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**THE GREAT EMPRESS  
DOWAGER OF CHINA**







后大皇帝聖訓堂欽奉 慈禧端佑康頤昭豫莊誠壽恭欽獻崇熙皇太后

*Tze-Hi, Empress Dowager of China*



# THE GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA,

BY

PHILIP W. SERGEANT, B.A.

FORMER EDITOR OF THE "HONGKONG DAILY PRESS"

AUTHOR OF "THE EMPRESS JOSEPHINE, NAPOLEON'S ENCHANTRESS"  
"CLEOPATRA OF EGYPT," ETC.

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TO  
R. F. J.



## PREFACE

**WHEN** I went out to China to edit the *Hongkong Daily Press* the Boxer troubles were just approaching their acutest point. It was customary then for foreign journalists and other residents on the China coast to speak of the Empress Dowager as a bloodthirsty old harridan, a murderous-hearted hag, and the like. I well remember the outcry aroused by an American missionary (whose name, however, I forget) when, soon after the return of the Chinese Court to Peking, he ventured to couple her name with those of the recently dead Queen Victoria and of Queen Elizabeth of England, speaking of them as the three most remarkable women who had occupied thrones. In those days it was more usual to compare Her Imperial Majesty with Jezebel, Messalina, and such pleasing characters,<sup>1</sup> and the missionary's bold innovation was greatly resented. And when ladies from the Legations and other foreign households in Peking were seen accepting invitations to call at the Palace, with their little sons and daughters, there was much fiery indignation expressed, especially as they did not refuse presents from "hands stained with the blood of European children."

<sup>1</sup> See p. 310.

Times have changed since then. We have read in recent years many whole-hearted eulogies of the old Empress Dowager, both before and after her death two years ago. For some reason which I cannot profess to explain, it is from American pens that the warmest praise has come. Yet it cannot be denied that there has been a general revulsion of feeling among Europeans as well. Those who have committed themselves most deeply in writing against the late Dowager have no doubt retained their prejudices. But others have come in to swell the court sitting in judgment upon her, who have drawn their impressions from the period 1902-8, after she began to purge herself so completely of her sin in befriending the Boxers and proclaimed herself a sympathizer with Reform. It is now by no means certain how a verdict on her character would be cast, if it could be taken from the mouths of all Westerners interested in modern Chinese history.

As I say in the last paragraph of this book, I refrain from attempting to indicate definitely how that verdict should go. I have endeavoured to set out the evidence impartially. I was led to the task of writing this biography by my admiration for the people over whom the Empress Dowager ruled for so long and with such ability. I am conscious of my rashness in doing so when I am no Sinologue—a fact which will be evident to the Sinologues merely through the spellings which I have adopted for Chinese names. In this respect I have aimed at



simplicity, for the benefit of the general reader, to whom (for instance) the transliteration Tz'ü Hsi cannot but be repellent, whereas Tze-hi is at least, I trust, pronounceable. "Diacritical marks" are, unfortunately, only a pleasure to the purist.

I desire to make my grateful acknowledgments to Professors Parker and Giles and to Sir James Stewart Lockhart, High Commissioner of Weihaiwei, for the kind way in which they have answered questions which I have put to them on various difficult points; to Mr. R. F. Johnston, now of Weihaiwei, not only for the hitherto unreproduced example of the Dowager Empress's art, from a memorial stone of which he took a rubbing when travelling in Shensi, but also for much advice about things Chinese, in which he more than anyone first stirred my interest when we were both in Hongkong; to Mr. D. Warres Smith, lessee of the *Hongkong Daily Press*, for the access which he has given me to the files of the paper in his London office; to Mr. Alfred Cunningham, formerly manager of the *Hongkong Daily Press*, for the loan of his autographed portrait of Li Hung-chang and the photograph of Kang Yu-wei; and to Lady Raines for kindly allowing me to take rubbings of the two private seals of the late Empress Dowager now in her possession.

PHILIP WALSINGHAM SERGEANT.

LONDON, *September*, 1910.



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# THE GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

## CHAPTER I

### THE BIRTH OF YEHONALA

**T**HE lady destined to become so famous in the history of China, and of the world, as the Empress Dowager Tze-hi, was born early in the second half of the year 1835,<sup>1</sup> in that section of Peking which is known to Europeans as the Tartar City. Her father was a Manchu military officer of the name of Hweicheng, belonging to the clan of Nala or Nara—a clan-name which is found among the Manchus more than two hundred years earlier. He had several other children beside his celebrated daughter, and was apparently in rather poor circumstances, although, like all the Manchus belonging to the eight "Banners" into which his army had been divided by Abukhaye, overthrower of China's last native dynasty, the Mings, he drew his regular pay and rations as a Bannerman for doing nothing in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 6.

## 2 GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

particular except abstaining from manual labor. Some writers would make Hweicheng of as exalted rank as Lieutenant-General of the White Banner but had this been the case, we should surely have heard something more about him than his mere name.

We have said that the future Empress was daughter of Hweicheng. It must be added, however, that there are other versions of the story as to her parentage which have obtained wide currency. It has been said, and the legend has been adopted by a number of European writers and appeared in many of her obituary notices in this country and elsewhere that Tze-hi was originally a Cantonese (and therefore a Chinese, not a Manchu) girl, who was sold into slavery by her family in childhood, and was drafted into the Imperial harem at Peking. As a matter of fact, as far as can be ascertained, one of the conditions of eligibility for that harem under the present dynasty seems to be that the candidate must be of pure Manchu descent, the jealous exclusiveness of the ruling race being nowhere more strictly exhibited than in this respect. Others would make her a Chinese girl adopted into a Manchu Banner family.<sup>1</sup> But, firstly, adoption of girls is rare in China; secondly, Manchus appear only to adopt other Manchus; and, thirdly, there still remains the objection to her admission into the harem.

If the story which makes her a Chinese is, to say the least, improbable, that which attributes to her

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix.



European grandfather is quite incredible, although there are those who seem to believe it. No doubt most of the efforts to find in Her Imperial Majesty Tze-hi some alien blood, whether Chinese or European, have their origin in the thought that her strength of character separates her far from the Manchus as we know them. The idle, ill-educated, debauched, city-living Bannerman of to-day—or, at least, of yesterday, for since 1902 conditions of life have changed for the Manchus—is so different from his open-air, hunting and fighting ancestors, who made a wild Tungusic Tartar clan from the Kirin district of Manchuria lords of the Empire of China, that the appearance of a Tze-hi may well seem extraordinary, until one remembers that her husband, Hienfung, was only a great-grandson of Kienlung, the most powerful and probably the best Emperor who ever sat upon the throne of Peking, one truly deserving the titles of “The August Lofty One” and “The Supreme Ruler,” which are among those bestowed upon the monarchs of China. And, in any case, it is surely a rash proposition to maintain that a degenerate race cannot produce a strong character.

Even more unconvincing is the argument that the Empress Dowager's features betray her foreign origin. For while some professed to find European, or at least non-Manchu traits in her face, others saw in her the facial characteristics of the typical high-bred Manchu lady.

We may be content, therefore, to regard the late

#### 4 GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

Empress Dowager of China as a daughter of the Manchu officer Hweicheng. The name that was given to her as a child was Yehonala,<sup>1</sup> which was also the name, as we shall see later, of her niece, wife of the Emperor Kwanghsu. About the elder Yehonala's childhood conjecture must supply the place of knowledge. The Manchu ladies of Peking, when not of the highest rank, have always enjoyed far greater independence than their Chinese sisters, and, long before the present movement toward the emancipation of women, might be seen going about the streets unattended, sometimes even doing their own shopping on foot. It would not be surprising, therefore, to find that Yehonala as a child lived in the daytime a very open-air life, playing in the streets of the Tartar City and carrying a small brother or sister on her back in the way so familiar to all visitors to China. And very probably, owing to her father's modest circumstances, she who one day was to have a gigantic palace-staff of women and eunuchs, compelled to receive her commands on their knees, was in her earliest years accustomed to share in the ordinary routine-work of a poor household.

Yehonala may therefore have had an upbringing calculated at the same time to strengthen her body and sharpen her wits. With regard to her other education, it is always stated that when she was

<sup>1</sup> Concerning this name Yehonala, Professor E. H. Parker writes to me, in response to a query: "Yéhé is the name of one of the Manchu tribes conquered by the leading tribe 270 years ago. 'Nara or Nala of the Yéhé ilk'; cp. *The Smiths of Lancashire*."

selected for the Imperial harem at the age of fifteen or sixteen she was almost illiterate, her subsequent reputation as a scholar being entirely due to her assiduous study after she reached the Palace. If she acquired any book-knowledge previously it would be a mere smattering of the *Filial Piety Classic*, attributed partly to Confucius, and held in great reverence in China, though usually dismissed by Western critics as a disappointing and commonplace work; and of abridged forms of the other great Classics which, until a few years ago, supplied the sole means of learning for the children of the Flowery Land, Chinese or Manchu, boy or girl.

It is disappointing, although only to be expected, that we should know so little of the first chapter in the life of China's greatest Empress, especially as her lifetime was practically contemporaneous, down to 1909, with the period of direct and violent contact between China and the Western nations. It would have been interesting to discover when first Yehonala learnt of the existence of those "outside barbarians," in the struggle set up by whose intercourse with her country she was destined afterwards to play so large a part. But, as a matter of fact, we do not know whether she gave a thought to them until the time when her husband, the Emperor Hien-fung, fled with her and the rest of his household from Peking to escape from the invading English and French. So dense was the ignorance in which the Manchu Court of those days was sunk that even the

## 6 GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

mother of the heir-apparent, as Yehonala had then become, could have had no opportunity of informing herself as to the nature and character of the strangers from beyond the seas. In her later years, when she was in the habit of receiving European and American ladies and conversing with them familiarly, the Empress Dowager never talked of her early thoughts and impressions about foreigners. In view of the attitude of mind of the Chinese nation towards the Western peoples when she was young, politeness perhaps forbade her being communicative on this subject. "The barbarians are like beasts, and are not to be ruled after the same principles as citizens." Such was the opinion of one of the earlier Emperors, and this maxim governed the action of the Court of Peking where foreigners were concerned.

The year before that in which Yehonala was born (her first year of life according to the ideas of the Chinese, who reckon a child's life as commencing from the date of its conception, and place the Empress's "birth-day" in November, 1834) witnessed one of the most important events in the history of East and West, certainly the most important in the relations of China and Great Britain. And therefore, although this event in no way belongs to the personal history of Yehonala, and occurred before her birth, there need be no apology made for dealing with it here at some length, seeing that the child of 1834 was one day to be called upon to deal, on behalf of China, with the far-reaching and terrible

consequences of that year and the momentous period which followed it.

In 1834 there sat upon the Dragon Throne, in the fourteenth year of his reign, the sixth of the Ta Tsing or "Great Pure" dynasty, which had ruled the Empire since the middle of the seventeenth century. Taokwang was grandson of the illustrious Kienlung and son of Kiaking, who—in spite of Taokwang's pious eulogium upon him when he died—was the first degenerate of his family, a dissolute, ill-tempered, indolent, and avaricious man, and a bad ruler of his people. Taokwang had ascended the throne at the age of thirty-nine, as a reward for saving his father's life from assassins in the Palace in the year 1813. He soon showed himself a very different kind of Emperor from what his predecessor had been, striving hard to do away with the corruption which had spread over Court and administration alike during Kiaking's reign. But both in private and in public life misfortune dogged his steps. His Empress and first wife died early, and his eldest son succumbed to the effects of excessive opium-smoking at the age of twenty; while internal rebellions, a legacy from the evil days of his father, disturbed the peace of the Empire, and were followed by still greater troubles from abroad, beginning in the year of Yehonala's entrance into the world.

In the April of 1834 the charter expired which King Charles I had granted two hundred years ago to the East India Company. The growth of the

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China trade had been so great since the Company had received its monopoly that the British Government decided not to renew the charter, but to take over itself the charge of the commerce between England and Canton, under the Manchu dynasty the sole port open to European traders until the Treaty of Nanking. Lord Napier was appointed by Royal Commission Chief Superintendent of British Trade in China, and in July, 1834, he reached the Portuguese colony of Macao on his way to Canton. Among the instructions which he was given by Lord Palmerston when he set out was the command to ascertain whether trade could not be extended from Canton to other parts of the Chinese Empire, and whether direct communications might not be established with Peking. He was told, however, to "adopt no proceedings but such as may have a general tendency to convince the Chinese authorities of the sincere desire of the King [William IV] to cultivate the most friendly relations with the Emperor of China, and to join with him in any measures likely to promote the happiness and prosperity of their respective subjects."

Nothing could sound fairer than this. Unhappily the British Government made for the first time now the mistake which it has made countless times since in dealing with the Government of China. It omitted to enquire into the exact position of affairs, or to discover how the Chinese understood the situation. Now the Chinese Government had received no intimation of Lord Napier's appointment before he

reached Cantonese waters, and was unaware of the substitution of an officially appointed Chief Superintendent of British Trade for the East India Company's long continued monopoly. Lord Napier himself had foreseen the difficulty, since he had requested, before he left England, that some notification should be sent to Peking of his appointment, or that at least the Viceroy at Canton should be informed of it. Lord Palmerston, however, simply instructed him to report himself by letter to the Viceroy. It is true that it would probably have been impossible to notify Peking of the appointment, owing to the arrogant self-isolation of the Chinese Court from the affairs of the outer world. But the failure to acquaint the Canton Viceroy with the changed position of affairs since the lapse of the East India Company's charter was a grave blunder, of which the Viceroy quickly availed himself.

Lu, Viceroy of the Liang Kwang (that is, of the provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi), was stigmatized by Napier in a despatch to the home Government as "a presumptuous savage." He was, however, merely a Chinese official of a very ordinary type—haughty, obstinate, intensely conservative, and looking on all other nations as tributaries of the Celestial Empire. Seeing that the Barbarian "Eye" (superintendent) was proposing to come to Canton with claims to an official post for which there was no precedent, he ordered the Cohong, the body of Chinese merchants at Canton through whom alone

foreigners were allowed to sell and buy, to send a deputation to Napier at Macao and tell him that he must stop there until he had received permission to proceed to Canton. The Cohong's deputation arrived too late. Napier had reached the factories—for the present settlement on Sham Island did not come into existence until nearly thirty years later—and was preparing to send a letter to the Viceroy. Lu refused to recognize the accomplishment. He put out a proclamation to the Chinese merchants, complaining of the gross infringement of established customs by the Barbarian "Eye." Lu memorialized the throne to the same effect; declined to receive Napier's letter; and ordered the cessation of trade with the British merchants at Canton. Napier, placed in a most unhappy position owing to his home Government's blunder and at a loss what to do, committed an error which might have endangered the lives of his fellow-countrymen, and, indeed, of all the foreigners resident in Canton. Lu really been the savage he had called him. Lu answered the Viceroy's proclamations with a counter-proclamation translated into Chinese and addressed to the people of Canton, denouncing Lu's ignorance and obstinacy, and asserting that it would be as easy to stop the current of the Canton River as to carry into effect "the insane determination" to cut off British trade. Lu retorted with a complete suspension of this trade and a stringent boycott of Napier himself, who was now no better than a prisoner.



the factories. A conflict seemed imminent. Two British warships sailed up to Canton River as far as Whampoa, exchanging fire with the forts on the way, and a boat's crew came up as garrison for the small foreign colony.

But Lord Napier was worn out with the struggle. His health broke down, and at the end of September he returned to Macao, where he died on October 11th a victim to the inability of two races to understand each other's ways and their lack of effort to arrive at such an understanding. He had not succeeded even in carrying out the first of his instructions, for at his death his letter reporting himself to Viceroy Lu remained undelivered. His departure from Canton was hailed by the Viceroy as a diplomatic victory over the barbarians, and Lu now graciously permitted British trade at Canton to start again.

As far as the Chinese were concerned, Napier's visit must have seemed a very trivial incident at the time. Peking heard nothing about it except through Lu's memorials, and no doubt noted with satisfaction that the envoy of one of the tributary kings had received a rebuff for his scandalous disregard of precedent and had been obliged to abate his pretensions. Nothing can have been further from the thoughts of the Canton Viceroy or the Court of Peking than that this incident of 1834 was the seed from which were to spring war, misery, disgrace, the shattering of old ideals, and ultimately the forcible opening up of China to the nations of the outer world.

## CHAPTER II

### CHINA AND THE WEST

**I**F the year preceding Yehonala's birth was one fated to have tremendous consequences for China, impossible though it was to foresee this at the time, a few years later brought events the significance of which was unmistakable. While she was growing up to girlhood, supremely unconscious of the great destiny which awaited her, the nation over which she was one day to rule was involved in its first war with a Western Power, and as the result was compelled to sign a treaty ceding Hongkong to the victors, opening not only Canton but also Amoy, Foochow Shanghai, and Ningpo to foreign trade under a regular tariff, and agreeing to correspondence on equal terms between British and Chinese high officials. Furthermore, the precedent was established for the payment by China of big indemnities whenever she offended a Western Power, twenty-one million silver dollars being the sum extorted on this occasion.

This war, beginning at Canton late in 1839 and ending at Nanking in the August of 1842, is commonly known as the "Opium War." From the Chinese point of view the name is fairly descriptive although the Treaty of Nanking left the opium ques

tion as far from settlement as ever, and the war, therefore, in this respect was fought in vain.

The opium difficulty was a burden which the British Government took over when it discontinued the East India Company's monopoly. The Company, first commencing the importation in 1773, had latterly been making about two million pounds sterling a year by the growth and sale of opium for China. The home Government, as it showed by its action both before and after the war, was not prepared to give up this revenue, while at the same time it denied responsibility for the direct importation of the drug. On the time-honoured principle that two blacks make a white, justification has been found for this attitude in the insincerity of the Chinese ; for, while Peking and the high provincial authorities vigorously denounced the "foreign dirt," officials broadcast filled their pockets by conniving at opium-smuggling, and opium-smoking was indulged in by countless people, from princes of the Imperial family downwards. The genuineness of the Chinese Government's crusade against the evil it was convenient to ignore.

From the British point of view it may be said that the war of 1839-42 was only incidentally an opium war, that it was practically inevitable had there been no opium question, and that the real objects were the freedom of legitimate trade in China and the recognition of the right of the Western nations to be placed by China on a different footing from that of tributary tribes on which the Court of Peking wished to place

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them. It was very unfortunate, therefore, that the opium question was allowed to occupy so much attention before hostilities actually broke out, that indemnity was exacted in the Nanking Treaty for the opium surrendered in Canton, and that after the Treaty no attempt was made by the British Government to put down the importation of opium which China on her part declined to legalize—and continued to declare illegal for nearly twenty years more. Opium-smuggling went on briskly, leading to constant trouble at Canton and leaving the Chinese with a substantial grievance against the foreigner whenever they desired to find one.

Unhappily China was never at a loss for grievance of a very real character against the Western Barbarians ever since they had come in contact with the Celestial Empire. Apart from the early religious visitors—Franciscan friars, etc.—and a stray traveller like Marco Polo, it was the Portuguese adventurer who first gave the Chinese their introduction to the manners of the Western world. And these Portuguese were greedy, treacherous, raping, and murdering ruffians, whose history would be a disgrace to a civilization. Portugal's neighbours in Europe came next. The Spaniards' first notable dealing with the Chinese was when, in 1603, some thirty years after their occupation of Manila, they massacred twenty thousand Chinese immigrants in the Philippines. The Chinese Emperor of the period was too much occupied by domestic troubles to make a protest, but the

feeling against Spanish subjects in China was very bitter for long afterwards, and led to isolated acts of revenge. The Dutch, less brutally savage than the Portuguese and Spaniards, yet swooped down on the Pescadores group early in the seventeenth century, and seized it without any provocation from China. Persuaded to abandon the Pescadores for Formosa, they were only driven from that island by the famous pirate king Koxinga.

Britain's first intercourse with China was similarly accompanied by violence. Captain Weddell, in command of the East India Company's initial venture to Canton, on his way up the river landed and captured the Bogue forts, which were so often to fall before the assaults of British seamen in later years. After the nations of the West had established a firm footing at Canton, the history of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there became a constant record of brawls between British, French, Portuguese, and other foreigners, and of murders of natives by drunken sailors from Europe and America. Only in a very few cases were the Chinese authorities able to get hold of the offenders. It is little to be wondered at that they should have considered applicable the maxim mentioned in the preceding chapter: "The Barbarians are like beasts, and are not to be ruled after the same principles as citizens." The nations which did China little or no wrong in the earlier days have since amply made up for this—France, Russia, Germany, and the United States, the

## 16 GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

last-named having marred a good record in China itself by the treatment accorded to Chinese in the States.

A sad story indeed is that of the intercourse between China and the West. China exhibited faithlessness, absurd pride, and utter ignorance of the ways of the outer world. But the foreign invaders of the Empire, while assailing China's want of faith, made no effort to act honestly themselves; while ridiculing China's pride and ignorance, showed a supreme contempt for the "savages," and made no attempt to acquaint themselves with Chinese manners and prejudices;<sup>1</sup> coupling with this attitude of mind a brutality of action which seemed to the Chinese—as it must also seem to any impartial observer in the Western world—a poor recommendation of the ethical code which permitted it. The difference between theory and practice in the civilization which China evolved is sufficiently profound. But it cannot be said to be as great as that between the professions of Western civilization and the conduct of the men who forced China to make its acquaintance.

