

The little Chinese boy with the pigtail has become "one of us." Long Tack Sam (right) as he appears to-day.



For A Passport He Offered A Label From A Chinese Tea Packet

—And The Authorities Accepted It, Unsmilingly!

cidentally!—and handed it back to me very seriously. 'You are free to enter Russia,' they told me. 'I'll bet I'm one of the few men who has got past the authorities with a Chinese tea label!'

Long Tack Sam ran away from his home in Shanghai when he was 12. It was all over a little matter of a broken window—boys will be boys, whether it's Shanghai or Auckland—and the child mind so magnified the crime that running away seemed the only solution. He got on a boat, was cleared off at Hong Kong, found another boat

to carry him to Annam, then Bombay, and so to Marseilles. He spoke no French, no English—and was just a small Chinese boy with a pigtail and no money. He watched some men performing in the streets, lifting weights, wrestling with one another and so on. And then they passed the hat round and collected a nice little sum of money.

I'VE often heard about the imperturbability of the Oriental; now I know it is no mere idle phrase. Long Tack Sam, the famous Chinese showman whose company is now touring New Zealand, told me the other morning that, between 1929 and 1935, he lost a cool hundred thousand pounds in bank crashes

in various parts of Europe and America. And he told it to me with a smile, no venom in his voice, but with something of infinite wonderment in his eyes—wonderment, I should imagine, at the strange ways of the Occidental and his institutions. But we didn't talk much about spilt milk. . . .

"I must tell you of an incident of 30 years ago," he said, "when I was travelling to play a season at St. Petersburg. In those days Russia was one of the few countries in the world where a passport was required—a fact that I had entirely overlooked. I was held up at the border and my passport was asked for. Here was a pretty pickle! I was due to open in St. Petersburg at a certain date, and it didn't look as if I would be there. And then I had an inspiration. I went to my bags, tore the label from a pound of tea I was carrying with me, and presented it to the officials. They turned the bright scarlet label over, looked at the Chinese writing on it—wrong side up, in-

"I thought I would do likewise," said Sam, "and so I began turning cartwheels and generally entertaining the crowd that collected. I hadn't a hat so I held out my hand—and was rewarded with a number of francs. This was easy, I thought

but there was a catch.

The police took an interest in me, and I found myself at the station charged with performing on the streets without a license.

"I told them in my very bad French that I had no money, no friends, no home—and I was helped to get a small engagement at the Palace Theatre, in Marseilles. So I had enough money to go on to London, where I lived in a tiny room in Waterloo Road—four shillings a week, I remember it cost me. I still had my pigtail and was dressed in my Chinese clothes, which were getting rather ragged.

"A Chinese contortionist was wanted for a little theatre near Victoria Station, and I got the job. Chinese performers were rare in the London theatre of those days, and my act was a big success. I'm afraid, too, that I didn't know very much about money. (Continued on page 66).

Long Tack Sam, Chinese Master Showman, Chats With "Radio Record"