enormous trade of *Eucommia* bark existed in late 19th century China. From the central provinces of Hubei, Sichuan and Shaanxi, *tu chung* was brought to the Hankow district of Wuhan and from that port alone 100 tonnes were exported annually by steamer to other treaty ports. The product commanded a high price and the Hankow exports reaped £18,000 in 1888 for the Customs Service. Wilson stated it was taken as a tonic (it has been used in China for over 2,000 years), a diuretic, an aphrodisiac and a cure for colds. It is also used as a tonic for the liver, to strengthen sinews and bones, to prevent miscarriage and to prevent significant back pain in pregnant women.

During the course of his travels in China Henry collected over eighty distinct species and varieties of *Rubus* many of which were highly ornamental. Henry reckoned that each new valley or mountain yielded some new species of *Rubus* and many of these bore fruits of exquisite flavour. One of the finest of these has to be *Rubus ichangensis*, a slender semi-evergreen rambling shrub to 7m (23ft) long. Wilson, who later introduced this species in 1900, regarded it as one of the finest of Chinese rubi on account of the beautiful and long (60cm – 1ft) panicles of orange fruits. It thrives in the mild Irish climate and there are good plants at Glasnevin, Kilmacurragh and Mount Usher.

The pink-flowered *Indigofera ichangensis* was a common shrub in western Hubei, particularly on the cliffs of the Xiling Gorge where it grew with other novelties such as *Philadelphus hupehensis*, *Peucedanum henryi*, *Sindecites henryi* (a new climbing genus in the Apocynaceae) and that very striking vine, *Tetrastigma hemsleyanum*. *Cotoneaster dammeri* was an 1887 discovery from Huangpo Shan near Changyang and it has become one of the most popular evergreen groundcover shrubs used in modern landscape design.

An interesting find in the glens above Yichang was the lace-bark pine, *Pinus bungeana*. Originally discovered by the Russian botanist, Alexander von Bunge (1803-1890) in the grounds of a Buddhist temple near Beijing in 1831, it has always been planted in pairs by temples and courtyards and in the tomb enclosures of the imperial classes, hence the superstition that to thrive they should be planted on the grave of a Manchu prince. *Pinus bungeana* was introduced to cultivation by Robert Fortune in 1846 by means of living plants. Augustine Henry's collections were the first records of truly wild trees in China. It is a beautiful small tree with grey-green bark flaking away to create a patchwork of green, purple, yellow, white and brown.

Maddenia wilsonii was rare around Yichang, Henry found it once only as a 3m (10ft) tall multistemmed shrub and strangely it grew in the same area as *Sorbus wilsoniana*, both of which were described and named from material later gathered by E. H. Wilson. The evergreen *Clematis quinquefoliata* inhabited thickets and woodland verges where it scrambled its way to 5m (16ft) overhead. Allied to *Clematis armandii*, it differs in having pinnate leaves and the lateral cymes of small white flowers are produced in autumn.

Henry's most famous discovery must be the lovely lily that bears his name, *Lilium henryi*, which he found near the summit of Moji Shan in July 1887. He also later collected a few scattered plants on the limestone crags of the Xiling Gorge and stated it was common on grassy slopes by cliffs near a Taoist monastery at Pingshanba. According to Wilson, Henry's lily had been virtually eliminated from the type locality by the time of his arrival in 1900. In the wild it grows to about 1m (3.3ft) tall and bears about 3 to 4 pendant, orange, turban-like flowers. In cultivation it performs far better and is one of the most glorious of all Asiatic lilies, thriving in alkaline soils and hating a peat-based soil. Ernest Wilson was full of praise for Henry's lily and when writing a monograph on the group many years later he penned the following lines, 'It is peculiarly fitting that such a noble addition to our gardens should bear the honoured name of a pioneer who has done so much to acquaint a sceptical world of the rich floral wealth of interior China, - Professor Augustine Henry'.¹⁴

Once again Man Yang's collections from Badong were full of new, exciting plants. One of the most beautiful of these has to be *Corydalis cheilanthifolia*, a short-lived perennial to 30cm (1ft) tall, bearing rosettes of finely dissected bronzed foliage in winter and early spring, above which it produces upright spikes of golden spurred flowers. In Badong its bedfellows included *Acer davidii*, *Angelica henryi*, *Asplenium henryi*, *Dicentra spectabilis*, *Eomecon chionantha*, *Aegopodium henryi*, *Arisaema erubescens* and *Iris tectorum*.