The result of the unfavourable impression created in China by the pioneers from Europe was to lead her to erect barriers against their further advance. The Manchu dynasty, in marked contrast to some of

<sup>1</sup> There is a useful Chinese proverb, which might with advantage have been taken as a motto for all foreigners going to China: "When entering a village learn what is customary, when entering a country ascertain what is forbidden."

its predecessors, enforced more and more rigorously the policy of exclusion of foreigners and limitation of their trade to Canton. The Emperors became more anti-foreign and more anti-Christian as time went on. Kanghi had permitted even members of his own family to be baptized by the Jesuit fathers at Peking. His son, Yungcheng, had three hundred churches destroyed and all missionaries banished except the Jesuits employed by himself in secular professions. The Regents during Kienlung's minority persecuted with vigour. The vicious Kiaking exiled even the Jesuits from Peking. And Taokwang, though a much better man than his father, from the outset of his reign was a foe to all foreigners, missionaries and traders alike.

With this steadily narrowing policy of the Ta Tsing dynasty, the ignorance at Peking became proportionately denser concerning the outer world. The Court was like a snail which had come in contact with some irritating substance. It had first drawn in its horns, then retracted its body. In the reign of Taokwang it had retired completely within its shell and covered itself over with a horny shield. The efforts of the outer nations to entice it forth again continued during the whole lifetime of the subject of this biography, and it fell to her lot to have the greatest influence both in retarding and, ultimately, in hastening the process.

## CHAPTER III

### THE REIGN OF HIENFUNG

**T**HE life of the unlucky, well-meaning Emperor Taokwang closed in the second month of 1850, trouble pursuing him to the end. A big Mohammedan revolt in Kashgaria, the second of the kind during his rule, broke out in 1846, and was only suppressed after merciless severity on the part of the Chinese generals. Seditious movements of two great secret societies, the "Triads" in the South and the "White Lilies" in the North, followed, and paved the way for the gigantic Taiping rebellion in the next reign.

The successor of Taokwang was his son Yichu, through marriage with whom a few years later Yehonala was enabled to play her part in the world. Yichu was the fourth of nine sons, of whom the three eldest had all died before their father. Succeeding to the throne at the age of nineteen, he took, in accordance with the Chinese Imperial custom, a reign-name, by which he is known to history. Just as his father, originally Prince Mienning, called himself Taokwang, "Glory of the Reason," so Yichu assumed the style of Hienfung, "Complete Abundance." A weak but obstinate youth, with a great



inclination toward the pursuit of pleasure, he began very early to show his character by dismissing from office the advisers in whom his father had put most trust, and replacing them by favourites of his own, the chief among whom were his nephew Tsaiyuan, Prince of I; Prince Ching, a descendant of the Emperor Kienlung; and a Manchu Bannerman, Sushun, a bold and greedy schemer, very tyrannical in his dealing with the Chinese. The new men, however, were quite as anti-foreign as their predecessors, and considerably more ignorant and narrow, in consequence of which the disastrous policy of complete isolation for China and non-intercourse with the "barbarians" was maintained even more rigorously than under Taokwang.

One of Hienfung's early edicts shows him apologizing, in approved Chinese fashion, for his own demerits, which he recognizes as the cause of misfortunes to his people. The misfortunes were certainly present in abundance. Hardly had he been seated on the throne when Foochow city shut its gates against foreigners, in violation of the Treaty of Nanking; famine attacked the Peking neighbourhood, and an earthquake did great damage in Szechuan. Moreover, the Taiping agitation began to take definite shape in the two Kwang provinces. Little as Hienfung was personally responsible for these varied troubles, he might have done much, had he possessed any strength of character, to prevent the spread of the Taiping movement, which was soon

to give his discontented subjects so great an opportunity of avenging their wrongs. But, having apologized for that of which he had not been guilty, he proceeded to the commission of the worst of crimes against his country by so ruling it that peace was possible neither at home nor abroad. Or, rather, it should be said that he let China be ruled thus, not that he ruled it himself; for least of all the Emperors of his dynasty who reached the years of manhood does Hienfung appear to have taken any real part in the government of China.

If, however, Hienfung was in himself a nonentity, he took one step which profoundly influenced his Empire and furnished it with the most capable ruler which it has known since the days of Kienlung. Unfortunately but little credit is due to him for this step, since all that he did was to set eyes upon the Manchu maiden Yehonala, and, attracted by her good looks, make her a favourite in his harem.

We left Yehonala a child in her father's home in the Tartar City, Peking, growing up with other members of a young family.<sup>1</sup> About the beginning of Heinfung's reign, when she was in her fifteenth year, she was taken, like all Manchu girls of Bannerman family, to the office for the registration of such particulars as her name, family, age, looks, and

<sup>1</sup> We know of two sisters, one the wife of Prince Chun, the other the mother of the celebrated Yunglu; while the "Duke" Kwei, father of the present Empress Dowager (Kwanhgsu's widow) is described as favourite brother of Her Majesty Tze-hi.

abilities—which office, oddly, was the Board of Revenue! From among the girls thus registered a selection is made later for the Imperial harem whenever a wife, concubine, or serving-maid is required. Yehonala's chief qualification seems to have been her beauty, and it was as Imperial concubine that she was introduced to the Palace. As many writers upon China have pointed out, there is no idea of disgrace attached to the Chinese equivalent for the word concubine. A subsidiary wife in a polygamous country is by no means without honour; although in China the first wife has peculiar privileges, among them being the right of being considered and called mother by the children of all the wives of her husband. And with an Imperial concubine still less is it the case that any dishonour is involved by the post. Her lot may not be happy, prisoner as she is for life in the Palace,<sup>1</sup> and perhaps never even looked at twice by the Emperor, if there be nothing remarkable enough in her appearance to attract his attention. Even if she succeeds in drawing the notice of her lord, her lot may be evil; for the harem is never without its intrigues and plots, which bring ruin to those unskilled in the game. But at least there is no stigma on a girl occupying the position of inferior

<sup>1</sup> "Once in the Palace," Mrs. Headland was told by the mother of two girls, first and second concubines to the Emperor Kwanghsu, "they are dead to me. No matter what they may suffer, I can never see them nor offer them a word of comfort." Mr. Headland's *Court Life in China* contains much information on the subject, the result of the observation of his wife and himself.

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wife to the "Solitary Man" who shares the Peking Palace with countless women and eunuchs.

The date on which Yehonala entered the Hall of the Sacred Precincts on her way to the harem is unknown, but probably she was about sixteen years of age at the time. She began as a *kwei-jen*, or concubine of the fifth rank. It is impossible to obtain certain figures, but it has been stated<sup>1</sup> that an Emperor may, if he chooses, have in addition to his legal wife as many as two hundred and eighty-one concubines : one of the first rank, four of the second, seventy-two of the third, eighty-four of the fourth, and one hundred and twenty of the fifth. When Hienfung became Emperor his original first wife, the "Queen Consort of the Central Palace," was already dead, without leaving him a child ; and his first concubine, known to later history as the Empress Tze-an,<sup>2</sup> was made Imperial consort. Yehonala, who afterwards shared supreme power with Tze-an, therefore started a long way behind her rival in the race. But early in 1854 she was promoted from fifth to fourth rank among the concubines ; in 1856 she went up another

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately I am unable to say by whom, having lost the reference. Professor Giles, answering my enquiry of him, says : "The Imperial harem consists of the Empress and five grades of concubines. I can find no authority for the number of women in each grade." Professor Headland speaks of "the Imperial household of Emperor, Empress, sixty concubines, two thousand eunuchs, and numberless Court ladies and maids."

<sup>2</sup> Professor Parker says, *China Past and Present*, p. 137 : "I believe, but I do not know, that [the Empresses] only obtained the titles Ts'z-hi and Ts'z-an after Hien-fêng's death."

step, and on the Chinese New Year's Day of the following year yet another, leaving her second only to Tze-an in the harem of Hienfung.

For this rapid advance Yehonala had come to the Palace apparently ill-equipped in all save beauty, though this possession was a valuable means of appeal to the weak and sensual Emperor. Her education, as has been said already, was very slight. But she had a quick intelligence and an aptitude for learning. Under the tuition of the well-educated eunuchs in whose hands the instruction of the Palace ladies of Peking is placed, she devoted herself assiduously to the proper study of the Chinese language, a task notoriously difficult to the Chinese themselves and decidedly not less difficult to the Manchu rulers of China. She strove hard to make herself a good pen-woman, for the handling of the pen—or, to be correct, the brush—is highly esteemed in China. She began to make herself familiar with the enormous literature of her country; and, since she was gifted with an unusually good memory (even in a land where the memory is so cultivated as China), we find her later spoken of as a fine scholar in the ancient Classics.

However, it was not to her intellectual attainments any more than to her mere sensuous attraction for Hienfung that Yehonala owed her rapid promotion in the Palace harem. What gave her importance in the Imperial eyes was the fact that on April 27th, 1856, she gave birth to a male child, afterwards the

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Emperor Tungchih. This infant was Hienfung's first-born, or at least his first-born son; for the Empress Tze-an, though often spoken of as childless, seems to have borne her husband a daughter, who died some twenty years later. The Ta Tsing dynasty had always up to now handed over the throne from father to son, and the birth of a male child to Hienfung had been anxiously awaited. When, therefore, Yehonala presented her lord with that which he so much desired, all possible honours were heaped upon her, and in less than a year she sprang to the position of second woman in the Empire; then in another year's time a title was found for her for which no precedent is known in Chinese history. While Tze-an was styled Empress of the Eastern Palace, or Eastern Empress, the former concubine Yehonala received the name of Empress of the Western Palace—the apartments which they occupied lying in the North-east and North-west, respectively, of the Forbidden City.

Few things are more remarkable in Yehonala's career than the fact that she and the Empress Tze-an lived together in harmony, seemingly from the time when the inferior concubine entered the Palace down to the death of Tze-an in 1881. Life in the harem is supposed to be attended with intense jealousy among the female inmates. Indeed, that this is so has been only too often proved at all times and in all parts of the world. Seeing then that Hienfung's senior wife, Tze-an, was a disappointed woman in

that she failed to give her husband a son, and that the junior, Yehonala, struck every observer later in life as extremely imperious, we might have expected bitter enmity between the two. Instead of that we find them firm allies as soon as the opportunity arose for them to show with what sentiments they regarded each other.

Western writers, none of whom ever saw the Empress Tze-an, differ considerably in their estimates of her character. Some make her out to have been an indolent and self-indulgent person, destitute of any ambition except to secure her own comfort; others, to have been a lady of literary tastes, gentle and yielding in disposition, and more or less an invalid. It is clear that, in either case, she was of an easy temper and by nature prepared to accept the advances made by her rival. That Yehonala, on her part, if imperious and ambitious, possessed the quality of tact in a high degree cannot be denied, in view of her marvellously diplomatic conduct towards the European and American ladies of Peking after the Boxer troubles had passed away in 1902. This tact she now showed, nearly fifty years earlier, when she reconciled the Empress Tze-an to the idea of sharing the honours of Hienfung's Palace with her on terms of practical equality.

There was no question as yet of the Empresses exerting political influence. Hienfung, in his weakness, left the government of his country in the hands of a Court clique, including a number of elderly and

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narrow-minded members of the Imperial Clan ; but the era of woman's rule had not yet begun at Peking. The first eight or nine years of her palace life, therefore, can have given Yehonala little acquaintance with affairs of State, though the gossip of the hundreds of little-occupied inmates of the Forbidden City must have brought to the innermost apartments some news, however distorted, of the great events proceeding in the outer world. For Hienfung's reign was an unpleasantly stirring time in his Empire. Soon after he took Yehonala to wife the Taiping rebels commenced their invasion of Central China and captured Nanking, the old capital of the early Ming sovereigns, to hold it against the Imperial forces for the better part of eleven years. And in the year when Yehonala bore her son there occurred the *Arrow* incident, which gave its name to China's second foreign war. We may pass over the Taipings for the present ; but it is necessary to pay some brief attention to the *Arrow* War, since it led to events which cannot but have had a great influence over Yehonala's future views of the world and political conduct.

The Canton Government's seizure in October, 1856, of the lorcha<sup>1</sup> *Arrow* when she was flying the British flag (although, as it turned out, she had forfeited the right to do so, and it is quite possible that she carried among her crew a pirate "wanted" at Canton) was but the spark that kindled an explo-

<sup>1</sup> Lorcha, a Portuguese term for a fast sailing vessel.



sion which had been long preparing. The Cantonese populace had remained bitterly anti-foreign after the Treaty of Nanking. Encouragement was given to the feeling by the arrival as Viceroy of the Kwang provinces of Yeh Ming-chin, whom Wingrove Cooke made so well known to England as the infamous "Commissioner Yeh."<sup>1</sup> Yeh, one of the bad type of Chinese scholar, narrow, self-satisfied, horribly cruel, and utterly contemptuous of all that was not Chinese, was soon at loggerheads with the British Commissioner of Trade at Canton, Sir John Bowring, himself a very opinionated man. There were abundant grounds for trouble; the flourishing condition of the opium-smuggling trade, helped by the nearness to Canton of the free port of Hong-kong, the illicit gun-running in the interests of the Kwangtung rebels with whom Yeh was carrying on a terribly bloody struggle, the alleged kidnapping of Chinese for the Portuguese coolie-traffic, the dispute as to the interpretation of an agreement opening the gates of Canton to foreigners, etc. etc.

On the British side there was ample reason for irritation in the unceasing opposition offered by the Chinese to legitimate trade, in the constant insults to which foreigners were subjected, and particularly in the Viceroy's refusal to receive any representative of Great Britain on equal terms and his neglect to suppress the publication of posters calling on the

<sup>1</sup> *China in 1857-1858*, reprinted from Cooke's letters to the *Times*.

people of Canton to massacre the "barbarian dogs." But it was unfortunate that Great Britain chose to make a *casus belli* of what Lord Elgin in his *Journal* rightly calls "that wretched question of the *Arrow*, which is a scandal to us and is so considered, I have reason to know, by all except the few who are personally compromised." As in the case of the Opium War, so in that of the *Arrow* War, this country was extremely ill-advised in allowing that point to be brought to the front in her case where morally she was least justified.

Yeh met the British protests and demands which followed the seizure of the *Arrow* with evasions and thinly disguised contempt. Thereon naval operations against the Canton River defences began, the Bogue forts being captured. Admiral Sir Michael Seymour even penetrated as far as Canton and established a footing in part of the city, but was not in sufficient strength to remain. Yeh, on his part, offered thirty dollars for English heads, burnt down the factories, executed a few foreigners, and had their heads carried through the villages of Kwangtung. To Peking he sent news of his victories over the barbarians, which doubtless pleased Hienfung. But the Central Government took no part as yet in the war, which languished even in the Canton neighbourhood owing to the smallness of the British forces.

This the British Government determined to remedy. The co-operation of France was secured, a French missionary having been tortured and be-

headed by official order, it was said, in Kwangsi, and reparation having been refused at Peking. Britain appointed Lord Elgin, France Baron Gros, to go on a mission to China with full powers to settle all matters at issue. In particular, Lord Elgin was instructed to obtain China's assent to "the residence at Peking, or the occasional visit to that capital, at the option of the British Government, of a Minister accredited by the Queen to the Emperor of China." This part of his task Lord Elgin carried out, to his own great credit, in spite of the fact that he was badly supported by other nations who should have been equally interested in bringing China to reason on the point.

Both Britain and France sent strong naval and military forces to support their plenipotentiaries. The outbreak of the Indian Mutiny delayed the commencement of vigorous hostilities, but before the end of December, 1857, Canton was in the hands of the Allies. Yeh, who had been soothing Peking with descriptions of how "Elgin passed the day at Hongkong stamping his foot and sighing," was captured as he tried to hoist his enormous bulk over a wall in the South-western city, and was carried away a prisoner to Calcutta, where he died two years later. He was no loss to China. Beside being responsible for the death of many Europeans, he was believed to have had no less than eighty thousand of his own countrymen executed as rebels at Canton in the year 1855 alone.

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Turning their attention North, the Allies, when it was found that Peking refused to appoint any representatives with full powers to treat with Elgin and Gros, sailed up the Peiho River, captured the Taku forts, and occupied Tientsin for the first time in the history of China.

Hienfung and his ignorant advisers had apparently expected the British and French to wait at Canton, as indeed they had sent orders commanding them to do. Now the appearance of the Allied army so near to Peking had its effect, and a commission of three was appointed with a free hand to deal with the Europeans, one of the three being Kweiliang, a sensible old Manchu official, father-in-law of Hienfung's brother, Prince Kung. After considerable delay and some curious intriguing, the preliminaries of the Treaty of Tientsin were settled. Elgin, brushing aside an attempt on the part of the representatives of Russia and the United States (who lent passive support to Britain and France) to induce him to forego demands for a resident minister at Peking and permission for foreigners to trade in the interior of China, took up a firm attitude and terrified the Chinese Commissioners with a threat of marching on Peking if they opposed these demands.

On July 4th, 1858, the Treaty was signed, leaving tariff matters to be settled later at Shanghai. The Allies retired South without loss of time. But the Court of Peking had learnt nothing after all, it

appeared.<sup>1</sup> When the time came for the confirmation of the Treaty next summer, strenuous endeavours were made to persuade Great Britain and France to give up the idea of a ratification at Peking. The Allies lost patience, and again a fleet was despatched to the mouth of the Peiho. Admiral Hope attempted to sail up, but met with disaster, losing three gunboats and three hundred men. Now an apology and an indemnity were demanded from China, in addition to the ratification of the Treaty. But the Court was emboldened by the foreigners' failure to pass the Taku defences, and declined to consider the demands. An invasion of Chihli and a march on Peking itself were resolved on, as soon as sufficient troops could be collected. This was not until the summer of 1860. The Taku forts having been captured and Tientsin again occupied, Kweiliang appeared and expressed himself willing on behalf of China to come to terms. Owing to his unsparing recourse to the evasion and delays which are such weapons in the armoury of

<sup>1</sup> There was this much to be said for the Court, however. The settlement of 1858, which Britain and France forced upon China at the point of the sword, compelled the recognition of the right of those countries to keep resident ministers in Peking; affirmed the principle of extraterritoriality, and provided that foreigners might travel in the interior of China without submitting to her laws; and legalized the importation of opium on payment of £10 per chest. Against the idea of any of those concessions the Court had protested bitterly. Did it consider itself morally bound to carry out the Treaty extorted by violence? But we can imagine the sneer with which most foreigners would have greeted the notion that Peking had a conscience in 1858.

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Chinese diplomatists, the Allies early in September started out overland for Peking.

Now Tsaiyuan, Prince of I, came on the scene and claimed to have full powers to negotiate. While not declining to recognize him, the Allies kept on their way until they found it barred at Changkiawan by a large army under Sankolinsin, a Mongol general who had made for himself a reputation against the Taipings, and was popularly known to Europeans as "Sam Collinson." Negotiations continued with every appearance of sincerity, but were suddenly interrupted by the gross act of treachery which led to the seizure of Messrs. Parkes and Loch and the other members of a party sent to arrange for a meeting between the Chinese and foreign Commissioners, and the barbarous torture of all and murder of a number of them—on whose responsibility it was never decided, though the Mongol general certainly encouraged their ill-treatment. The capture of the envoys was followed by a battle, which ended in the rout of the brutal Sankolinsin's army. Pressing on, the Allies inflicted another defeat on the Chinese at Palikao, a bridge crossing the Peiho near the town of Tungchow, about ten miles from Peking, and had now no enemy left between themselves and the gates of the capital. They were unprepared, however, for an assault on the powerful walls, and were obliged therefore to call a halt, while sending peremptory demands for the release of the prisoners. Yet another representative of China took up the negotia-

tions now. This was Prince Kung, whose acquaintance from this moment with the men of the West was to benefit his country so greatly. About twenty-eight years of age, he had recently become a member of the Li Fan Yuen or Colonial Office, which in those days of Chinese enlightenment was entrusted with matters concerning the "Ocean Barbarians." Married to the daughter of Kweiliang, a Manchu of ability and unusual courtesy towards foreigners, Prince Kung may have learnt some of his address from his father-in-law.

The first intimation which the British and French Commissioners received of Prince Kung's intervention was a letter from him, asking for a truce and informing them that he had been appointed plenipotentiary for China. The letter was correct. Hienfung and his counsellors had been plunged in despair by the defeat of Sankolinsin, who had promised them to sweep the invaders into the sea. Fearful lest the terrible barbarians should capture him in Peking, the Emperor resolved on flight. About a hundred miles to the North-east of Peking, in that portion of Chihli province which lies beyond the Great Wall and is Mongolian rather than Chinese in character, there was a small fortified town called Jehol, where there was an Imperial hunting-box. Giving out that he was going on an autumn hunting expedition—for appearances must be preserved—Hienfung collected together his Court and his harem, wives, concubines, and all, and set out hastily for Jehol. Prince Kung

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stayed behind at the Summer Palace a few miles outside Peking, with instructions to make the best terms possible with the barbarians. In entrusting this task to his brother Hienfung perhaps committed the only wise political act of his life.

Yet at first Kung's prospects of appeasing the invaders did not seem promising. Although they did not feel strong enough to attack Peking itself without being reinforced, the Anglo-French troops were not kept inactive. They marched on the Summer Palace, their outposts all but capturing the Prince before he could escape through a back gate. He made his way safely to Peking, however, and on the renewed demand of the Allies set free the prisoners whom Sankolinsin had taken. What happened next is never likely to be forgotten in the history of European-Chinese relations. The narratives of the survivors and the production of the bodies of those who had been murdered caused such outburst of feeling in the Allied camp that Lord Elgin was moved to order the destruction of the Summer Palace, in some of the rooms of which the captives had undergone torture, and where some of the murdered men's clothes were found.

This Summer Palace of the Manchu Emperors was in the Yuen Ming Yuen or "Round Bright Garden," a vast park laid out in the approved Chinese fashion with lakes, bridges, pavilions, temples, and beautiful trees and shrubs. The main buildings were the work of Jesuit architects at Peking in the



eighteenth century, and at the time of the Allies' arrival they and their annexes were full of treasures worth at least a million pounds, presents from European sovereigns to various Emperors, tribute in kind from the provinces, rolls of silk, gold ornaments and jewellery, jade, porcelain vases, magnificent furs, and most valuable furniture. On the day on which the first troops arrived, the French and some Sikh cavalry, looting began—and not only looting, but wholesale and wanton smashing and trampling under foot for the pleasure of destruction. Lord Elgin himself was shocked by the appearance of the Palace on the day of his arrival; but looting continued, if in a more systematic and less wasteful manner. Finally the order came for the firing of the buildings to commemorate what had been done to the English and French captives. "As almost all the valuables had already been taken from the Palace," remarks Elgin in his *Journal*, "the army would go there not to pillage, but to mark by a solemn act of retribution the horror and indignation with which we were inspired by the perpetration of a great crime."

The argument is weak. The Congo atrocities would not have been expiated by the burning of the late King Leopold's Palace at Ostend, nor did even the fact of tortures having taken place in the Yuen Ming Yuen make it a rational thing to give warning against murder by the destruction of a fine historical monument such as the Summer Palace was.

Lord Elgin was right, however, in expecting his

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deed to impress the Chinese Court. In the course of the conflagration several other Imperial villas were burnt, which added to the effect. A threat is said to have been made of further burnings in Peking itself. The Court did not wait for this. Two days after the match was set to the Summer Palace, Prince Kung notified that his Government would concede every demand, including one for an indemnity for the murdered and tortured envoys and their escort. On October 24th the ratifications of the Tientsin Treaty of 1858, with the fresh additions, were exchanged at the offices of the Board of Rites in Peking by Lord Elgin and Prince Kung, and on the following day the French Treaty was similarly ratified.

China had now agreed, among other things, to permit the residence at Peking of representatives of Great Britain and France, to pay an enormous indemnity, and to open a number of new ports, including Tientsin. Britain obtained the cession of a portion of the mainland opposite Hongkong; and France (who already in the Treaty of 1858 had inserted—illegally, as the Chinese claimed—a clause permitting missionaries to reside and travel in the interior) a far-reaching promise of indemnification to Roman Catholics for all Church property and land which had ever been owned by them in China, the money to be handed over to the French representative at Peking.

Before withdrawing the troops the Anglo-French Commissioners insisted on the issue of an edict from

the Emperor commanding the publication of the terms of the two treaties. In order to rid Peking of the invaders, Hienfung reluctantly complied ; but on the retirement of the Allies he showed no anxiety to return to the Forbidden City. There can be no doubt that Hienfung and his ministers had been genuinely terrified by the advance of the "barbarians" on Peking, for China's capitals had too often seen the fall of historic dynasties before the armies of the rude outer nations. And whether or not the latest invaders contemplated subversion of the Empire, at any rate they had extorted from the Emperor his consent to the presence, within a short distance of his Palace, of representatives of their sovereigns' claims to equality with himself. The blow to Celestial pride was tremendous, and it may be imagined that all inmates of the Imperial harem at this time were imbued with a strong hatred, combined with fear, of the impious wretches who had flouted the commands of the Son of Heaven and proposed now to desecrate his capital by residing in it permanently.

The Empress of the Western Palace, therefore, received her first practical lesson as to the character of the nations beyond the seas in a manner calculated to inspire her with a deep aversion from them. Did she look back, in 1900, we may wonder, when in the company of her Emperor-nephew she sped South-west over the seven hundred miles which separated Sianfu from Peking, on her hurried flight

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in the opposite direction forty years earlier, dragged in the train of her terrified Emperor-husband? There was certainly a similarity in the two cases which might cause the recollection of Jehol to rise in her mind as she hastened to bury herself in distant Shensi. But in 1860 she was a victim of the inability of others to understand the barbarians; in 1900 she was herself to blame for her own sufferings.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EMPRESS ENTERS POLITICAL LIFE

**PEKING** in the early part of 1861 was full of rumours. Sir Frederick Bruce took up his post in March as first resident British Minister at the Chinese capital. It was felt by the natives that the contaminating presence of a barbarian envoy, forcibly established in Peking, might have the effect of keeping the Court at Jehol, and it was reported that Hienfung contemplated transferring the seat of government permanently thither. On the other hand, the members of the Eight Banners, who depended for subsistence on the allowance made to them while the Emperor was resident in Peking, were known to be most anxious for his return to rescue them from the beggary which threatened them ; and it was difficult to see how Hienfung could resist the pressure of the Bannermen.

The most serious rumour, however, was to the effect that the Emperor's health was growing precarious—some said because of continual debauchery in which he lived, others that the severity of the winter at Jehol had broken down a constitution already damaged by excess. It was suspected that certain people were interested in encouraging him

along the road to ruin ; and, as might be expected, it is one of the charges brought against the Empress Dowager by her enemies later that she assisted her husband to his death. However, the secret history of the Jehol intrigue can never be known. It seems a necessary supposition that the Eastern and Western Empresses, prepared beforehand for the death of their joint husband, decided to look for a man to protect them against the danger threatening them from the camarilla in whose hands Hienfung intended to leave the government during the minority of his successor. In that case it was obvious that Prince Kung, leader of the most enlightened politicians at Peking, was their best hope, since, on other grounds than his liberalism, he had a strong backing among the Manchus outside the clique in whom the Emperor put his trust. It is possible, however, that Prince Kung made the first advances ; because, powerful though his position was in Peking as long as his brother lived and retained the throne, he had arrayed against him the leading members of the Imperial clan, and was likely to be very badly placed after Hienfung's death unless he could secure some friends among those in possession of the person of Hienfung's infant son.

Whatever were the negotiations which preceded the understanding between the two Empresses and their brother-in-law, early in August Prince Kung hastened secretly to Jehol. Here he found the Emperor on the point of death, and his old advisers

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in command of the situation. On August 22nd Hienfung died, leaving behind him an Imperial Decree in which the government, until his son should come of age, was entrusted to a Council of Regency consisting of Prince I as president, Prince Ching, Sushun, and five other Manchus. The new Emperor was proclaimed under the reign-name of Chihsiang, "Lucky Omen," and the Regents prepared to establish themselves firmly in power before proceeding to Peking with him. During September and October they remained at Jehol, while Prince Kung was sent back to his post at the head of the Tsungli Yamen,<sup>1</sup> the new Foreign Office just set up on his own suggestion to look after the affairs of the barbarians. Here, it was felt, he would be conveniently buried.

As to the intentions of the Regents, we have only the accusations of their enemies. They are charged with planning to put out of the way the Dowager Empresses, together with Prince Kung and his younger brothers, so as to have no obstacle left in the way of complete control of affairs by themselves. At the end of October seven of them set out for Peking, taking with them the little Emperor and the two Empresses. Sushun remained to escort from Jehol the body of Hienfung. But, if they were

<sup>1</sup> Its full title was Tsung-li Ko-kwoh Shi-wu Yamen, which Professor Parker translates, word for word, "Generally-managing All-countries' Business-matters Praetorium" (*China Past and Present*, p. 208).

guilty of the plot of which they are accused, they had reckoned without the Empresses. These ladies communicated to Prince Kung their suspicions, and it was decided to strike at once a blow which should stop the Regents' power for harm. By some means possession must have been obtained of the Great Seal, for there suddenly appeared two edicts in the Emperor's name, one suspending the whole Council of Regency from office, and the other appointing the Empresses regents instead. With the former edict in his hand Prince Kung, who had already taken the precaution of bringing into camp outside Peking some troops on whom he knew he could rely, walked into the Council, informed the members of the order attributed to the Emperor, and demanded whether they intended to obey. There was, of course, no alternative, and Princes I and Ching at once submitted to arrest. While Prince Kung was thus securing two of his chief enemies, his next brother Prince Chun (whose first appearance in history this is) had set out to intercept Sushun on his way from Jehol. Sushun, it was said, had so far forgotten propriety as to give himself up to debauchery while engaged on his mission of conducting Hienfung's body to the capital. Prince Chun came upon him by night and arrested him in bed. As soon as he was brought back to Peking, the trial of the three principal ex-Regents commenced. Accused of high treason, all three were condemned to execution, Sushun by the painful process of *ling-chih*, or "death by the



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thousand cuts." On the intercession of the Empresses, it was reported, more merciful punishments were inflicted. The Princes were graciously allowed to hang themselves in their cells, and Sushun was taken to the market-place, which serves as Peking's execution-ground, and there beheaded, to the great joy of the populace, by whom he was bitterly hated.

By this bold stroke China was rid of the band of evil rulers which Hienfung had imposed upon her, and Prince Kung and the two Empresses were left complete masters of the situation. The credit for the conception of the scheme possibly belongs to the Prince. But the brilliant strategy shown at the big political crises of 1875 and 1898 might tempt us to see now, too, the hand of Yehonala, or Tze-hi, as we may call her henceforward, this title apparently being decreed to her after she became joint Regent with the Empress Tze-an. Tze-hi was only just twenty-six years of age, and had up to now no experience in the conduct of great affairs, whereas Prince Kung had shown his skill in his management of China's relations with the Western Powers. Still, the young Empress was soon to show that she was by no means a puppet in the hands of her brother-in-law, and there is nothing which directly proves that the stroke of 1861 was his rather than hers.

The change of government at Peking was welcomed by foreign observers, the old Regency being notoriously anti-foreign; and great hopes were entertained that an era of friendliness on the part

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of China was about to open. Such hopes were doomed to be disappointed, however, for the new rulers were no more pro-foreign than those whom they had succeeded. The difference was that they—or some of them, notably Prince Kung and Wen-siang, a Manchu who was known to have assisted the Prince in the late revolution and was now a member of the Grand Secretariat,<sup>1</sup> as well as of the Tsungli Yamen—knew more about foreigners and how to deal with them, not that they loved them better than Prince I and his associates had done. Prince Kung made concessions to the “barbarians” because he appreciated their brute force, and if to him is rightly attributed the institution of the Imperial Tungwen College at Peking, designed to give the literary men of China some acquaintance with Western learning, his object was to prepare his fellow-countrymen to carry on the struggle against the intrusion of the nations of the West. As for the Empresses Tze-hi and Tze-an, it is impossible to credit them with any leaning toward the foreigner with whom their nearest acquaintance was derived from the hurried flight to Jehol when the Allies marched on Peking.

In order to efface as far as possible all memory of the three months which followed Hienfung's death,

<sup>1</sup> The Grand Secretariat and Grand Council, as they are usually called in English, are both in a sense Cabinets. The Secretariat (by law half Manchu, half Chinese) is the much older body; but the Council, though only founded in 1730, grew to be practically the more important.

the young Emperor was given a new reign-name. In place of Chihsiang he was now called Tungchih, "Union Rule" or "Joint Government," in honour of the combined regency of his nominal and natural mothers. As he was only five years old, the Empresses Regent and Prince Kung could look forward to a long period at the head of affairs, provided that they could maintain their authority in China and steer clear of a serious collision with the West. For the latter task, as has been said, they were far better equipped than those who had gone before them. With regard to their rule at home, the Chinese are so docile a people, under any government that is not extremely bad, that they would have had little difficulty had it not been for the existence of two rebellions left over from the last reign—one confined to the Mohammedans of Western China, and the other the celebrated Taiping rising, which had continued throughout Hienfung's eleven years, and was apparently as far as ever from suppression when the reign of Tungchih began.

The Panthay revolt, as the movement among the Mohammedans of Yunnan is sometimes called, is of no importance to the history of Tze-hi. But the devastating Taiping rebellion, involving so much that concerns the relations of China and the outside world, demands some attention here. The Taiping propaganda combined in a strange way Chinese and Western elements. The semi-Christianity of their tenets gained for the rebels the sympathy of great numbers of Europeans and Americans, and this fact

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and the active help given by a few foreigners to the rebel cause undoubtedly served to leave the Chinese, at the end of the struggle, with an increased grudge against Christianity and foreigners.

Hung Hsiu-tsuan, the founder of the Kingdom of the "Great Peace" and thus author of the most horrible war which ever ravaged his country, was the son of a farmer living in a village about thirty miles from Canton. His family, like the rest of the villagers, belonged to the race of Hakkas ("strangers"), those Northern immigrants who form about a third of the population of Kwangtung province and keep distinct in blood, customs, dress, and language<sup>1</sup> from the Puntis, the original Chinese inhabitants of Kwangtung. A diligent student from early years, Hung had cherished reasonable expectations of an honourable career, but for some reason he failed several times to pass his *Hsiu-tsai* ("budding genius") or B.A. examination. On one occasion, it is said, he met a Christian convert who was distributing tracts among the candidates. Hung accepted a pamphlet entitled "Good Words of Exhortation for the Age," containing a number of translations from the Christian Bible, and took it home to his village. He had not read it, however, when he next went up to Canton for his degree. As he was once more "ploughed"—

<sup>1</sup> For example, when I lived in Hongkong, I had occasion to call in a plumber to repair my bath-room floor, and requested my "boy" to give him the necessary instructions. Ahoy replied, "My no can talkee. He belong Hakka!"

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though unjustly, it is said<sup>1</sup>—he returned home and took to his bed, being there visited by extraordinary visions and imagining that he was one day to be Emperor of China. However, when he recovered he became instead a schoolmaster, combining this profession rather oddly with fortune-telling. In 1843 he made his last attempt to pass the B.A. examination, with the same result as before. In his despondency he listened to the advice of a relation, who wished him to read the “Good Words of Exhortations.” Doing so, he thought that he had solved the mystery of his wonderful visions, and he and his relation proceeded to baptize themselves and to seek for converts to the religion which they made their own.

Hung at first called the society which he founded the Shang-ti Hui or “Association of God,” and his original teaching was distinctively Christian. An American Baptist missionary in Canton, by name Roberts, tried to gain control over him and enrol him in his own sect, but after two months Hung left without waiting to be baptized by the American. His doctrines began now to take on a rather different colour, and to show an anti-dynastic tendency,

<sup>1</sup> Such things do happen in China, that land of examinations. Not a dozen years ago a high official in Canton, having purchased tickets in the lottery which is got up in connection with the examination, unfairly used his influence to have the candidates whose names he had drawn placed at the top of the list. It must be added that the Viceroy of the two Kwang provinces, when the story reached his ears, had the fraudulent official beheaded.

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attracting to him therefore some members of the Triad Society, sworn supporters of the old Ming dynasty and enemies of the Manchus. He also cut his followers off from the use of tobacco, opium, or alcohol, forbade them to offer worship to images in the village temples (thereby giving offence to the remaining inhabitants of the villages), and enjoined the keeping of a Sabbath day. By 1848 he had between two and three thousand disciples in the Kwang provinces, and the number was constantly growing, in spite of the hostility of the non-Hakka population. The authorities having become suspicious, two years later he moved with his family to Kwangsi, and now it was not long before an open revolt was declared. Hung's followers, in obedience to his command, clad themselves in the open-fronted Ming dress (familiar to Europeans on vases and in paintings) and cut off their queues, gaining for themselves thereby the name of *Chang-mao tseh* or "long-haired rebels." Joined by bandits and other disorderly characters from all over the two Kwang provinces, mostly Hakkas, Hung found himself in command of quite an army, and decided on taking the field actively against the Government. He had now no doubts as to his divine mission, and overawed his motley following of religious fanatics, secret society men, and fugitives from justice with revelations which he claimed to have received direct from the *Tien-fu* and *Tien-hiung*, the "Heavenly Father" and "Heavenly Elder Brother." After

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some successes against the outnumbered and ill-led Imperial troops—enrolled on the fatal principle of the Chinese maxim: “Make your soldiers of your worst men, as you make your nails of your worst iron”—he proclaimed himself Emperor of the *Tai-ping Tien-kwo* (“Great Peace Celestial Empire”) dynasty, from the first part of which appellation his rebellion takes its name. He also assumed the title of the *Tien-wang* or Heavenly King, producing a “Celestial Decree” in which he was so styled.

Hung’s ignorant adherents easily accepted their leader’s claims. A kind of religious mania spread through their ranks, and many among them began to see visions and go off into trances. This increased their prestige throughout the countryside, and the peasantry credited them with miraculous powers, including the ability to cut out regiments of paper soldiers, breathe upon them, and take them into battle with them as comrades—just as later the Northern peasantry believed that the Boxers could raise regiments of “spirit soldiers” to help them against the foe. The panic among the rustic population spread to the towns, to the officials, and to the Government troops, making the progress of the Heavenly King almost a triumphal march from district to district and from town to town until he reached Changsha, provincial capital of Hunan and scene of the anti-missionary riot in the April of the present year. Here the Taipings received their first check through the bravery of one Tseng Kwo-fan,

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one of those excellent soldiers with whom the province of Hunan seems ever ready to supply China, and at the same time an able scholar, being one of the "Forest of Pencils," the great Hanlin Academy, founded in the Eighth Century A.D.

Foiled by Tseng Kwo-fan in their attempt on Changsha, the Taipings passed on in the direction of the Yangtse River, along which they worked toward the mouth, capturing every place of importance on the way until at last, in the spring of 1853, the great city of Nanking, the second largest in China, fell into their hands.

This was perhaps the highest point of success reached by the Taipings. As they marched from province to province, murdering and laying waste wherever they went, they received into their ranks the outlaws and desperadoes always ready in China to flock to the standard of rebellion. The Heavenly King lost the support of the Triads by his proclamation of himself as Emperor and by his violent denunciation of "idolatry," for the Triads are essentially Buddhists of the corrupt Chinese type. But victory brought him so many soldiers to supply the place of the Triads that when he attacked Nanking he had no less than eighty thousand men under him. The city was unable to withstand assault. The Taipings broke in and put the bulk of the population to the sword, including all the twenty thousand Manchus resident in the place.

In less than three years from the time when he



began his mission the Hakka villager was seated as Emperor on the throne of the Mings, and his forces lay like a wedge inserted between Northern China and the coast provinces about Canton in the South. It looked as if the Ta Tsing dynasty, in the person of the feeble and dissolute Hienfung, was doomed. But at this moment the Heavenly King, as though intoxicated by his position, proceeded to hide himself from the general view of his followers and to live in the midst of his harem the life of a cruel tyrant and debauchee. He had appointed five subsidiary *wangs*, or kings, in whose hands he left the conduct of public affairs; and he even suffered encroachments on his privilege of delivering messages from Heaven. At last, however, one of the *wangs*, the Eastern King, who had already arrogated to himself the title of the Holy Ghost, went so far as to rebuke the *Tien-wang* severely for his violent treatment of his womenfolk. The Heavenly King accepted the rebuke, but not long afterwards had his rash assistant beheaded on a false charge of treason. The example which he set his adherents of licence and brutality was one which they needed no encouragement to follow; and a broad trail of outrage, ruin, and murder marked the progress of the Taipings through China.

The Heavenly King's lapse into debauchery soon brought about a change in the situation, and, had it not been for the outbreak of the *Arrow War*, it is possible that the Imperialists might have crushed

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the rebellion half a dozen years earlier than they actually did. It is true that the Chinese generals in the Yangtse region calmly continued their operations against the Taipings while the Allies were invading the province of Chihli. But without the necessary reinforcements from the North they made no permanent headway. On the contrary, one of the Taiping commanders, the *Chung-wang* or "Faithful King," as his title is usually translated, displayed so much ability in the field that only the presence of a body of British and French marines, landed from the warships engaged in the operations against the Central Government of China, saved Shanghai from falling into rebel hands!

The death of the Emperor Hienfung and the accession of his little son found the middle provinces of China in a dreadful condition. The Imperialists and the rebels swept backward and forward, leaving beggary and starvation behind them. The nucleus of the Taiping armies, being alien in blood to the inhabitants of the Yangtse Valley, robbed and murdered wherever they went, and the Government troops, with their pay always in arrears and their commissariat usually non-existent, were scarcely less of a scourge to the district which they visited. The wretched peasantry were reduced in some places to cannibalism as they wandered among the ruins of their villages.

The establishment of the new Regency was powerless of course to produce an immediate improvement

in the condition of affairs ; and gradually there came about a better organization of the Imperialist forces and an introduction of method into the warfare against the rebels. The more harmonious relations of the Government with the Western Powers enabled China to make systematic use of foreign aid in the struggle. In a small degree this course was adopted before the death of Hienfung, for as early as 1860 there was formed at Shanghai, through the subscriptions of rich Chinese merchants of the place, the beginning of that force which afterwards made itself so famous as the Ever Victorious Army. But it was not until three years later that "Chinese" Gordon took command, in response to the request of China for the loan of a British officer. Partly through the military talents of Gordon (but also, it must not be forgotten, through the patriotic exertions of General Tseng Kwo-fan and of Viceroy Li Hung-chang, who, like Tseng, came to the very front of affairs at this period in their country's history), the second turning-point in the great rebellion was reached, and the end then came even sooner than could have been expected. On July 19th, 1864, Nanking capitulated. The Heavenly King had already poisoned himself on June 30th, by that curious Chinese method of "swallowing gold-leaf." The *Chung-wang*, Faithful King to the end, escaped with his leader's sixteen-year-old son and a thousand followers, only to be captured and executed before the year finished. By the spring of 1865 there were

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no Taipings left, except a few isolated bands of desperadoes who broke across the frontiers of the provinces bordering on the disturbed regions, and lived to cause the Government trouble in the future.