Another common plant on cliffs at Badong was *Androsace henryi*, a clump-forming perennial bearing large umbels of pure white flowers. It was also later collected in Sichuan by the Swedish botanist Harry Smith (1889-1971), by George Forrest in Yunnan and by Frank Kingdon Ward (1885-1958) in Burma. Wilson introduced it through Veitch's Coombe Wood nursery, though it has long been lost to cultivation which is a great pity. In mountain meadows Wilson's yarrow, *Achillea wilsoniana* was a common sight. Henry collected it several times, both north and south of the Yangtze.

Ligularia veitchiana was common in marshes in the higher mountains above Badong and according to Henry it was known as *ch'ing ho yeh*. Wilson introduced it many years later and it was named for his employers. It is still popular in gardens on account of its large, rounded bold foliage and 2m (6.5ft) tall spikes of showy yellow daisy-like flowers which are carried during August and September. Another Henry discovery/Wilson introduction is *Lithocarpus cleistocarpus*, a widespreading evergreen tree to 30m (98ft). It was known colloquially as the *chou-ko-li* and its tough wood was much in demand with local carpenters. The largest trees in the British Isles and Ireland grow in Caerhays Castle in Cornwall and are 22m (72ft) tall.

The Chinese witch-hazel, *Hamamelis mollis* was described at Kew from Henry's 1887 Badong collections but, unknown to botanists there, it had been previously discovered and introduced by Charles Maries in 1879. It is incredible to think that such a valuable new shrub grew unrecognised for 20 years in their nursery and was merely considered a superior form of *Hamamelis japonica*. The identity of the Veitch plant was corrected by George Nicholson, the Curator of Kew and the company did not begin to propagate it until 1898.

Another exciting discovery from Badong was *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*, one of the finest of all the flowering dogwoods. Henry called it the *shih-tsaio* and E. H. Wilson later recorded it as being common around Yichang. Wilson's

223, collected near Yichang in 1907, has formed a fine tree at the western end of the pond at Glasnevin where it forms a beautiful picture every June when covered in masses of white bracteate flowers which later age to blush-pink. It was from the parent of the old Glasnevin tree (W. 223) that the variety was described, though Henry had discovered it a good two decades earlier.

Emmenopterys henryi was another remarkable new genus and Henry stated it was known around Changyang and Badong as the *hsiang-kou*. It was common throughout the Three Gorges region where it formed trees to 30m (98ft) tall with girths of up to 4m (13ft). The specific epithet is very apt and derives from the Greek, *ēmmēnēs* (lasting) and *ptēryx* (a wing) alluding to the fact that one of the calyx lobes develops into a large white leaf-like appendage, adding to the beauty of the tree at flowering time and persisting on the tree to later serve as a sail to distribute the fruits.

Emmenopterys henryi was first introduced to cultivation from Yichang by E. H. Wilson (W. 622) through the Arnold Arboretum in November 1907. A tree at Kew was obtained from this source in 1913 and six years later a plant was donated by Kew to Glasnevin having been propagated from this tree. The Glasnevin tree, once the finest in Europe, has now succumbed to honey-fungus though it has been propagated and young trees grow at both Glasnevin and its country estate at Kilmacurragh in County Wicklow. Following ninety years of growth at Glasnevin that old tree is reputed to have flowered only once during a hot summer in the 1990s though its annual spring show of newly emerged bronze-tinted foliage has more than compensated for this shortfall. *Emmenopterys* needs a warmer summer than the insular seasons provided in Britain and Ireland and young plants have begun to flower well in northern California, Washington and near Philadelphia in the USA.¹⁵

Man Yang it seems was not without a sense of humour and pulled a number of mischievous pranks while collecting for Augustine Henry, including the creation of hoax specimens. The most famous of these has to be one that was later described as a new genus, *Actinotinus sinensis* by Professor Daniel Oliver. *Actinotinus* was in fact a combination of two plants. By inserting the inflorescence of *Viburnum plicatum* f. *tomentosum* into the terminal bud of a previously unknown horse chestnut, *Aesculus wilsonii*, Man Yang managed to construct a specimen so convincing that it fooled even the most senior taxonomists at Kew.