This horrible civil war came to an end none too soon. During the course of fourteen years no less than twenty millions of Chinese had been killed or died of starvation, and nine provinces had been utterly devastated, Honan, Chekiang, Kiangsi, and Kiangsu suffering most. The way of the Taipings was to slaughter and loot, not to establish a proper government wherever they went, in spite of the Heavenly King's claim that he was founding a new dynasty. The language of the Imperial edict on receipt of the news of his death was perfectly true: "Words cannot convey any idea of the misery and desolation which he caused. The measure of his iniquity was full, and the wrath of gods and men was aroused against him." It is remarkable that even now, when we can appreciate to the full the immense evil wrought by this rebellion, some Western writers can be found regretting the foreign aid given to the Imperialists. The Taipings, with their Hakka leaders, were barbarous savages, and the ludicrous parody of Christianity which the Heavenly King invented calls for no sympathy in the West. It would have been a dire calamity for China had the dynasty of the "Great Peace" prevailed. Here truly was an example of that bad government which Confucius declared to be worse than a tiger. Far better the

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Manchus than the *Tien-wang* and his like. The chief causes for regret which the West should feel are that misguided people in Europe and the United States should have upheld the justice of the Taiping cause and welcomed its adherents as fellow Christians ; that numbers of unscrupulous European and American adventurers should have enrolled themselves under the rebel banner and helped the rising to continue for such a fearful length of time<sup>1</sup> ; and that the general effect of the connection of Westerners with the rebellion was to render the Chinese more suspicious and contemptuous of them than before.

It was a fortunate commencement for the Regency of the two Empresses and Prince Kung that in three years they got rid of the incubus which had preyed on China throughout the preceding reign. The Yunnan revolt still remained unquelled ; and the situation was complicated by the outbreak in 1863 of another Mohammedan rising, starting in Shensi, spreading into Kansu, and thence involving all the Tungan subjects of the Empire outside the Eighteen Provinces. Happily for China, the Panthay and Tungan rebellions (both of which seem to have been caused chiefly by the tyranny of local Chinese officials) remained quite distinct, and allowed themselves to be

<sup>1</sup> It was an Englishman who aided the Faithful King to inflict on the "Ever Victorious Army" its first defeat ; and the exploits of an American, the infamous Burgevine, deserter from the Imperialists to the Taipings, did much to counteract the good effects of Gordon's presence at the head of that force.

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crushed in the usual leisurely but thorough way of the Imperialist generals.

So the Regency, although confronted for a period by three simultaneous revolts, and suffering from the legacy of humiliation at the hands of the foreigner left to them by Hienfung and his advisers, succeeded not only in maintaining the integrity of the Empire, but also in preserving on the throne the Ta Tsing dynasty. Opinions may be divided as to the benefit to China of the latter achievement, but there can be no doubt that for the former the country owes a great debt of gratitude to Prince Kung and the two women who lent him their aid and the weight of their names as mothers of the Emperor minor.

## CHAPTER V

### THE JOINT REGENCY—RISE OF LI HUNG- CHANG

**P**RINCE KUNG and the Dowager Empresses, we have said, working together had saved the Empire, in a position of enormous difficulty ; and with the Empire the Imperial family. Hardly had they done so, when there came about a sharp, if brief, quarrel between the joint Regents. Nothing is known for certain of the facts of this dispute, save what is revealed by the edict published on April 2nd, 1865, in the name of the two Empresses. Herein Prince Kung was accused of overrating his own importance and showing want of respect for their Majesties, and it was announced that he was dismissed from the offices which he held. This was all. According to rumour, however, Prince Kung's control of the executive power and the fact that he alone could receive the high officials personally (the Empresses being by custom kept behind a screen in the reception-room), had begun to turn his head and make him arrogant. The edict took effect immediately, and the Prince stepped down from his lofty position, apparently without an attempt to resist. But his partisans, including those in the Grand Council of Empire

over which he had presided, lost no time before making a vigorous protest in the time-honoured way of memorials to the throne. One of the memorialists was courageous enough to give warning that if the Imperial Household were to be the first to begin misunderstandings there was no knowing where matters would end. In later days an official venturing to use such language towards Tze-hi might have had reason to regret his rashness. But at this early date Her Majesty did not feel herself secure. Although she had the support of her fellow Empress, who, if a practical nonentity, had at least tremendous prestige, she agreed to a compromise. Prince Kung, having expressed his sorrow for his conduct and begged the Empresses' forgiveness, was reinstated, a month after his degradation, to all his posts except the presidency of the Grand Council. The better to show their goodwill, the two ladies adopted the Prince's daughter as their own, giving her the title and privileges of Imperial Princess, which she retains to this day.

It is uncertain how far Prince Kung's position was affected by this affair. Some say that he had henceforward little or none of his former authority ; others, that he was as important as ever. It seems probable that he learnt the lesson which the Empresses desired to teach him, that they were the real Regents, not he, and that it was only by working in harmony with them that he could continue to wield the power which his talents had won for him in the first place.



There was, too, in addition to the offended dignity of his sisters-in-law, another influence which tended to diminish the supremacy to which the Manchu Prince seemed to have been aspiring in the government of the Empire. This was the rise to high positions of the two Chinese whom the Taiping rebellion had especially proved to be men of ability, Tseng Kwo-fan and Li Hung-chang. Tseng Kwo-fan, whose family prided themselves on their descent from the philosopher Tseng, sometimes called by Westerners Cincius, was at once a soldier and a scholar, as has already been noted. While his intellectual achievements brought him distinction in the shape of membership of the Hanlin Academy, his bravery in the defence of Changsha against the Taipings was rewarded with such rapid promotion that in 1864 he was the general in command of the Imperialist forces which captured Nanking. After the suppression of the rebellion he was made a *Hou* or "Marquis," and soon became second in power to none in China outside the Imperial clan. A man of high character, he made a good impression on unprejudiced European observers, although the fact that he was Viceroy of Chihli when the Tientsin massacre took place (as will shortly be mentioned) exposed him to a certain amount of obloquy. He was certainly not pro-foreign, for no patriotic Chinese is or can be that; and Tseng was a patriot beyond question. But he was fair-minded and statesmanlike, and showed wonderfully little of the narrowness which so

often accompanies great literary attainments in China.

A very different kind of man, undeniably patriotic but at the same time intensely self-seeking, was Li Hung-chang, world-famous as no other countryman of his ever was. Li first came to the front in a manner singularly like Tseng Kwo-fan. Born in 1823, he was about thirty when the Taipings invaded his native province of Anhui. Li was living at his father's house in the town of Hofei. Like Tseng he put himself at the head of the Government forces (in this case militia raised by himself) and attacked the enemy. More cautious than the other, he restricted his operations against the rebels to guerilla fighting, but he did sufficiently well to attract the attention of the authorities. Tseng, having distinguished himself somewhat earlier in date, was already in a position to be of use to his imitator, and a friendship sprang up between the two men which lasted until the elder's death. Li's rise during the rebellion was as rapid as his friend's, and it was as Viceroy of the Kiangnan provinces (Kiangsi, Kiangsu, and Anhui) that "Chinese" Gordon found him when he took up command of the Ever Victorious Army. After the close of the rebellion, Li was not only made a *Pih* or "Earl," but he was also given the high reward of the Yellow Riding Jacket. Some people may recall the great Li wearing this brilliant golden-hued coat, with its peacock-blue sleeves, on certain occasions during his visit to this country.

ships might become a source of danger as well as of power, and it was necessary for her to build up a party prepared to support any claims which she might one day put forward. When the critical moment arrives, we shall find that Tze-hi had done this. And among her adherents there was no one better qualified to bring her success than Li Hung-chang.

Apart from what Tze-hi schemed in her own interests, it may certainly be said that the Regency was instrumental in bringing to the front men of much better character and more enlightenment than those who had guided the councils of the Emperor Hienfung. And the general policy of China appeared to be assuming a more liberal character, although the foreign merchants resident in the coast-ports, it must be added, refused to admit that there was any genuine improvement. The merchants had this much evidence in support of their argument, that the local Chinese officials remained as corrupt, as anti-foreign, and as obstructive to trade from abroad as ever they had been. Still, it is impossible to deny that Peking showed some unmistakable signs of awakening. The mere fact of the despatch of the "Burlingame Mission" to America and Europe showed a remarkable departure in policy.

Mr. Anson Burlingame had been United States Minister at Peking. Retiring from his post toward the end of 1867, he received from the Government of China an appointment as joint Special Commissioner with two native colleagues, attended by a

mixed European and Chinese staff, to visit the West and plead for China's right, as a progressive nation, to manage her own affairs. The mission was not so fruitful as Burlingame himself hoped. He succeeded, indeed, in negotiating a treaty between China and his own country, one of the clauses of which recognized "the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of free migration and emigration" of the citizens and subjects of the two countries "for the purposes of curiosity or trade or as permanent residents." In Europe he did little before death cut short his task at St. Petersburg in the spring of 1870.

It was noted with bitter satisfaction by those who had denounced the Burlingame Mission that the Peking Government refrained from rewarding Burlingame's Chinese colleagues with high office on their return from abroad, and that, so far from relations between natives and foreigners improving, a wave of anti-foreign feeling suddenly swept over various parts of China, including districts which ought to have been well under the control of the central authorities. It was, of course, very human of these critics to seize upon the waverings and the inconsistencies of Peking to drive home their arguments against any real desire for progress in China. Yet, if they had waited, they would have found others beside the Chinese inconsistent; they would have seen the United States Government, after affirming "the inherent and inalienable right of man," etc., passing

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exclusion laws against the Chinese which have become stricter and stricter until the present day. They would have witnessed also waves of anti-Chinese feeling, both in the United States and in Australia, resulting in outrages for which China has received no compensation whatever.

Unhappily, it has never been the custom of the Western Powers to treat the nations of the East with justice unless obliged to do so, and in this respect China has been a great sufferer. Peking has always had to answer for the wrongs done to foreigners,<sup>1</sup> while no appeal to a Western Government regarding wrongs inflicted on Chinese immigrants has yet been allowed.

In the case of the Tientsin massacre of 1870, China, it must be admitted, escaped very lightly, when we compare other outrages against Europeans and the punishments exacted for them. But the reason for this was that the hand of the chastiser was stayed by a catastrophe at home.

For two years previous to the Tientsin massacre troubles had occurred in various parts of the Empire—in Kwangtung, Fuhkien, Kiangsu, Szechuan, and Formosa—between natives and foreigners, chiefly missionaries. The surreptitious clause in the French version of the Treaty of Tientsin had opened the way for a vast increase in missionary propaganda (about which more will be said in the next chapter);

<sup>1</sup> Pecuniarily, no doubt, Peking has always been able to recoup itself at the expense of the province in which the trouble occurred.

and Great Britain in a discussion on the revision of her own Treaty insisted on the extension of the right of residence in the interior of China to merchants as well as missionaries. Although the Tsungli Yamen, including its most enlightened members, fought bitterly against this extension, which involved the presence in the inland provinces of still more foreigners exempt from Chinese jurisdiction, resistance was in vain. China, having been deceived by French diplomacy into permitting the thin end to be inserted, now saw the wedge being driven further home. Those who search for the hand of Peking in almost every provincial outbreak against foreigners claim that the disturbances immediately preceding and during 1870 were promoted, directly or indirectly, by the central authorities, rendered desperate by the position in which they found themselves placed. And this was the view held also by coast-port residents at the time. Naturally it is impossible to bring home the guilt, and in the heated condition of opinion accusations were hurled too broadcast to be worthy of acceptance. In the Tientsin affair suspicion fell not only on high officials like Tseng Kwo-fan, but still more on various members of the Imperial family, notably Prince Chun. Twenty years later the name of the Empress Dowager Tze-hi would have been the first to occur to the minds of foreigners. But in 1870 her personality was almost unknown outside Peking, and as far as she was known she was credited with adherence to the party

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of Prince Kung, Wensiang, and other Liberals, to whom the Tientsin massacre came as a great blow, thwarting their plans for the guidance of the ship of State and all but wrecking it, as its previous unskilled pilots had wrecked it in the reign of Hienfung. If we may judge the Empress, however, by her attitude in later years, she should now have been engaged in the occupation known as "sitting on the fence." And in this she would have been well justified ; for the outlook was very obscure.

At the time when the Tientsin massacre took place the Viceroy of Chihli was Tseng Kwo-fan. He had only recently come to the metropolitan province from the Kiangnan, where unfortunately he had experienced considerable trouble with the British Consul from Shanghai over the Yangchow anti-missionary outbreak. Tseng had only given way to Mr. Medhurst's demands for reparation, in their full extent, after threats of violent action. Now at Tientsin Tseng was called upon to face a far more serious crisis than at Yangchow, where the worst the mob had done was to wreck the China Inland Mission buildings and drive the missionaries out of the town. In the first half of the year 1870 Tientsin and its neighbourhood were in a state of smouldering combustion, which boded ill for foreigners should anything happen to fan the smallest flame into existence.

Perhaps all the causes of the bitter anti-foreign sentiment at Tientsin in 1870 (which, it may be noted, continues strong even to the present day) are

not known. Nearly ten years earlier the French had given great offence by converting a former temple into their consulate. French missionary activity, too, at Tientsin was very marked, the Sisters of Charity in particular having started an orphanage and founding hospital for Chinese children. Unhappily they marred their good work by the indiscreet offer of a small reward in return for every child placed in their charge. The Chinese claimed that this led to the kidnapping of children to sell to the Sisters ; and this charge seems to have been not altogether without foundation, according to the belief even of foreign residents. But kidnapping of children has always been laid to the charge of Christian missions in China. The zeal of the Tientsin Sisters to baptize children at the point of death led to still worse misunderstandings. The more ignorant among the Chinese, in no matter what part of the Empire, incapable of comprehending the results of Western science, have always been ready to accept the idea that it is by magic that foreigners achieve their wonders. And, in the crude state of China's pharmacopeia to this very day, the mob has never found any difficulty in swallowing the story that the eyes, etc., of dead Chinese are important ingredients in compounding miracle-working drugs. In this superstition the literary classes, resentful of the blows which Westerners were endeavouring to strike at them and their intensely cherished learning, have always been glad to encourage the vulgar herd, regardless



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of the danger to their country of exciting trouble against the foreigner.

It seems to have been, then, the usual admixture of selfishness of the native *litterati*, credulity of the native populace, and unwisdom of foreign propagandists which led to the catastrophe at Tientsin in 1870. Toward the end of May an epidemic carried off many of the Chinese children at the orphanage hospital of the Sisters. There was in the town a secret society called the "Turbid Stars," which included a great number of the worst characters of the place, who eagerly seized on an excuse for disturbance. The local authorities, according to their European accusers, knew of the brewing storm, but took no steps to prevent the outbreak. When crowds began to assemble and talk of an attack on the mission-buildings, all they did was to suggest that a committee should be appointed to visit the Orphanage and report. The Sisters, alarmed at the situation, consented. At this point the French Consul at Tientsin, M. Fontanier, a rash and hot-tempered man, made an unfortunate intervention. Although he should have known, equally as well as the Chinese authorities, the threatening state of Tientsin, his first step was to come to the Orphanage and drive out without ceremony the committee of inspection. Then when the District Magistrate called upon him at the Consulate and warned him that it was highly dangerous to forbid the inspection, Fontanier declined to deal with an official of so low a rank. And so the

chance of amicable negotiation, which might have prevented disaster, passed away.

On June 21st, two days after the District Magistrate's futile call at the French Consulate, the mob gathered together again in full force and hurried to the Sisters' establishment and the Roman Catholic Cathedral, threatening fire and slaughter. As we learn from a letter which the British Minister, Sir Thomas Wade, afterwards wrote to Prince Kung, it was led by "the fire-brigades and the banded villains known as the *Hunsing Tzu*" (hooligans), and under the chief direction of an ex-rebel officer now, according to the common Chinese custom, holding the brevet of major-general in the regular army. In its ranks, too, were numbers of soldiers and of underlings from the various magistracies.

While the rioters marched on their prey, the unhappy Fontanier, taking with him a clerk, presented himself at the office of the Superintendent of Customs, a Manchu named Chunghow. This Chunghow, though a poor weak creature and destined to make himself infamous a few years hence by a betrayal of his country to Russia, on the present occasion appears to have been in no way to blame for what occurred. It was not within his province to keep order in Tientsin. Fontanier was off his head with excitement, and, disregarding Chunghow's advice, went out into the street, revolver in hand. He was never seen again, and his death gave the mob its signal for the attack on the Orphanage and Cathedral. The

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Sisters were barbarously murdered, together with a number of other foreigners, twenty in all, and probably many more native converts.

It is a remarkable fact that all the foreigners killed were French subjects, with the exception of three Russians, who may have been mistaken for French ; and that the rioters did not go on to attack the Protestant missions. It is usually said that the Chinese mob cannot discriminate between one foreign nation and another. But at Tientsin in 1870 this does not seem to have been true, which points to the grievance being anti-French and anti-Roman rather than generally anti-foreign and anti-missionary ; and also, it must be added, points to some intelligent direction of the brute force of the mob.

As it turned out, the Chinese Government was very lucky in that France was the sufferer on this awful day, for some three weeks later came the fatal council of Saint-Cloud on July 14th, when war against Prussia was declared. But for this, a Franco-Chinese war might have taken place, with the usual penalty in China for the blood of the martyrs, the extension of foreign dominion.

Nevertheless, the prospect looked black for Peking at first, the representatives of the other Powers loyally supporting France in her demand for instant severe measures. Prince Kung and the Tsungli Yamen employed, to the utmost possible extent, the favourite Chinese diplomatic weapon of procrastination. They defended the conduct of Viceroy Tseng and other

high officials, whom they claimed to be doing their duty in restoring order and seeking for the guilty parties. The foreign Ministers retorted that only a few of the lowest criminal class had been arrested, while songs were in circulation in praise of the massacre, as well as pictures in which the officials were represented as spectators friendly to the mob. Sir Thomas Wade, in his letter to Prince Kung, told him plainly that there were leading men in China who, if not direct instigators of the atrocities, at least approved of them and were shielding the authors, while urging that all foreigners should be treated in the same way as the victims of June 21st.

Refusing to believe in the sincerity of China's endeavour to find the real criminals, the Powers assembled a naval force off Tientsin, while France through the *chargé d'affaires* then representing her at Peking, put forward a demand for the execution of the City Prefect and District Magistrate. The Tsungli Yamen, strengthened by the knowledge of the outbreak of hostilities between France and Prussia, very properly declined to execute these officials before they had been duly tried. They promised, however, to make a strict investigation, and appointed a special commission of enquiry, of which the two principal members were Li Hung-chang and Tseng Kwo-fan. At the same time, in deference to the foreign outcry against Tseng (who was certainly unfortunate in the occurrence of two outrages against missionaries in two successive vice-

royalties), an Imperial edict removed him from Chihli to the Kiangnan provinces, where the Viceroy had just been assassinated. In place of Tseng, Li Hung-chang was brought from the Hukwang and appointed to Chihli.

Li's presence on a commission, as Westerners now began to learn, meant that the work in hand would be carried to a conclusion with a speed that was almost un-Chinese. The two officials who were adjudged responsible for allowing the mob to collect were sentenced to exile in Manchuria. Twenty men were condemned to death as having taken actual part in the murders, and on October 18th, four months after the massacre, sixteen of them were led to the execution-ground and beheaded in the presence of the consuls and other foreign residents and a large crowd of Chinese, who took no pains to conceal the fact that they looked on the captives as heroes and martyrs.

In addition to these punishments the Chinese Government agreed to pay an indemnity of four hundred thousand Taels and to send Chunghow on a mission of apology to France. Thus, at a price which was light indeed compared with what China has since had to pay for less serious outrages, the crime of Tientsin was expiated. Had some foreign views prevailed the penalty would have been far heavier. A member of one of the Protestant missions actually proposed that troops should be landed to raze to the ground half of the city, and that on the open space a memorial should be erected

to the victims of June 21st.<sup>1</sup> Happily for the credit of Western civilization the lay arm was not so cruel as the clerical mind, and on this occasion the innocent were not made to suffer with or instead of the guilty—although it is true that Tientsin residents freely suggested that the sixteen men beheaded in October were bought substitutes for the real criminals.

In conducting the commission of enquiry to a satisfactory close, Li Hung-chang deserved well of his country, and the Regents recognized this by bestowing on him the two-eyed peacock's feather and the rank of Imperial Tutor of the Second Class, as well as by appointing him to the Grand Secretariat. With the waning of Tseng Kwo-fan's influence through his misfortunes as Viceroy, which caused him twice in three years to be concerned in the paying of heavy indemnities to foreigners, Li was now practically the first man in China outside the Imperial family. On Tseng's death in 1872 he had no rival of his own race.

The incident of the Tientsin massacre has been

<sup>1</sup> It is painful to see also a missionary of the standing of Dr. W. A. P. Martin writing: "If in 1870 the French *chargé*, declining the offer of money and heads, had waited until he could have a fleet of gunboats in the Peiho, if then the whole suburb where the riot occurred had been laid in ashes, the [Chinese] Government would have taken care that there should not be a second riot. Being let off cheap, the anti-foreign mandarins felt that they could afford to continue the process of fanning the flames of patriotism" (*A Cycle of Cathay*, p. 445). Could a better exposition be asked for of the "missionary and gunboat" policy?

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dealt with at some length, for the reason that it was the first serious international complication since Tze-hi took a share in the government of her country, and must have given her her first insight into the dangers threatening China now that she had been forced by treaty to take her place in the so-called sisterhood of nations. Unhappily it was destined that more than thirty years should pass before the Empress Dowager gave unmistakable proof that she had learnt the lesson which the Tientsin affair should have conveyed. Curiously, it was Li Hung-chang's last performance in life, thirty-one years later, to extricate his Imperial mistress from the situation in which she had involved herself and her country by her inability to understand this lesson.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MISSIONARY QUESTION IN TZE-HI'S LIFETIME

**N**O one writing about the Empress Dowager has ever suggested that she showed at any time in her life an inclination toward Christianity. She once accepted, on her sixtieth birthday, a present of a New Testament from the native Christian women of China ; but we never hear that she read it. Her most friendly act toward a teacher of the Western religion which is known to history was when, in the February after her restoration to Peking in 1902, she received Monseigneur Favier in audience and, after expressing her regret for the Boxer attacks on his cathedral, affirmed that she wished to look upon Christian converts and other Chinese alike as her subjects.

Yet it is not, perhaps, too much to say that but for the presence of an ever-increasing number of Christian missionaries in China during her rule, Her Imperial Majesty Tze-hi might have remained a mere name to the Western world. Certainly the West would not otherwise have come to look upon her as the great influence, for good or for evil, that she is admitted to have been. The European penetration



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of China has almost invariably proceeded on the same lines. The missionary is the pioneer, the trader and the gunboat follow him, and the last step is the establishment of a "settlement" or "concession," or in some cases the outright annexation of a port and its "hinterland." To the solution of the problem how to deal with aggression conducted in this manner, the subtlest minds of the Celestial Empire were compelled to devote their attention. The Manchu Empress Dowager, therefore, and her greatest Chinese henchman, Li Hung-chang, giving their consideration to the matter, learnt by experience that honesty was impossible, and that the only policy was what Li himself called "the policy of the weak"<sup>1</sup>—to yield when forced to, and in the meanwhile to postpone the evil day by playing upon the mutual jealousies of the ever insatiable Barbarians, who looked on China as their prey, whether for religious, commercial, or political purposes. So now at this point in the Empress's story, when we are about to see China make a sincere attempt to grapple with the missionary difficulty, we may pause to look at the prominent aspects of the question which, above all others, has brought China into conflict with the world.

Volumes might be written merely to sum up the

<sup>1</sup> Li was probably thinking of the saying of a legendary prince in *The History of Great Light*: "Force can only be successful in combating what is weaker than itself . . . but weakness can overcome what is far stronger than itself."

opinions of those who have devoted attention to the subject of Christian missions in China—intelligent Chinese, foreigners both intelligent and foolish, officials, commercial men, journalists, globe-trotters, and a whole army of missionaries themselves, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Protestants of innumerable sects. Nor would the task of compiling those volumes be altogether without profit in the study of the human mind. As, however, the present book has no such ambitious aim in view, we shall content ourselves with such few incidental references to the writings of others as may seem necessary to the discussion of the subject.

All fair-minded Western observers have admitted that the Chinese are, as a whole, one of the most tolerant nations in the world in religious matters ; the upper classes through being so imbued with Confucian indifference, the lower because they are so superstitious that the doors of their pantheon are always open to receive any god who will not make war on his neighbours. Three creeds have lived peaceably side by side for the greater part of twenty centuries of Chinese history, and a fourth has been allowed to come in without opposition. If then the Confucianist does not persecute the Buddhist, the Buddhist the Taoist, or the Taoist the Confucianist, and if a Chinese can practically own allegiance of a sort to Confucius, the Buddha, and Lao-tze at the same time, while tolerating the practice of Mohammedanism in certain provinces of the Empire, how is it

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that the three creeds may be found banded together in enmity to Christianity? Clearly because Christianity, as introduced to China, had neither the rather contemptuous indifference of Confucianism nor the accommodating ease of Taoism and East Asiatic Buddhism. It was not prepared to hold out a hand of friendship to its rivals, nor even to acknowledge them with the civil bow of mere acquaintance. Moreover, where its tenets came in conflict with the customs of the country, it did not allow its adherents to conform to the customs; though, like old national customs all over the world, they had more than the force of laws. The result of this was, as the educated men of China and Western critics of the missionaries have alike insisted, the establishment of an *imperium in imperio*.<sup>1</sup> Homage to one's ancestors, which is filial piety carried to an extreme, has been called the foundation-stone of Chinese belief. It is a religion transcending all the three main creeds of the nation, and has profoundly influenced them all. It has not been rejected by the Mohammedans of China. But since the day when the suggestion of the Jesuits at Peking in the seventeenth century to tolerate this national custom among their converts was declined by Rome, missionaries, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, have denounced

<sup>1</sup> The Memorandum mentioned below says, precisely, that the missionaries are founding "an indefinite number of states within the State."

“ancestor-worship” and refused to allow their flock to conform to the practice of their non-Christian neighbours. With this refusal has gone the withdrawal of the converts from the contributions made in every town and village for the upkeep of such foolish but quaint ceremonies as the driving of the demons of plague, cholera, etc., outside the gates and their massacre by armed troops in the open ; the giving of theatrical shows to placate the wrath of Buddhist or Taoist divinities ; and the marching out in picturesque procession in honour of this god or that. The abstention of the native Christians not only insulted the gods and their worshippers, but also threw an additional expense on the latter, as there were less to contribute to the common fund.

Cases of actual disrespect shown by missionaries themselves to sacred images or religious processions have fortunately been few, though there have been such cases, even as late as the beginning of the present century. With regard to slighting references by Christian teachers to the philosophers Confucius and Mencius, Dr. A. H. Smith, fairest of all missionary writers in China, considers that they have been rare. But he is probably thinking of the better-educated teachers, and there are, alas ! very many who cannot be so described, both European and American. Since it is seldom made part of the preliminary training of missionaries to China that they should learn how to approach and (still more important) how not

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to approach their intended converts, it is inevitable that causes of offence should arise.<sup>1</sup>

It can be seen, therefore, that the Christian teacher presents himself, to the Chinese mind, as an attacking force on his religious side. There is also the political side. It is generally claimed on behalf of the Protestant missionaries that they have kept their hands clean from political intrigue; and they have themselves joined with other critics in denouncing the intriguing of the Roman Catholic priests. The unscrupulousness of the French Governments in the past in using the priest as a pawn in the game against the integrity of China has doubtless brought a great deal of undeserved abuse upon the Roman Catholic propagandists. Still it cannot be denied that the latter have not unfrequently combined, in a manner discreditable to their calling, with the diplomatists of the country which until recently posed as the guardian of the Church of Rome. China, unskilled in discriminating between the sects, has visited the sins of some mischievously political Roman Catholic priests upon the Christian evangelists as a body. And when

<sup>1</sup> For instance, the newly arrived missionary will probably never have heard of *Feng-shui*, that mysterious science which regulates the height and positions of buildings, the directions of roads, and innumerable other things in China, and will be unable to understand why the Roman Catholics at Canton gave such offence by the erection of their great cathedral, overtopping every other building in the city, and therefore threatening terrible evils from the outraged spirits of the air. Yet without attention to *Feng-shui* it is hardly possible to put a window in a Chinese house, much less build the house itself.

we come to the accusation that the teachers interfere in the legal affairs of their flock and put unfair pressure on the magistrates, we cannot exonerate one section rather than another. It is but natural that a missionary should take an interest in his converts, even to the extent of going into court with him and pleading with the magistrate. But all converts are not in the right nor all truthful, while the sight of a magistrate bowing to missionary pressure is calculated to have a very bad impression on the crowd—and especially on the evil characters, who see in conversion a short cut to triumph over their enemies. On this last point the Chinese Government felt extremely strongly, as is proved by the fact that the Tsungli Yamen in its memorandum drew up a special rule to deal with it.

The chief active causes of offence introduced by Christianity into China have now been mentioned. There remain what we may call the passive causes—the proceedings of the medical missionaries, the establishment of conventual life, and the participation of women in the task of evangelization.

It is a very unhappy fact that the medical missionaries, both male and female, whose usefulness in China not even the strongest opponents of missions in that country can deny, have been the origin of some of the most virulent persecutions of Christians there. We have seen in the events which preceded the Tientsin massacre how laudable actions such as the saving of infant life could be misrepresented by

anti-Christian agitators, and that the kidnapping of children was one of the favourite accusations against the foreign missions. About this time an infamous pamphlet was published, entitled *A Deathblow to Corrupt Doctrines*, whose charges against the Christians Professor Douglas well compares with those made against the early Christians under the Roman Empire. The supposed author was no less a dignitary than the Admiral of the Yangtse Fleet, one Peng Yu-lin, although he derived the bulk of his material from a pamphlet issued as early as 1624, when a violent persecution of Christians was in progress. Peng brought up again the gruesomely ridiculous accusations against foreigners of using the eyes and other parts of murdered Chinese children in medicine, in photography, and in the conversion of lead into silver. The supremely ignorant rabble of Tientsin and elsewhere accepted such charges without hesitation,<sup>1</sup> with the result that the lives of some true philanthropists were pitiably sacrificed. Occasionally, no doubt, these medical missionaries were worse than unwise, for they have been known to exhibit human bones, bottled specimens, etc., amongst semi-barbarous villagers with the same assurance which they would have shown in a medical gathering at home. The display of a bottled infant is supposed to have started the Yangchow riot. Such indiscretions, like that of the unfortunate Sisters of Charity at Tientsin, who encouraged the bringing of

<sup>1</sup> See Dyer Ball, *Things Chinese*, in the section on "Riots."

dying infants to the Orphanage to be baptized, argue ill for the commonsense of those who committed them.

Conventual life has always been looked on with disfavour in China, and neither Buddhist nor Taoist monks or nuns have escaped the worst abuse which could be heaped upon them.<sup>1</sup> The Roman Catholic brotherhoods and sisterhoods could not therefore hope to be better treated. But still greater offence was given by the vagrant female missionary as she enthusiastically went about defying all the Chinese notions of propriety for women. However self-sacrificing and beneficent she might be, her morals could not but be suspect, especially as she generally saw no harm in consorting freely with male missionaries.

China is not the only country where a breach of the conventions is a breach of morals—or worse. But in China some conventions have a peculiar force which they perhaps have nowhere else. And the foreign missionary comes to China sworn to defy these conventions and to teach his flock to defy them. He is seen forbidding homage to ancestors, making light of the sages, denying the popular gods, offending against the rules of *Feng-shui*, setting his

<sup>1</sup> This is true all over China. Buddhist nunneries have almost ceased to exist, however. With regard to the monasteries, I had the fortune to visit one, the Hing-wan (“Happy Clouds”), on the West River, which the Cantonese captain of the launch that took me thither admitted to be a good establishment. He was very sceptical as to the existence of any others like it in that part of China.



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clients above the law, terrorizing the magistrates, and encouraging in women an undue freedom of life. If he is touched, or if his mission-buildings are damaged by scandalized villagers, or even by an irresponsible mob, then armed force steps in to avenge him, and at the best an indemnity is demanded ; at the worst heads may fall, officials may be cashiered, and fresh towns may be declared open ports for foreigners to reside in.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the opposition to Christianity has always come from all classes alike in China, though special classes have had their special grievances. The men of letters complained that the Christian teachers had no reverence for Confucius, Mencius, and the other beloved philosophers, and wished to replace the rules of life drawn up by them ; the officials, that the missionaries claimed to rank with them, a Bishop with a Viceroy, and so on down the scale ; the common people, that the new teachings struck a severe blow at the observance of popular rites and holidays. But there was a sufficient similarity in all the grievances to bind all classes together to present a united front against the invading religion, with the result that after so many centuries of evangelization there certainly cannot be over a million and a quarter of converts to Christianity in China.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, nine years ago Professor Parker put the number at half a million only.

<sup>1</sup> This is the figure given in the "Twenty-second Annual Report of the Christian Literature Society."

The serious point for consideration by the Chinese Government after the Tientsin massacre and its unpleasant consequences was how repetitions of such occurrences might be avoided. Those in the Government who had any experience of the "Western barbarians" knew that it was hopeless to try to solve the problem by persecuting the Christians out of existence. Even before the foreigner had come with armed force to China this plan had failed, and to attempt to revive it now only threatened ruin to the Empire. Prince Kung and his enlightened colleagues at the Tsungli Yamen set to work in a manner deserving of all praise to find a better way. They must have acted with the consent of the Empresses Regent, but the initiative was clearly their own. Had they been met by the representatives of the Powers in a right spirit, much future strife and misery might have been saved. But the Powers, to their shame, showed no sign of a desire to help China out of a difficulty for which she was far less responsible than they. As usual, the representatives of the West at Peking seemed powerless to combine for any good and unselfish end.

It was in the February following the massacre of Tientsin that the Legations received from the Tsungli Yamen a circular note, to which was attached a memorandum on the missionary question. This memorandum, which has been declared by a British critic<sup>1</sup> almost the only example of true initiative with which

<sup>1</sup> The late Alexander Michie, *China and Christianity*.

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the Tsungli Yamen can be credited, gives evidence of careful study of the question by Prince Kung and his colleagues and a strong desire to deal with it in a manner which should not damage the good relations of China with the West. At the same time it presented China's case very forcibly, supporting the argument with specific instances of the grievances of which she complained. Perhaps its most notable phrase was the statement, alluded to above, that the missionaries "seemed to be founding an indefinite number of states within the State"—a complaint of which impartial Western observers have never attempted to deny the justice. The general wording of the memorandum gave some offence to European pride, but must be admitted to have been singularly moderate for a Chinese official document.

With the intention of turning their study to practical account the Chinese Foreign Office proposed for the consideration of the Legations eight rules, which may be briefly summarized as follows :—

(1) The Roman Catholic orphanages shall be strictly supervised and shall only take in the children of converts.

(2) In order to exhibit the strict propriety of the Christian religion, no Chinese women shall be allowed to enter the chapels where men are present, nor shall foreign women engage in the propagation of the doctrine.

(3) Missionaries shall not step beyond the bounds of their calling nor attempt to withdraw themselves,

and their native converts as well, from the jurisdiction of the local authorities.

(4) Missionaries shall not interfere in the affairs of converts before the magistrates.

(5) Missionaries shall not transfer their passports, nor make improper use of them so as to leave no traces of their whereabouts.

(6) Evil characters shall not be received as converts nor protected when they have declared themselves Christians.

(7) Missionaries shall not assume official privileges.

(8) The claims, under the French version of the Treaty of 1860, for the restoration of any buildings or property which had ever belonged to the Roman Church in China, regardless of the injustice done to Chinese who have honestly bought and paid for such property, shall cease.

Of these eight rules, none except perhaps the second can be called unreasonable. It must be admitted that Professor Douglas says that they "were so palpably contrary to the spirit of the treaty that the ministers one and all declined to entertain the consideration of them for a moment."<sup>1</sup> If that be the case, so much the worse for the spirit of the treaty; and for the credit of its framers we should prefer to substitute "letter" for "spirit."

The foreign representatives at Peking, however, showed no inclination to interpret treaties otherwise

<sup>1</sup> *China*, p. 369. On the next page Professor Douglas nevertheless goes far toward justifying the suggestions of the Tsungli Yamen.

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that of their attitude to the West. They did not properly seem to look at the Tsinghih Tamen's suggestion, and they adopted the policy which they do still take a case of resentment against the Chinese, and themselves as they leave that at least the Tamen seem to have had a friendly discussion of the matter and allowed it to pass. Only the United States Minister showing the true nature of his country's representative in taking a more appreciative of China's rights than his European colleagues, and the Tamen in courtesy of a polite reply to their proposals, and being done, he could do no more than make a few suggestions.

A great opportunity was thus lost, the result of which was increasing trouble down to the present day for the Western Powers, and for China constant unrest, numberless "incidents," the great war, and the loss of all her best harbours and of millions of dollars in the name of reparation and indemnity.

The missionary writer, Dr. A. H. Smith, has well said that the Tsinghih Tamen's memorandum "remains a landmark in the history of missionary relations with China." There would have been a far nobler landmark in the whole history of China and the West had the envoys of the latter, in a spirit of fairness, welcomed the advances made by the Chinese Foreign Office in 1871, and agreed to a discussion of the carefully considered suggestions of the memorandum. It is the invariable custom of the Western nations to deny the genuineness of any attempt on the

part of the Government of China towards a better condition of affairs. "Chinese faith" is a true-born descendant of that "Punic faith" which figured so largely in the speeches of the Romans before the fall of Carthage. Yet if any official document is stamped with sincerity it is this memorandum of Prince Kung and his colleagues, and never has the parrot-cry of ill-faith been uttered with more injustice. The Prince, Wensiang, and those who acted with them, were, it is true, only temporarily representative of the Dragon Throne. But, committed to a definite policy toward the missionary question by arrangement between the Tsungli Yamen and the Powers, China could have been kept to her promises in the same way as she has been made to observe those wrung from her by force. The Empress Dowager, when she emancipated herself completely from the guidance of her brother-in-law, would not have found herself confronted by the same old difficulties which had always attended the presence of the Christian missions in China, and much that is most to be regretted in the history of China under her regency would have been averted. Never again did a peaceful solution offer itself of the gravest problem in the relations between China and the Western world, although the Treaty of Shanghai in 1903 leaves Great Britain under a pledge, still waiting to be redeemed, to join with China in a Commission to investigate the missionary question.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REIGN OF TZE-HI'S SON

**WHILE** the government of the Empire was being carried on in the name of the two Empresses, his legal and his actual mothers, and (as far as foreign affairs were concerned) by the counsels of his uncle, the young Tungchih was growing up to man's estate. Born in the April of 1856, he was only sixteen in the same month of 1872, according to our reckoning. But the already mentioned Chinese method of dating the commencement of life from the period of conception made him seventeen before the end of 1872, and it was decided that he should take an Empress in the autumn of that year and begin his reign on the following New Year's Day.

The prescribed parade of Manchu maidens was held in the Palace and, out of the six hundred or more, Tungchih was stated to have fixed his choice on Ahluta, daughter of the "Duke" Chung-yi, a prominent Bannerman and a scholar of unusual learning for a Manchu, as he was a Hanlin. It was rumoured that Ahluta was actually the Emperor's own selection, although it is certain that the Empresses Regent would not have allowed this consideration to have weighed with them, had they not deemed the

lady suitable. Indeed, custom as well as self-interest dictated the intervention of his mother, if living, to help the Emperor in his choice of consort. Tze-hi was doubtless a willing go-between. As she proved later in the case of her adopted son Kwanghsu, she had no doubts as to the necessity of the young Empress being an amenable daughter-in-law before she was a wife acceptable to her husband. We shall see, however, that there is reason to suspect that she misjudged the strength of Ahluta's character, with disastrous results to the unhappy daughter-in-law.

The lady having been chosen, it was left to the Astronomical Board (whose functions are rather astrological than astronomical) to discover the lucky day and hour for the wedding. This they found to be October 16th, at midnight precisely, and to prevent the possibility of the slightest error in time one of them was deputed to walk beside the closed bridal chair which took Ahluta from her father's house to the Palace, holding in his hands a candle which marked the hours as it burned. So at the appointed moment the Emperor received his bride, having already been instructed in his duties, according to the quaint Chinese Imperial custom, by the female "Professors of Matrimony."<sup>1</sup>

China had now a reigning Emperor and Empress, and it only remained for the Dowagers to step down from the position of Regents, which they had occupied

<sup>1</sup> See Douglas, *China*, p. 373.



for a dozen years. On February 23rd the Emperor issued the following edict :—

“We are the humble recipient of a decree from Their Majesties the Empresses, declaring it to be Their pleasure that We, being now of full age, should personally take over the superintendence of affairs and, in concert with Our officers in the capital and in the provinces, devote Our attention to the work of good government. In respectful obedience to the commands of Their Majesties, We do in person enter upon the important duty assigned to Us, on the twenty-sixth day of the first moon of the twelfth year of the reign TUNGCHIH.”

The accession of His Imperial Majesty Tungchih was accompanied by the rise of a question which China had been happy to see in abeyance during the twelve years of his minority. The Regents cannot but have foreseen that this was to be. There was, however, no escape from the difficulty when in the natural course of events even an Imperial boy must grow up and attain the age of manhood.

The question was that of the reception of foreign envoys at Peking, which had exercised the minds of China and the Western nations alike ever since the latter had first attempted to get in touch with the Dragon Throne. In China the proper way to enter the Emperor's august presence is with a triple series of three prostrations ; the favoured one kneeling, with his hands joined together and lifted to his forehead, and bowing solemnly until his head all but

touches the ground, whereon he raises himself, separates his hands, and then repeats the process twice more. This is the profoundest form of what Europeans call "the kowtow" (i.e. *k'ou-t'ou*, "knock-head"). From the first Peking insisted that foreigners, if they desired to be presented to the Emperor, must follow the prescribed ceremonial. The matter was discussed at length as early as the middle of the seventeenth century, when a Russian mission refused to comply with the demand and left the Chinese capital without seeing the Emperor. A Dutch mission of the same period gave way, but the other Powers declined to accept this as a precedent. Lord Macartney, Britain's ambassador in 1793, was allowed when seeing Kienlung in a tent in the Palace grounds at Jehol to make a much modified obeisance; but Lord Amherst's mission, twenty-three years afterwards, was a complete failure owing to Kiaking's insistence on the kowtow. Under Taokwang and Hienfung China's attitude never wavered. In 1859 the representatives of the Chinese Government had a friendly conference on the subject with Mr. Ward, the United States Minister of the day. "If we do not kneel before the Emperor," said one of them, "we do not show him any respect. It is that or nothing, and this is the same reverence which we pay to the gods." Prince Kung's old father-in-law, Kweiliang, quaintly told Ward that he on his part was ready to burn incense before the President of the United States. Doubtless he remembered the pro-

posal at the time of the Macartney mission that a representative of the Chinese Government should bow before a picture of King George in the same way as Macartney bowed before Kienlung.

Hienfung had accepted the necessity of granting an audience to the envoys of the Powers, but by his flight to Jehol he had avoided the actual ceremony. For his son there was no such escape. On the day after his accession edict the foreign representatives asked Prince Kung, still head of the Tsungli Yamen, to ascertain the Emperor's pleasure as to the date of their reception. The Yamen secured a few weeks' delay through the convenient illness of their secretary, Wensiang, and then managed to protract the discussion for four months. But they fought in vain. Against them they had the firm determination of all the foreign Governments represented at Peking to obtain an audience without the kowtow, backed by the fact that the Treaty of Tientsin in its third article expressly stipulated against the observance of any derogatory ceremony. At last Prince Kung yielded, influenced by his nephew's personal curiosity to see what foreigners looked like, it was said. The utmost he could do for his country's dignity was to arrange that the audience should take place not in the Palace, but in a building called the *Tzu-kwang Ko*, "the Pavilion of Purple Light," on the further side of the Middle Lake which helps to bound the Forbidden City to the West. The representatives of the Powers have been severely taken to task, both in their own

days and later, for agreeing to this, because this pavilion was the place where the Emperor held his New Year's reception of the outer tribes of his Empire. But probably they were wise to allow the Chinese Government to "save its face" in one detail, while making so large a concession otherwise; for it cannot be doubted that the conservative literary class all over the Empire was bitterly opposed to the omission of any items whatever of the kowtow to the Emperor.

Tungchih, therefore, before June ended, received into his presence the Ministers of Great Britain, France, Russia, Holland, and the United States, and the German Secretary of Legation, the audience taking place at the early hour of 6 a.m. He was surrounded by a great crowd of Imperial princes and high dignitaries. Seated cross-legged on a raised platform, with a small table before him, he saw the foreign envoys bow to him and listened to the reading of an address in Chinese, which was then translated into Manchu, welcoming him to the throne in the name of the nations of the West. Next Prince Kung fell on his knees with the full ceremonial of the kowtow and took from his nephew the reply to the address. As he descended from the dais, he did not forget the Confucian rules of conduct; for he hastened his steps, his arms extended like wings and his demeanour indicative of respectful uneasiness.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Analects*, x. 5 (Legge). Professor Douglas appears annoyed with the Prince for his adherence to tradition! (*China*, p. 378).

The Ministers listened to the reply, laid their credentials upon the small table, bowed again to the Emperor, and retired backward from the pavilion, doubtless much pleased with their victory over the exclusive prejudices of Peking.

Tungchih, although he began his brief period of actual reign with what foreign observers naturally looked upon as a happy augury for the progress of his Empire, was destined to experience much trouble, both external and domestic, before he died. The Mohammedan rebellion in Yunnan, it is true, was at an end in 1873, leaving the province ruined. The other Mohammedan rising was also crushed, as far as the Shenkan provinces were concerned, by the energy of the Viceroy Tso Tsung-tang, though Kashgaria and Kuldja still remained for China to win back. The Eighteen Provinces were thus more peaceful than they had been for many years. But in 1874 two new questions arose on the boundaries of the Empire which damaged severely the prestige of China. Japan, in revenge for the murder of some shipwrecked sailors by Formosan aborigines, landed troops in Formosa and annexed the Loochoo Islands, over which China had hitherto exerted a shadowy suzerainty for centuries. War seemed imminent. The Japanese, however, were in the end induced to leave Formosa on payment of a moderate indemnity ; but they retained the Loochoos.

The other question concerned Annam, where China had been recognized as suzerain Power almost

from the beginning of the third century A.D. France, coming on the scene toward the end of the eighteenth century and from 1858 onward gradually making her way into the country, in 1874 forced the Annamese king to sign a treaty which virtually handed over to her his North-eastern province of Tonking. Apart from the blow to China's suzerainty, the presence of the French in Tonking, into which Chinese outlaws from the border provinces were constantly crossing, boded ill for peace in the future.

But, perhaps fortunately for him, Tungchih was not to see the results of Japan's expansion in the Yellow Sea and France's establishment in the South. With the weak character which he was supposed to have he might have brought ruin upon his Empire when confronted with the difficulties which caused so much anxiety to his strong-minded mother and her favourite statesmen.

We do not indeed know much that is certain about Tungchih's disposition. The common Chinese opinion of him seems to be that he rather resembled his father Hiengfung, and was feeble and dissolute. One strong reproach against him was that he allowed much power to fall into the hands of the Court eunuchs, the curse of all the weaker Chinese rulers both of the present and of the preceding dynasties. There were, nevertheless, stories current which credited him with Haroun al-Rashid's fondness for slipping out of the Palace by night and personally investigating the conditions under which his subjects

lived. Such conduct, of course, might be prompted either by good or bad motives, and it is unsafe to draw any conclusion from the report with regard to Tungchih.

The young man, however, ventured upon one act during his reign which seems to indicate the possession of will-power. Prince Kung, although he had so ably guided China's foreign affairs since the institution of the Tsungli Yamen, had not pleased his nephew by his attitude toward him personally. Matters suddenly came to a crisis. On September 10th, 1874, there appeared an Imperial edict degrading both Prince Kung and his son Tsaiching from their rank as hereditary princes. It was explained that the Prince had allowed himself to use language "in very many respects unbecoming" toward his Imperial kinsman. When we remember the Regent Empresses' edict of April, 1865, we may be inclined to believe that the alleged cause of Prince Kung's disgrace now was also the real one.

Whatever the true facts of the case, Peking was profoundly shaken by this manifestation of the Emperor's will. But something more startling was to follow. Since they had made way for Tungchih to ascend the throne, their Majesties Tze-hi and Tze-an had, to all appearance, really withdrawn into private life and abstained from interference in affairs. In the spring of 1874 they had joined the Emperor in a pilgrimage to the ancestral tombs of the Ta Tsing dynasty, eighty miles from Peking, under the guard

of Li Hung-chang, Viceroy of Chihli. But this was a ceremonial, not a political, act. Now they emerged from their obscurity to publish an edict, on the very day after Tungchih's, declaring in their own name that Prince Kung and his son were restored to their former rank. Such is the reverence paid to "august ancestresses" in China that there was no question of disputing the validity of the second edict, and Tungchih himself accepted the situation without any protest of which the outer world heard. Perhaps his intention of asserting himself was cut short by the illness which very soon after brought his reign to an end.

Early in December a pompously polite decree announced to the Empire that their sovereign was "happily" ill with smallpox. On the 18th of the same month another appeared, in which he besought the Dowager Empresses in their overflowing benevolence to take over the government of the Empire until he should recover from his sickness. On the 24th yet another stated that his condition was hopeful, and bestowed generous rewards on the Imperial physicians. But rumours of a turn for the worse soon followed, and then a report of his death. This proved to be true. Tungchih expired on, or perhaps before, January 12th, 1875, in the nineteenth year of his age. In spite of the circumstantial details in the various edicts concerning his attack of smallpox, Tze-hi's Chinese enemies have not hesitated to impute to her the murder of her son, and a few



English writers have repeated the horrible accusation without making any attempt to verify it. Like Catherine the Great of Russia, Tze-hi has had to bear the brunt of many charges of murder. It is probable that the Chinese Empress is more justly the subject of some such charges than the Russian, for the cruelty alleged against Catherine is difficult to find (unless it be in the case of her husband), whereas Tze-hi only too often showed herself ruthless in pursuit of her ends. The murder of one's own son, however, is very different from the removal of an ordinary enemy from one's path, and it is satisfactory to discover no real ground for branding China's greatest woman ruler with the stigma of so black a crime.

A curious echo of Tungchih's death was heard fifteen years later. It happened that a transit of the planet Venus occurred on December 9th, 1874, the day on which the Emperor's smallpox declared itself. Peking being a favourable spot for watching this transit, two American astronomers had come to the Chinese capital with a large telescope to make observations. Owing to the superstitious fears of the Chinese, however, they were unable to carry out their purposes, and were obliged to leave in a hurry to escape trouble. Now in a Boxer proclamation of May, 1900, we find the Barbarians accused of causing Tungchih's death in the following terms :—

“They arrived with a great telescope, which they set up on the ground. Then, all of a sudden, a

black spot appeared on the radiant orb, and two days later the Emperor died of the Black Flowers. Is not the Sun the symbol of Imperial Majesty? And did not the moving spot represent the terrible evil which the Ocean Devils caused to cross through space by the use of their telescope? Thus they brought about the death of the Lord of Ten Thousand Years. And, instead of expiating their crime by the punishment of *lingchih*, they escaped by the help of their consuls."

Chinese superstition was eager to make out that Tungchih was as unlucky in his burial as in his reign and in his death. In violation of the laws of *Feng-shui*, it was said, he was interred in the same cemetery as his father Hienfung, whereas, following precedent, his grave should have been in the West like his grandfather's. For this breach of funeral propriety China was bound to be punished. And did not the Empire a few years later suffer from a terrible famine?

If Tungchih's reign closed with an ill-omened defiance of convention, that of his successor began still more unluckily; and, strange to relate, it was mainly through the influence of Tze-hi, for all her strength of mind a victim of the grossest superstition,<sup>1</sup> that this evil thing was brought to pass, if the ordinarily accepted view of the *coup d'état* of 1875 be correct.

<sup>1</sup> Yet she could be a courageous violator of all traditions on occasions, as we shall see.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TZE-HI THE EMPEROR-MAKER

**T**HE Emperor Tungchih being dead without leaving a son and without nominating a successor (as far as is known to history), the Dragon Throne became vacant for the first time since the "Great Pure" dynasty began to rule over China. The task fell, therefore, to those who could exert their authority best in the unusual condition of affairs to find a successor whom the Empire would accept as the new Son of Heaven. On the recognized principle of inheritance in the Imperial family this would have been easy had there been a brother of Tungchih with a son, however young. But Tungchih, having been an only son, had no nephew, in the male line, at least. Failing a son or nephew of the deceased, the next heir would have been some other member of the Imperial family in the same generation. But owing to the fact that both Hienfung and Tungchih were shortlived (there were only forty-five years between the birth of the father and the death of the son) there may very possibly have been no one yet born of the right generation to succeed the late Emperor. If this was the case, then the unfortunate necessity arose of going back to the generation to

which Tungchih himself had belonged—the category of the Tsais.<sup>1</sup> This meant that the new Emperor would not be in a position to perform the proper ancestral rites in honour of his predecessor, which, if not performed by the actual son, should at least be performed by someone of the same generation in the family descent, if the wrath of Heaven was not to be incurred.

If one of the Tsai category must succeed to the throne, it might have seemed that Prince Kung's son, Tsaiching, was the most likely candidate. But here again a difficulty arose through the Chinese ideas on propriety. If Tsaiching became Emperor, his own father would be obliged to do him reverence; or, rather, would be obliged to retire into private life in order to avoid the necessity of doing so. Prince Kung could not yet be spared from the Foreign

<sup>1</sup> All members of the Imperial family were named according to the generation in which they were born. Thus the Emperor Taokwang was originally Prince Mien-ning, and his brothers and male cousins were all Mien-something, e.g. Prince Tun was Mien-kai. So the Emperor Hienfung was originally Yi-chu, his brothers Princes Kung, Chun, etc., were Yi-hin, Yi-hwan, etc. The Emperor Tungchih was originally Tsai-chun, his cousin the Emperor Kwanghsu was Tsai-tien, and other cousins were Tsai-ching, son of Prince Kung; Tsai-feng, whom we now know as the Regent, Prince Chun; and Tsai-tso, the prince who so recently visited England. The next generation are all P'us, like the present infant Emperor P'u-yi (whose reign name is Hsuantung), while the heir-apparent discarded by the old Empress Dowager was P'u-chun. There is a convenience about this system of nomenclature, since one can always tell to what generation a member of the Imperial family belongs if one knows his original Manchu name before he becomes Prince This or That.

Office, however. In view of the fact that Prince Chun did actually hold office during the reign of his son Kwanghsu, the objection does not seem to have been insuperable, and it is suggested that the Dowager Empresses made undue use of it in order to debar from the throne the lineage of their overweening brother-in-law. Prince Chun having taken very little part hitherto in public affairs, and having an infant son who would remain a minor for many years to come, there was an obvious advantage for the prospective Regents to see his son proclaimed rather than Kung's, especially as Chun's wife was sister of the more powerful of the two ladies.

The selection of the child Emperor in 1875 has been almost universally described as Tze-hi's *coup d'état*, and some accounts make her, supported as usual by Tze-an, produce before the assembly of Imperial clansmen after Tungchih's death a will that she alleged to have been left by her son, in which he chose his cousin Tsaitien to succeed him.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not she did this later, she seems early to have foreseen the possibility of a disputed succession, and to have made her plans beforehand. The story goes that she had warned her friend Li Hung-chang to be

<sup>1</sup> The succession edict, however, merely says: "Whereas His Majesty the Emperor has ascended upon the Dragon to be a guest on high, without offspring born to His inheritance, there has been no course open but to cause Tsaitien, son of Yihwan, Prince of Chun, to be adopted as son of the Emperor [Hienfung] and to enter upon the inheritance of the Great Dynasty as Emperor by succession. Therefore let Tsaitien," etc.

ready to march to Peking immediately he received news that Tungchih's death was imminent. The Viceroy of Chihli obeyed without hesitation. Taking with him four thousand picked troops, all from his own native province of Anhui, he made a forced march from Tientsin to Peking, covering the eighty miles in a day and a half, although it was mid-winter. At midnight after Tungchih's decease<sup>1</sup> he reached the walls of the Forbidden City and at once seized all the gates, driving away the unprepared and astonished guards. In the meantime, Tze-hi and the other Empress had hastened out of the Palace in two covered sedan-chairs, accompanied by a very small retinue so as not to attract attention, and made their way through the snow to the house in the Tartar City where Prince Chun and his family lived. Proceeding to her nephew's nursery, Tze-hi took him out of bed, wrapt him up, and carried him down to her chair. Then the procession started back as quietly as it had come. At the gate of the Forbidden City the faithful Li was waiting, master of the Palace. Next morning the Emperor Kwanghsu ("Illustrious Succession" or "Continuation of Glory") was proclaimed. The Imperial clansmen, if not convinced by a production of an alleged will, were unable to ignore the accomplished fact. We hear of no attempt on the part of

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps we should say "after Tungchih's decease was made public," for it is said that the news of the Emperor's death was kept back until the Dowager Empress's plan was ready for execution.

the princes to contest the succession on behalf of any other candidate, although many clansmen were supposed to be anxious to see Tsaiching on the throne and the Dowager Empresses permanently relegated to obscurity. Kung himself met the blow to any hopes he may have entertained as he met all blows to his ambition, before or after—with passive acquiescence.

Kwanghsu being now Emperor at the age of four, a regency was needed. The former Empresses Regent naturally resumed their task, having proved their capacity for it during so many years and being so closely connected by blood with the new sovereign. Only a few of the Palace eunuchs were recalcitrant. That famous Chinese classic, the *Book of Poetry*, says that “among those who cannot be trained or taught are women and eunuchs.” The eunuchs of the Forbidden City certainly appeared anxious to prove the justice of part of the maxim. Often as they had suffered for their meddling with politics under the Ta Tsing dynasty, they were always ready to continue in their ways. The latitude which Tungchih had allowed them during his short reign perhaps encouraged them in their folly now. But the Regents quickly brought them to book, arresting seven among them, of whom three were transported to the Northern frontier of the Empire and four severely bastinadoed. After this we do not hear of trouble with the Court eunuchs for many years to come.

The Empresses, having carried out their plan (or rather the plan of one of them) with surprisingly

little opposition, allowed Viceroy Li Hung-chang to take back to Tientsin the troops with which he had secured success for them. They had some difficulties still in their path, but not such as required a display of armed force to dispose of them.

The most pressing difficulty was to reconcile with the laws of succession their nephew's position on the throne. In order to give him the proper status he must be adopted as son to a predecessor. But Tungchih, his first cousin, having been in the same generation, could not figure in the records as his father. To give some semblance of legitimacy to the transaction, therefore, Kwanghsu was adopted as son to Hienfung, dead fourteen years before, while it was stipulated that if he should himself be blessed with a male child that child should carry on the succession as Tungchih's heir. This device did not satisfy the champions of tradition. One of the Censors felt the irregularity so strongly that he committed suicide as a protest against the condemnation of his late master's spirit to a long period of waiting for the proper performance of the ancestral honours due to him; and the superstitious remembered the irregularity when in the first year after Kwanghsu's actual accession the Temple of Heaven was struck by lightning. But if there was no one of the proper category yet born to succeed Tungchih, the Dowager Empresses had no better resource at their command than to choose someone of an older generation.

Of course the affiliation of Kwanghsu to Hienfung



was a good stroke for the two widows of that Emperor, even if it caused further doubt to be cast on their motives, already under suspicion through their selection of so young an heir. They became mothers, by adoption, of the child, and thus practically secure against any attack short of open rebellion against the dynasty. Provided that they should themselves live long enough, they were sure of many more years at the head of affairs.

Where, it may be asked, was Tungchih's widow while her mothers-in-law were arranging matters so much to their own advantage? Why was she unconsulted in the disposition of power during the minority of her husband's successor? We now come to a charge against the stronger of the two Dowager Empresses which a large number, of her Chinese subjects at least, held to be true. The young Empress Ahluta, had she borne a son to Tungchih, would naturally have become Regent until he grew up. And it was rumoured that Tungchih at his death left her with child. Two months and a half after her husband, however, Ahluta herself died. The tales were various. Some said her sorrow as a widow induced her to refuse food until at last she died of starvation; others that she took her own life by more violent means; while among the Chinese in particular many believed that there was foul play. Those most hostile to Tze-hi made her personally bring to her daughter-in-law a poisoned cup and force her to drink it. No evidence is forthcoming for or

against this most sensational version of the story, beyond the significant fact<sup>1</sup> that the young Empress's family had no quarrel with the Dowager Tze-hi, whom the Duke Chungyi continued to serve down to the time of the Boxer rebellion, when he committed suicide after the Court had fled as far as Paotingfu. From this it hardly looks as if Ahluta's father believed his Imperial mistress guilty of the crime which her enemies imputed to her. The most that can be said in support of the charge is that, if Ahluta was really with child, the chance of her bearing a son threatened Tze-hi's ambitions with extinction; and the promptitude with which she grasped the opportunity offered by Tungchih's death, set her infant nephew on the throne, and secured the Regency for herself and her colleague the Eastern Empress, showed how strongly those ambitions swayed her.

Ahluta being dead, it was given out to the public of Peking and of the Empire that she had succumbed to grief at the loss of her husband, and every effort was made to produce the impression that her Imperial relatives regarded her as an exemplary wife. A memorial was sent up to the Throne, signed by the Dowager Empress's invariable friend in need, Li Hung-chang, among others, petitioning that the deceased lady should be rewarded by the bestowal of some posthumous titles of honour. The Throne graciously welcomed the suggestion, and ordered the

<sup>1</sup> First brought forward, I believe, by Professor Headland, *Court Life in China*, pp. 40-41.

ministers to select suitable epithets. Then from two alternative series of twelve honorifics a final choice was made and Ahluta was gazetted under the name of "The Filial, Wise, Excellent, Yielding, Chaste, Careful, Virtuous, and Intelligent Queen, governing her Conduct by Heaven's Laws, and by her Life adding Lustre to the Teaching of the Sages." So, in a blaze of wordy magnificence, ended the connection of Chungyi's daughter with the Imperial family.

The Empresses of the Eastern and Western Palaces, free from any fear of a rival to their nominee on the throne, continued to entrust the superintendence of China's foreign relations to Prince Kung. It is possible that the influence of the Eastern Empress was exerted on his behalf, for after Tze-an's death he did not long remain in power. Tze-hi had obvious reasons for preferring Prince Chun, who was doubly her brother-in-law (husband of her sister as well as brother of her late husband), and whose son was now hers by adoption. Her relations with Kung, on the other hand, could scarcely be cordial after the *coup d'état* of 1875. While, therefore, she did not disturb the senior Prince's position at the head of the Tsungli Yamen, she took care to put a check upon his authority by increasing the confidence which she gave to those who were not at all in sympathy with him. As we shall see later, she had a very good conception of the importance of a balance of power among men of different views in order to ensure a stable govern-

ment. Only at one period in her long career, and then with most disastrous results, did she seem to throw herself entirely into the arms of one party.

The grouping of the Peking politicians at this period is by no means easy to follow. Only Prince Kung's position seems clear. Of great experience in foreign affairs, full of tact, liked by foreigners and trusted by them as they trusted no one else in China, he was maintained in his high office by the fact that he was still indispensable. Prince Chun, suspected by foreigners of hatred for them and of warlike tendencies, was beginning to make his influence felt in spite of the fact that his relation to the Emperor minor seemed to doom him to private life, and it was seen that he was not likely to work in harmony with his brother.

Li Hung-chang, unrivalled among those of his own race, and designed by the Western Empress to serve as a protection for her against the undue power of the Manchu princes, was yet, by his knowledge of foreigners and his appreciation of the dangers of war for China, drawn somewhat toward an understanding with Prince Kung. In the meantime, he put the Regents and his country still further in his debt by settling with Great Britain's representative, Sir Thomas Wade, the question of the reparation to be made by China for the murder of an unfortunate young consular official, Margary, near the Yunnan-Burma frontier early in 1875, and he handled with vigour and ability the dreadful situation arising from

famine in Honan and Shansi, which led to the death of about nine million people in 1876 and the following years. Li returned to his duties as Viceroy and Grand Secretary with increased power—but also, no doubt, with an increased number of enemies, for he had dealt severely with embezzling officials in connection with the famine-relief fund.

Next to Li Hung-chang there was no one of Chinese race who strengthened his position so much during the early years of Kwanghsu's minority as Tso Tsung-tang, Viceroy of the Shenkan provinces. Beginning public life like Li under the protection of the great Tseng Kwo-fan, Tso had made himself famous by his suppression of the Mohammedan (Tungan) rebellion in the Shenkan; and in 1878 he had the satisfaction of crushing the Tungans in the outlying North-west portion of the Empire as well. Already he had been appointed to the Grand Secretariat and the Tsungli Yamen, and henceforward his views carried great weight. At once brave and cautious, an admirable organizer, and a most intelligent student of public affairs, he was nevertheless suspected by foreigners of a leaning toward the use of force and of sympathy with Prince Chun. A memorial which he left behind him on his death, however, argues that he had liberal and progressive ideas.

An incident occurred after the close of the Tungan rebellion which threatened to split Peking into hostile camps and upset the balance of power which the

Empress Tze-hi had already begun to create. Russia, taking advantage of the disturbed condition of affairs on her Eastern frontier through the prolonged rebellion in Chinese territory, in 1871 occupied the region known as Kuldja or Ili, nominally in order to preserve order there. When Tso Tsung-tang, seven years later, had brought the rebellion to an end and had incorporated the reconquered region outside the Eighteen Provinces under the name of the "New Dominion," a Russian Governor was still holding Ili for the Tsar. Representations to the Russian representatives in Peking availed nothing, and it was resolved to send a special commissioner to St. Petersburg. The man chosen was the Manchu Chunghow, whom we have already met at the time of the Tientsin massacre. As he had been on a mission to Paris—sent to apologize for China over the Tientsin affair—he was supposed to be acquainted with the methods of European diplomacy, although he could not speak a word of any European language; and the Empresses Regent, receiving him in farewell audience in the August of 1878, no doubt felt confidence that all would be well. They were greatly mistaken. Seventeen months later Chunghow landed in Shanghai and set out for Peking with the Treaty of Livadia in his hand.

But news of what he had done preceded him. He had left Russia with the most valuable part of Ili still in her possession, and had agreed to pay her an indemnity equivalent to £500,000 for the expenses

of her occupation of the province. A tremendous outcry arose all over the country. Memorials from Li Hung-chang, Tso Tsung-tang, Chang Chih-tung, and others called for the denunciation of the treaty. Chang Chih-tung, now first making a name for himself, was especially bitter in his attack on the blundering or venal commissioner.<sup>1</sup> The mass of the Manchus, too, were against him, from Prince Chun downward; and Prince Kung, of whose wife he was a connection, was unable to shield him from the storm. An Imperial edict having stripped him of all his offices, he was arrested and condemned to be beheaded. His treaty was repudiated, and a demand was presented for fresh negotiations. There was even talk of war if Russia should refuse to reconsider the matter, the Imperial princes, with the exception of Prince Kung, showing the boldness of ignorance and pressing for immediate action. Even Tso Tsung-tang, it was rumoured, pronounced himself in favour of war. But Li Hung-chang had no hesitation in declaring that China was doomed to defeat if she took up arms.

It required true courage on the part of the great Viceroy to adopt this attitude, for he had for years been spending huge sums of money on military and naval preparations in his province. He brought down upon himself now, as he must have expected,

<sup>1</sup> "If he cannot bequeath a fragrance for ten centuries, at least he can leave a stench for ten thousand years." So said Viceroy Chang (Parker, *John Chinaman*, p. 215).

fierce censure for his "useless expenditure." But, supported by the Dowager Empress Tze-hi and Prince Kung, he was unmoved by abuse. War was not declared, and the extreme Nationalists had not even the satisfaction of seeing Chunghow beheaded. Partly through the intervention of the Governments of Russia and England, partly through the influence of Prince Kung and of Viceroy Li, who was friendly to the man if disapproving of his conduct, his sentence was commuted. Russia then agreed to reopen negotiations, and finally a new arrangement was made whereby China recovered all but a small strip of Ili, while increasing her indemnity for the cost of Russia's occupation to £900,000.

A dangerous question thus closed in a manner very honourable to China, and much credit is due to Li Hung-chang and his Imperial mistress for the part which they played in the affair—to Li for having the courage to insist on his country's unpreparedness for war when he himself caused the greatest amount of money to be spent on war-materials; to the Empress because she stood by Li when the Imperial family were nearly all ranged on the other side. But mistress and man were destined to find themselves in a very similar position more than once again in their careers.

The recovery of Ili was the last important act of the joint Regency, which indeed came to an end before China had reoccupied her former territory.



## 116 GREAT EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

On April 9th, 1881, the Empress of the Eastern Palace died suddenly, aged about forty-five. The death was supposed to be due to heart-failure ; but if the farewell edict which was issued in her name, calling on the child Emperor to restrain his sorrow at her departure, was really her composition, she was prepared for her end.

That Tze-hi should have been accused of making away with her colleague must be regarded as a proof of the extreme malice which actuated her enemies. Of all people the Empress Tze-an was certainly the one who least stood in the way of Tze-hi's ambition. Having lived together for nearly thirty years, in circumstances which were calculated to bring about a quarrel between most rivals of the harem within as many days, and having never during that period given just occasion for the Court gossips to talk of dissensions between them, the two Empresses should surely be allowed to have been of singularly harmonious dispositions, and it is unnecessary to seek to explain the death of one by the treachery of the other. The murder of Tze-an would have been a useless crime, and Tze-hi, ruthless as she was when she saw a call for drastic measures to further her plans, does not stand convicted of any useless crimes. There was no need for the latter to grasp at the shadow of power in the former's hands when she had already the substance in her own.

## CHAPTER IX

### TZE-HI SOLE REGENT

**T**HE Empress Dowager Tze-hi was about forty-six years of age when she became sole ruler of the Chinese Empire on behalf of the child whom she had herself chosen to sit upon the throne. Nor was her authority an unreal one compared with that of any of the Emperors who had governed China before her. She was not an absolute despot, it is true, except within the walls of the Forbidden City. But neither were her male predecessors at Peking absolute despots outside the palaces. The Chinese theory of Imperial rule did not allow the unrestrained tyranny of the Son of Heaven over his subjects. Only his fellow-Manchus called themselves "slaves" of the Emperor, and even their slavery was of an honorary kind. The Emperor of China is in many ways as much of a figurehead as any constitutional monarch. His influence over the destinies of his country is exercised chiefly through the power which he has of choosing his advisers. But even here it seems difficult for him to prevent a great man from rising, by sheer force of merit, to the highest offices, including what is equivalent to a place in the Cabinet.

The chief obstacle which Tze-hi found to the

satisfactory enjoyment of her position was that occasioned by her sex. The stringent laws of etiquette which hedged her about were not lightly to be broken, and she was too thoroughly a woman of China to try to flout the rules of feminine propriety which had been established by immemorial antiquity. She recognized that what there was to be done to emancipate herself from unwelcome trammels must be done gradually. It is not until 1898, after the failure of the Reform movement, that we find her overcoming the ban against face-to-face interviews with her ministers in the throne-room of the Palace ; and not until another four years that she takes the bold step of receiving the representatives of the Western barbarians into her august presence.

If she had to wait years, however, before she could get free from some irritating restrictions upon the visible exercise of her authority, the Empress Dowager soon made it clear that she intended to prove the reality of that authority. She must have decided to dispense with Prince Kung long before the issue of her decree dismissing him from office. For the offence which she made a pretext for her action was small indeed in comparison with the quarter of a century of faithful services which he had rendered to throne and country—if indeed the Prince was in any degree to blame, which is not certain.

During the Emperor Tungchih's brief majority, France had established a footing in the Annamese province of Tongking, on China's South-eastern

frontier. As has been said earlier, this boded ill for peace, owing to the fact that Tongking was a favourite refuge of outlaws endeavouring to escape from justice at the hands of the Chinese provincial officials. Remnants of the old Taipings had made their way across Yunnan and Kwangsi and, joined by other desperadoes, formed themselves into wandering bands, the most celebrated of whom were those known as the "Black Flags." The Chinese officials in their warfare against these bands sent regular troops over the frontier and kept small garrisons in some of the towns north of the Red River. This state of affairs continued after the Franco-Annamese Convention of 1874 gave France a virtual protectorate over Tongking. As France's Colonial ambitions grew stronger, however, she determined to make her protectorate effective. This brought her at once into conflict with China. In the first place, having serious trouble with the Black Flags, she accused the Chinese provincial officials of subsidizing them—a charge for which there was no basis, the officials and the outlaws being at deadly enmity. Then, having resolved on a military occupation of Tongking, and having forced the new King of Annam, after a temporary seizure of his capital in the summer of 1883, to sanction her proceedings, she spread her troops Northward toward the Chinese frontier. The Chinese Government gave warning that if the garrisons at Sontai and Bacninh were molested, the Chinese Minister would be withdrawn from Paris. Nevertheless, the French attacked

both towns and drove out the garrisons. The Chinese Minister was withdrawn, although no declaration of war followed.

As soon as the news reached the ears of the Empress Dowager, she issued a strongly worded decree in which she stripped Prince Kung of all his offices, dismissed several other ministers, and punished all the military officers connected with the Tongking disasters. It was alleged that Prince Kung had neglected to inform Her Majesty at once of the French attack on Bacninh. But the hollowness of the pretext was apparent. Prince Kung, as usual, stepped down silently from his high posts. He lived another fourteen years, but, although he did not entirely disappear from view—the Emperor Kwanghsu on his accession is said to have urged him to come forward again, and we shall see him figuring as a member of the Tsungli Yamen as late as 1898—his voice was never again great in the councils of State.

Prince Kung must always be somewhat of an enigma to the historian. Although on two notable occasions—in 1865 and 1874—degraded for undue assertion of his power, he appeared to the outer world the reverse of self-assertive. By his vigorous action on the death of his brother Hienfung he made it possible for his two sisters-in-law to take the leading place in the Empire. Yet he seemed content (apart from the affair of 1865) to serve under them rather than rule with them, limiting himself to the direction of foreign affairs, of which he had an un-

rivalled knowledge. When his nephew Tungchih died, he might have had reasonable expectation of seeing his son Tsaiching on the throne, but acquiesced in the choice of his younger brother's son as Emperor, retaining merely his old posts. Finally he vanished into private life without a protest in 1884. Yet compulsory retirement was the worst fate which could have befallen him, had his son been chosen Emperor instead of Kwanghsu nine years earlier. He cannot have been devoid of ambition, although but for the censure upon him in the two decrees of his sisters-in-law in 1865 and of his nephew in 1874, we should have no proof of high claims on his part. Perhaps the post which he coveted was that of the power behind the throne ; and this he held for twenty-three years, with an occasional reminder from those on the throne that he must keep well behind it. What then induced him in 1884 to resign all his pretensions and abandon public life ? Was he convinced at last of the futility of striving against his imperious sister-in-law when she had made up her mind to get rid of him ?

Although we cannot know all the circumstances of the case, it seems impossible to acquit the Empress Dowager Tze-hi of ingratitude toward Prince Kung, the man who made her if any man can be said to have done so. Yet even her bitterest critics allow that one of her best points was her loyalty to her friends. It has been suggested that the real cause of Kung's overthrow was the ambition of his brother

Chun, between whom and the Dowager there was a strong bond of sympathy after his marriage with her sister. It should be noted that in one of her last public acts in March, 1889, a rescript to a memorial recommending the bestowal of some extraordinary distinction on Prince Chun when his son assumed the administration of affairs, the Empress Dowager, while rejecting the suggestion, praised the Prince for his devotion to the public service, his modesty and absence of personal ambition. Fifteen years ago, she said, in the first year of Kwanghsu, he had written a memorial deprecating the very course now recommended, while he had persistently declined to ride in the magnificent apricot-yellow palanquin provided for him, thus showing the simplicity and humility of his mind and his desire to be considered the servant of the State rather than the father of the sovereign.

Nevertheless, the general impression was that the Prince was ambitious. Certainly when Kung stood down Chun stepped up, and for the seven years preceding his death in 1891 wielded much of the power which had formerly been his elder brother's. He did not take the presidency of the Grand Council nor that of the Tsungli Yamen, which fell to Yikwang, Prince of Ching, a descendant of the Emperor Kienlung, a prince who subsequently made himself highly esteemed by foreigners. Nevertheless Chun began to exercise very real political influence, while he increased the number of the administrative duties which he performed. Already Commander of

the Peking Field Force, when an Admiralty Board was formed in 1886 he was made its President. Not only did he take pains to make himself acquainted with the work entrusted to him, but having occasion to visit Tientsin, Chefoo, and Port Arthur in his official capacity, he returned to Peking with a much enlightened mind, abandoning his opposition to railway construction and himself introducing electric lighting into the capital and into his own palace.

Western opinion was always far less favourable to Prince Chun than to his brother Kung. At first he was looked on as a mere nonentity of rather unpleasing exterior.<sup>1</sup> Then at the time of the Tientsin massacre he was discovered to be strongly anti-foreign. He was declared to be a reactionary and a Jingo. Gradually the fact of his ability forced itself upon foreigners, and when he died he was recognized as having been a genuine force in China, and a force, moreover, by no means altogether for ill. It was necessary to have recourse to the explanation that contact with the outer world had converted him to Liberalism. It is certainly remarkable to find a prince

<sup>1</sup> See an unflattering description of him and Prince Kung in Parker's *China, Past and Present*, pp. 131-2: "All the Princes of the Imperial family have a strong family likeness. . . . The chief points are a heavy sensual mouth, with just a suspicion of 'underhangedness' about the lower lip, and a decided scowl. Otherwise the faces are not ill-looking, though the expression is imperially vicious." In *John Chinaman*, p. 260, Professor Parker speaks of "the poetical Prince Chun," however. The reference must be to a "Poetical Essay on a Voyage by Sea," which the Prince wrote after his visit to the ports mentioned above.



who suffered under the reputation of being a bigoted Conservative, not only recognizing the advantages of railways and electric light, but also bringing about, as Chun did, the introduction of certain branches of Western learning into the old Chinese curriculum for the training of officials.

Prince Chun's emergence into public life was in itself an exhibition of a power to rise superior to tradition, though in the circumstances a natural consequence of the Prince's ambition—if we may venture to dispute the Dowager Empress's view of his character. When his son was selected as Emperor, the father's career was looked upon as over almost before it had begun. But after Kwanghsu's minority had lasted but five years Prince Chun was seen taking up the command of the Peking Field Force; and four years later he threw off all pretence of abstaining from the conduct of affairs. The fact of his son's adoption by the Empress Dowager may have made it easier for him to disregard old custom. Yet the question was seriously discussed again, as we shall see, when Kwanghsu came of age, whether Chun could in propriety hold office under his son. To the extreme traditionalists this was one of the grave offences of the new reign, and, like the choice of Kwanghsu as Emperor though he was in the wrong generation for succession to the throne, was bound to bring down on China the wrath of Heaven.

Foreign residents were inclined to think, when Chun supplanted Kung, that the war party had

triumphed at Peking, and that a definite declaration of hostilities against France would follow. Nothing of the kind happened. But it is necessary here to go back a few months to explain the condition of affairs.

After the fall of Bacninh, an attempt had been made to arrange matters amicably, and a French officer had been sent to Tientsin to meet Viceroy Li Hung-chang, the inevitable representative of China in a tight corner. Li and the French Captain Fournier in May drew up a convention, which is known by their names. Herein China agreed to withdraw her remaining garrisons from Tongking and to recognize France's treaties with Annam. Unhappily a dispute arose as soon as the convention came to be interpreted. The Chinese alleged that Fournier illegally altered with his own hand the date for their evacuation of Tongking. So when on June 21st the French appeared with a small force before Langson and called on the garrison to go, they were met by a refusal, a fight followed, and the French were defeated. At once a demand was made for an apology from Peking and the payment of £10,000. China refusing this monstrous indemnity, a state of war began on the Tongking frontier, but still without any official declaration on the part of either France or China. So far from Peking manifesting a Jingo spirit, consequent upon the rise of Prince Chun, no orders were issued for hostile preparations against France. The Empress Dowager and her advisers seem to have

been genuinely surprised that the Western Barbarians did not, as often before, restrict operations to the locality where the trouble arose.

So when Admiral Courbet, who was in command of the French forces in the Far East, after declaring a blockade of Formosa sailed up the Min River to Pagoda Anchorage, ten miles below the treaty port of Foochow, he found no preparations to resist him. A fleet of about a dozen Chinese wooden war vessels lay at the Anchorage. Courbet, who had nine warships under him, on August 23rd demanded the surrender of the Chinese fleet and the forts along the Min River. The Chinese not complying, Courbet opened fire, sank nine of their vessels (which were even less of a match for the French than the Spaniards in Manila Bay were for Admiral Dewey's squadron), and reduced the principal fort at the Anchorage to ruins. On the following days he sank twelve more ships in the river, and wrecked four more forts. He then sailed back to Formosa, leaving about three thousand Chinese dead behind him.

This affair, called by Pierre Loti "the crowning glory of Foochow," did not appeal to the taste of all foreigners in China. One of them<sup>1</sup> describes the results of France's victory with considerable candour. "The bodies of the dead floated out to sea on the tide, many of them being borne back on the return-

<sup>1</sup> The missionary George B. Smyth, President of the Foochow Anglo-Chinese College, in the *North American Review*, quoted in A. H. Smith's *China in Convulsion*, pp. 24-5.

ing current, and for days it was hardly possible to cross the river anywhere between the Anchorage and the sea, twenty miles below, without seeing some of these dreadful reminders of French treachery and brutality." Such being a Westerner's opinion of the matter, it is not surprising that the impression in China was very bad. It is rather to be wondered at that no reprisals against foreigners followed. But still no declaration of war was made, and the fighting area remained restricted. Courbet did little in Formosa, and in Tongking the smallness of the French forces and the fusion of the Black Flag guerillas with the Chinese regulars led to a protracted struggle, with but little advantage to the European Power.

At length the foreign merchants in China, disgusted at the damage done to their trade by the Franco-Chinese quarrel, succeeded in making their complaints heard. While the irregular warfare continued in Tongking, France and China were brought together through the mediation of Sir Robert Hart, the Irish head of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs, and in the June of 1885 Li Hung-chang and the representative of France signed the Li-Patenôtre Convention, which secured Tongking to France with an indemnity of £160,000 to cover all claims, while Annam was in future to have no political relations with the outer world save through her new suzerain.

The damage done to M. Ferry's Government in France by the Tongking adventure is a matter of European history. In China, although Li Hung-

chang had really gained a great diplomatic victory when he made such terms with the determinedly aggressive French, there was a strong outcry over the national disgrace. Memorials poured in upon the Throne demanding his impeachment as a traitor. But the Empress Dowager stood firm. Li was not impeached, but, on the contrary, was retained in his offices and treated with still greater confidence. He even succeeded in rescuing from punishment one of his clients, Chang Pei-lung, the man in charge of the defences of Foochow when Admiral Courbet sailed up the Min. Chang not only allowed the foreign squadron to ascend the river quite unmolested, but had the impudence after "the crowning glory of Foochow" to send news to Peking of a Chinese success. For this he was justly dismissed from his post and condemned to banishment beyond the Great Wall of China. Through Li's intervention, however, he was recalled, and in 1888 we find him accepted by his patron as a son-in-law, and holding official rank once more—to be accused of peculation in 1894. It is unfortunate that the great Viceroy was prone to use his influence on behalf of worthless characters, and that the Empress Dowager, while rightly declining to sacrifice him to his enemies, allowed him to foist upon his country men who deserved very ill of it.

During the Empress's sole regency China experienced, roughly contemporaneous with the troubles over Annam in the South, other troubles over Korea

in the North-east. Already both Russia and Japan had their eyes upon the "Land of the Morning Calm." But while Russia's designs were temporarily checked by Great Britain's seizure of Port Hamilton and refusal to evacuate it until China, Korea's legal suzerain, had given a guarantee that no other Power should be allowed to occupy it, China herself proved strong enough at this epoch to keep Japan at bay. This measure of success was due to her resident at the Korean capital, the since famous Yuan Shi-kai. Yuan—a client of Li Hung-chang, but, unlike Chang Pei-lung, in every way deserving of his patron's favour—by a combination of energy and of wily diplomacy, forestalled the Japanese intention of occupying Seoul and kidnapped the Korean King's father, the intriguing and anti-foreign ex-regent of the country, whom he packed off to China as a hostage for the King's good behaviour. China's position in Korea was now secured for some time to come, and Yuan Shi-kai was on the road to becoming one of the great men of his nation.

Thus when the period of Kwanghsu's majority was drawing to a close, China found herself in a better position than had been hers for many years—perhaps better than at any time since the first foreign war. Having made peace with the outer world without the usual humiliating concessions, comparatively free from internal rebellions, and guided by the counsels of some men of real ability, who recognized the necessity of building up their motherland's defensive

powers if her forced entry into the "sisterhood of nations" was not to prove fatal to her, China seemed likely to pass into Kwanghsu's hands a far less troublesome heritage than she had been to his three immediate predecessors on the throne. The only disquieting symptom was a series of anti-missionary riots occurring over the country from 1883 onwards. However, the movement did not assume alarming proportions until after Kwanghsu's accession, and we may, therefore, leave the subject to be dealt with later.

For the generally favourable state of affairs a considerable portion of the credit cannot be denied to the Empress Regent, who used the position at the head of the Government which her nephew's youth had given her to discover men competent to steer the ship of State along the exceedingly difficult course which circumstances prescribed for it. If she had got rid, in the person of Prince Kung, of a statesman who commended himself to foreign taste, it must be admitted that those who came to the front with her assistance previous to the year 1887, notably Prince Chun, Li Hung-chang, and Yuan Shi-kai, all of them compelled the respect, if not all of them the liking of foreign critics. And to the list of those who laid the foundations of their fortunes during the Regency must be added the names of the two Viceroys Chang Chih-tung and Liu Kun-yi, to both of whom, for their sagacity and strength of character, foreigners had every reason to be grateful before the nineteenth century came to an end.

## CHAPTER X

### THE EMPRESS IN RETIREMENT

**K**WANGHSU should legally have come of age in February, 1887, and ascended the throne on the following Chinese New Year; and there was no reason publicly known why precedent should not have been followed. However, although the Empress Dowager announced that her nephew and adopted son was now qualified to take over the reins of government, Kwanghsu responded—or was made to respond—with an extraordinary decree, in which he confessed his inability to rule alone. “When I heard the edict,” he said, “I trembled as though I were in mid-ocean, not knowing where the land is. But Her Imperial Majesty will continue to advise me for a few years more in important affairs of State. I shall not dare to be indolent, and in obedience to the Empress’s command I have made petitions to Heaven, Earth, and Ancestors that I may assume the administration of the Empire in person on the fifteenth day of the first moon in the thirteenth year of my reign. Under the guidance of Her Imperial Majesty, care will be devoted to everything.”

What was there behind the decree thus attributed to Kwanghsu? It was a defiance of all past history



that the Emperor should continue to subordinate himself to anyone, however august, after attaining his majority. Could the Empress Dowager have dared to violate precedent so grossly in order to gratify her ambition to rule a little longer, or was there anything which incapacitated her nephew at the proper time for his accession ?

Kwanghsu was assuredly the most extraordinary character in the huge Manchu Imperial family, far from ordinary as were many of his kinsmen. If his uncle Kung has rightly been called by us somewhat of an enigma, Kwanghsu was more enigmatic still. Suffering from ill-health in early childhood, he always remained delicate and sickly. Foreigners who saw him at various periods in his life were always impressed by the pallor of his skin and his timid, shrinking air. His youthful appearance continued into middle life ; for at thirty-eight he is said to have looked only sixteen. His figure was elegant and slight, his head large, with the frontal portion well developed (though retreating toward the crown) ; his face an elongated oval, with a very narrow and projecting lower jaw ; his eyes, under high arched brows, large and mournful, while full of intelligence ; his lips thin and sensitive, always parted and slightly twisted up to the left. His dress was extremely simple whenever State ceremonial did not cause it to be otherwise. The restraint and dignity of his bearing in public were always noticeable. Yet it was rumoured that he was capable of violent anger in

private; that as a child he would throw himself upon the floor and scream if his desires were thwarted; and that in later life he occasionally broke everything within reach, and more than once was guilty of kicking off his slipper at his principal wife, with whom he got on but ill. With regard to women in general, it was said that their society had little attraction for him, however good-looking they might be. Some have gone so far as to call him a perfect type of a degenerate.

Whatever his personal share in drawing up that astonishing Reform Programme which must always make his reign memorable, Kwanghsu decidedly had a great aptitude for the assimilation of new ideas. Unlike his aunt, he did not devote himself especially to making a name for himself in Chinese scholarship. Foreign ideas seemed to exert a fascination over him. European and American toys pleased him most in childhood, and all kinds of mechanical appliances from the same countries as he grew up. As soon as he began to live his own life he showed how his tastes lay. He collected watches and clocks, which he could take to pieces and put together again, interested himself in musical-boxes and phonographs and the more serious telephonic and telegraphic apparatuses, made attempts to play the piano and ride a bicycle, bought a miniature railway-engine and carriages for the Forbidden City, and placed steam-launches on the Lotus Lake. He read all the translations which he could get from European tongues, and,

as we shall see later, took up the study of English eagerly. Of all his nation, Chinese and Manchu, he seems to have been the nearest approach to a pro-foreigner. Indeed, could we feel quite certain about Kwanghsu, we might call him the only pro-foreigner whom China has produced. We may be confident, at any rate, in calling him an enthusiast and a visionary.

• Such as he was, he was brought up in a palace full of women and eunuchs, under the watchful eye of his aunts. At first he was mainly under the care of the Eastern Empress. But after Tze-an's death he was entirely in the hands of Tze-hi and those whom she appointed. It does not seem likely that she encouraged him in his foreign leanings, but it is more than likely that she did encourage him to dream, for thereby she must have seen her chances increased of acting. She endeavoured to imbue him with a profound respect for herself, and, if we judge only by his public utterances and conduct, she succeeded admirably. Privately his feelings toward her may have become in time as unfriendly as his partisans and her enemies represented them to be. But it must be remembered that there is nothing to prove this, even after the affair of 1898. The Emperor kept his own counsel.

On reaching his seventeenth year (according to Chinese notions) Kwanghsu might have been expected, had his strength of character been as great as his power of dreaming, to welcome the opportunity of exchanging theory for practice and of



THE MARQUIS TSENG, FIRST CHINESE MINISTER IN LONDON  
(From a caricature by the late Alfred Bryan)

governing his Empire in harmony with his ideas. Being of timid disposition and delicate constitution, however, he may really have taken a first view of his task such as the edict in his name expressed. He had not yet found the man to set him on fire with the craving to pull down and build anew, and his private tutor, **Weng Tung-ho**, although afterwards appearing as a moderately progressive politician, seems rather to have been led on by his pupil than to have led him in the direction of new ideas. A favourite friend of the Emperor, the "Marquis" **Tseng**, son of **Tseng Kwo-fan** and first Chinese Minister in London, unfortunately died in 1890, too early to take part in the full development of the young Emperor's character ; and his race, Chinese not Manchu, prevented him from having much opportunity for wielding his influence effectively in the Palace.

**Tze-hi** was not the woman to shirk the further period of rule which her nephew's diffidence offered her. She graciously consented to step back into the position which she had just declared her intention of vacating, and for two years more **Kwanghsu** remained under the shadow of her power.

Normally **Kwanghsu** would have married a wife in 1887, as well as taken his place on the throne. His marriage, however, was delayed like his accession. The Empress Dowager did not intend that her nephew should follow in the steps of her son and take to himself a wife in whom she had not herself

complete confidence. At the same time she saw the advantage of forging another link between the Imperial family and her own. Of her brothers Kwei, or Kweisiang, Deputy Lieutenant-General of one of the Manchu Banners, was the one she loved best, and his daughters were all great favourites of hers. The eldest of them, named like herself originally Yehonala, was a docile, retiring girl, rather sickly and not remarkable for her looks. On her Tze-hi fixed as the most suitable first wife of the Emperor, to whom she was three years senior. It mattered not if Kwanghsu had already bestowed his affections on another, as it is said that he had. At the customary exhibition of Manchu maidens, which took place in early November, 1888, he was compelled to select Yehonala the younger as his consort.

An edict from the Dowager Empress then appeared in the *Peking Gazette*, in which she said :—

“Since the Emperor reverently entered upon the succession to his patrimony he has been daily growing up to manhood, and it is right that a person of high character should be selected to be his consort and to assist him in the duties of the Palace, to the end that the exalted position of Empress may be fittingly fitted and the Emperor supported in the practice of virtue. The choice having fallen upon Yehonala, the daughter of Deputy Lieutenant-General Kweisiang, a maiden of virtuous character and becoming and dignified demeanour, we command that she be appointed Empress.”

Kwanghsu was permitted to take as his first and second concubines the maiden of his personal choice and her sister, daughters of a Vice-President of one of the Peking Boards. Yehonala herself, according to Court gossip, failed to please her husband, while her cousinship to him was a cause of offence to the superstitious, who looked on a fire which injured one of the gates of the Imperial Palace in January as a sign of the wrath of Heaven against the marriage. She did not, however, disappoint her aunt. Contented to remain a nonentity, she exercised no influence whatever on affairs, and when she saw her husband deposed she continued to be an unassuming dependent on the masterful woman who had given her a post of so much dignity and so little power.<sup>1</sup>

After the choice of the bride had been made, the Board of Rites was called upon to draw up the programme of ceremonies in connection with the

<sup>1</sup> Miss Katharine Carl, the American artist, painter of Tze-hi's portrait for the St. Louis Exposition and author of the book *With the Empress Dowager of China*, gives an attractive sketch of the young Empress, however. She says: "She is small, not quite five feet tall, with exquisitely dainty hands and feet, of most patrician type. She has a narrow, high-bred face, with a thin, high nose. Her eyes are more of the Chinese type, as we conceive it, than either the Emperor's or the Empress Dowager's. Her chin is long and of the type generally called strong. Her mouth is large and extremely sensitive. Her eyes have so kindly a look, her face shines with so sweet an expression, criticism is disarmed, and she seems beautiful. She has a sweet dignity, charming manners, and a lovable nature; but there is sometimes in her eyes a look of patient resignation that is almost pathetic. I should not say she possessed any great executive ability, though full of tact."

marriage, to be revised by the Empress Dowager. Although they had the models of antiquity to imitate, the Board were unfortunate enough to offend Her Majesty by a slip with regard to the day on which a certain prayer must be offered up to Heaven, and were consequently all degraded, as a lesson in respect for tradition. The mistake having been corrected, she signified her approval, and on December 4th the formal betrothal took place.

It has been pointed out<sup>1</sup> that the Chinese Emperor in taking a wife follows the lines of procedure laid down for all his subjects. First the go-between—in Kwanghsu's case, the Empress Dowager—arranges the marriage. Then comes the betrothal. Next the bridegroom sends his presents to the bride, which in this instance included a gold tablet, enclosed in a gold and jewelled casket, on which was inscribed the Dowager's consent to the union. On the day selected for the actual wedding the bridal chair is sent to fetch the lady from her father's to her husband's home, the pair meet face to face and pledge one another, and then both kneel down together to worship Heaven, Earth, and Ancestors, and inform them of the marriage. Finally, a day or two later, the husband takes his wife to visit his parents, even if he is living in their house, which is usually the case in China.

<sup>1</sup> By Mr. W. H. Wilkinson, in the course of a very interesting account of the Emperor Kwanghsu's marriage in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review*, 1889.



The ceremony of sending the wedding presents is particularly gorgeous where an Emperor and Empress are concerned. Kwanghsu went himself in state to view them before they were despatched in the Dragon Car to Kweisiang's house, and then listened while a herald read aloud to him the Empress Dowager's edict already quoted, everyone present except himself reverently kneeling. The gold tablet, the seal and sceptre made for the new Empress, the bridal crown, veil of pearls, and silken robes embroidered with phoenixes, and all the other presents having been put in the car, the procession conveyed them to the bride, escorted by Imperial princes.

The Emperor was called upon to listen to the reading of the edict sanctioning his marriage again, when on the day following the despatch of the presents he paid an early morning visit of homage to Her Majesty Tze-hi, prostrating himself nine times before her in the throne-room, she alone being seated. Only when she had withdrawn did he take her place and hold a reception of princes and nobles, before whom the edict was solemnly recited.

Yehonala was brought to the Palace on the lucky day chosen by the Astronomical Board, February 25th, coming in the dusk and through streets all shuttered and barred so that no profane eyes might gaze on the bride of the Son of Heaven, an object of such awe to all except his adoptive mother. The closed sedan-chair, carried by sixteen bearers and

escorted by a magnificent procession of princes on horseback, reached the Imperial Palace, its arrival being announced by a herald with the words: "The Phoenix Car is come!" whereon there broke out a tremendous welcome of trumpets, drums, cymbals, bells, and gongs, in that confusion of sound so dear to the Chinese ear on festive occasions. The chair was taken through the Palace into the Throne-room, the escort retired, and eunuchs handed out the bride and led her to her throne. As the herald announced, "The auspicious moment dawns, all is ready for the happy union," the Emperor, with a retinue of eunuchs, entered the room clad in dragon-embroidered robes, and the pair were permitted to look upon one another face to face, perhaps for the first time. Kneeling attendants poured out for them wine from a golden flagon into jewelled cups, and they pledged one another solemnly, amid the fumes of burning incense and to the sound of joyful music from bands without.

Having brought about the marriage which was considered to prove her adopted son's attainment of manhood and with it his competence to rule, the Empress Dowager issued her edict of farewell to the nation, handing over the administration of the Empire to His Majesty Kwanghsu on March 4th, 1889.

And now at last Tze-hi, at the age of fifty-four, ostensibly withdrew herself from public affairs and retired to the palace which the Emperor solicitously

assigned to her as "a haven of rest after her eighteen wearisome years of regency." Elaborate preparations had been going on at this palace for some time past to fit it for her comfort, but had been stopped for a time at the Empress's desire when the before-mentioned fire broke out in Peking. She requested the cessation of all work except on a Buddhist temple in the palace-grounds, saying that the fire was an admonition from Heaven, and that she wished to economize in her own luxuries for the benefit of the nation and to reconcile herself with the divine power.

Acknowledging Kwanghsu's decree of the "haven of rest" for her, Tze-hi in admirable language replied that now that His Majesty had reached manhood "the highest respect which He can pay to Us will be to discipline His own body, to develop His mind, to pay unceasing attention to the Government, and to love His people." With that she took up her residence at the Iho Park, which lay within the vast enclosure known as the Wan Shou Shan (Mount of Ten Thousand Ages). A dozen or more miles Northwest of Peking, the Wan Shou Shan is approached from the gates of the Tartar quarter of Peking by a stone-paved road which, being for Imperial use, is better than most Chinese highways, and runs through scenery made beautiful, in the season, by fields of wheat and maize. Within the enclosure were many buildings, including the old Summer Palace, the "Round Bright Garden," wrecked by the Allies in 1860. The Iho Park section, where the Dowager

was henceforward to dwell until she decided to interfere openly in public affairs again, was a fine palace with most magnificent undulating grounds attached to it, temples and pavilions being dotted about on every hill. Here she was able to devote herself to the cultivation of flowers, always a favourite hobby of hers, as might be guessed from her fondness of painting them, even if we did not know from the accounts of the various foreign ladies acquainted with her in later life how much their beauty appealed to her. Within the grounds lay a large lake, across which ran a seventeen-arched white marble bridge leading to an island surmounted by marble terraces, yellow-tiled pavilions, rocky grottoes, and lovely gardens. The Southern shore of the lake was fringed all its length by a balustraded marble embankment. On this fine piece of water, which was entered from the Imperial Canal under a curious "camel-backed" bridge, also of white marble, Tze-hi was able to indulge another of her passions, for boating. Subsequently she introduced steam-launches upon the lake; but at this time its waters were disturbed by nothing more than an Imperial barge, towed by others filled with oarsmen, all compelled by etiquette to stand at their labours, and followed by boatloads of eunuchs in charge of the tea-making apparatus and other necessities of Her Majesty's existence.

Horticulture and boating are said to have been her two main diversions in the Iho Park. But she had other occupations also to compensate her for the loss

of the excitements of Peking. Architecture pleased her as much as it pleased an European Empress whom Tze-hi resembled in many of her tastes—Josephine, wife of Napoleon. In the Wan Shou Shan grounds she had scope both for the erection of new buildings and the restoration of old. She tried her hand at repairing some of the damage done by the Anglo-French invaders of 1860. Foreign critics have said that her restorations were rather tasteless. Their countrymen, actuated (may we suppose?) by disgust at this, visited the neighbourhood in 1900 and did much damage. Unfortunately they did not content themselves with attacking the restored portions or even with looting the Dowager's buildings; for the wonderful Temple of the Five Hundred Buddhas, on the crest of the hill, was now sadly injured by fire, after escaping unscathed forty years earlier.

With her various hobbies and her taste for literature, painting, and the drama—as the child Yehonala had loved puppet-shows in the streets of Peking, it was said, so the Empress was an enthusiastic patron of the theatre and kept her own troupes to play before her wherever she went—Tze-hi had abundant means of occupying her leisure. But her enemies of Chinese race attributed to her indulgence in far less reputable distractions. The subject will be dealt with in a later chapter and need only be briefly mentioned here. Her accusers made her out to be an utter profligate, and asserted that the eunuchs of her Court were so only in name. The Empress Dowager had

made the mistake, after the first severe treatment which she had meted out to some of them at the beginning of her joint regency with Tze-an, of allowing these persons to assume too prominent a position in her household ; and in consequence she laid herself open to the slander of malicious tongues. It is true that the foreigner who saw most of them at the Dowager's Court, the American artist Miss Katharine Carl, speaks well of them and found "accomplished *litterati*" among them. But Li Lien-ying, the head eunuch (whom the same foreign observer describes as a tall, thin, Savonarola-like personage with elegant manners, a pleasant voice, and an appearance of ability), was utterly detested by the Chinese for his greed and abuse of authority, and the obstinacy with which his Imperial mistress disregarded all complaints against him caused them to aver that he had been introduced into the Palace under false pretences and was in reality her lover. It was certainly an error of judgment on the part of the Empress Dowager to bestow so much of her favour on "Cobbler's-wax Li," as the Pekingese nicknamed him in allusion to the fact that he had been born a shoemaker's son.

From her Palace on the "Mount of Ten Thousand Ages" the retired Regent could see the yellow-tiled roofs of the Forbidden City, so clear is the air in this part of China when not obscured by dust-storms from the desert. But not only could she see the roofs with her eyes ; also, by means of the numberless adherents which a wily woman like herself knew

so well how to secure, she could watch all that went on under those roofs. For nine years she gave no sign of any intention of returning to her former position; she looked on passively, it was almost thought benevolently, while the man whom she had put on the throne planned a most astounding revolution in the Government which he had taken over from her hands. Then suddenly we see her, in the course of a few hours, and without any shedding of blood in the process, re-establish herself in the Forbidden City and resume her regency of the Empire. It is evident that in her sojourn at the Iho Palace she wasted no time and never lost her grip over affairs.

It must be added that, while retiring from Peking, the Empress Dowager appears to have kept the Great Seal, possibly for another eight years; and that she certainly retained the right of examining State documents and of appointing and cashiering officials of the two highest ranks, both of which privileges gave her a considerable voice in Chinese policy, and put a check upon the Emperor's freedom.

## CHAPTER XI

### FIRST YEARS OF KWANGHSU—TZE-HI'S JUBILEE

**O**N February 25th Kwanghsu began his actual reign. The moment had been eagerly awaited by foreigners ; since with an Emperor on the throne the Audience question, in abeyance after the death of Tungchih, arose once more. The Empress Dowager and her advisers have been credited with having this difficulty in mind when Kwanghsu's accession was delayed, but that hardly seems a sufficient explanation of so startling a step. However, when the new Emperor was in his place, the Tsungli Yamen showed itself very evasive and dilatory in discussing the matter with the Western representatives at Peking. At length, in the closing month of 1890, the Emperor issued an edict in which he stated that he would receive the ministers of the Powers in the following Chinese New Year, and that thereafter he would do so in the first month of each succeeding year. Foreigners were pleased by the tone of the edict, which was decidedly friendly. It is noticeable, however, that Kwanghsu adhered to the manner of procedure observed under Tungchih, and that the audience still took place in the "Pavilion of Purple Light," outside the Palace. Consequently, after the reception on March 5th, 1891, dissatisfaction was



expressed, and representations were made to the Tsungli Yamen. The usual procrastination followed; but finally China gave way, and in the November of 1894, a hundred and one years after Macartney's interview with Kienlung, the Chinese Emperor admitted the Western nations' ministers to his presence in a proper hall of audience within the Palace.

On January 1st, 1891, before his first foreign reception, Kwanghsu lost his father, who thus did not long survive the disappearance from active politics of the sister-in-law who had given scope to his ambitions. On his son's accession, Prince Chun was expected by upholders of old tradition to retire from the posts of which his tenure, even during the years of Kwanghsu's minority, had been looked on as a violation of propriety. But the Prince had no intention of giving up his offices, and preferred to violate tradition by serving under his son rather than condemn himself to the obscurity of private life. Having a strong will, he prevailed. It is questionable, however, whether he wielded the influence after 1889 which the Empress Regent had allowed him to wield before. There were rumours of divergence of opinion between him and Kwanghsu. The Prince, although he had turned out very different from what foreigners had expected him to be, and had shown himself genuinely receptive of new ideas, was not prepared to travel at the pace desired by his son.

With Chun's death his brother Kung became a little more prominent again, being, it seems, a

favourite with his nephew. But Kwanghsu was preparing to try his wings alone, without aid from any members of his family.

Perhaps it was partly due to the removal of his father that the Emperor was able to follow up his edict of December, 1890, with another next June which was welcomed by the foreigners. His Majesty pointed out that existing treaties provided for the propagation of Christianity in China, and that the protection of missionaries by the provincial officials had been enjoined by various Imperial decrees. "The doctrines of the Western religion," he continued, "have for their purpose the teaching of men to be good, and although Our people become converts they do not cease to be subjects of China, and are amenable to the local authorities. There is no reason why peace and quiet should not prevail between the people and the adherents of the foreign religion." But villains, "not a few in number, and to be found everywhere," had been reckless in fabricating stories against the Christians in order to create trouble. The local authorities were therefore again commanded to protect foreigners, and were threatened with degradation from office if they should be negligent.

This decree was inspired by the series of attacks on foreigners commencing in 1883, spreading over the country, particularly in the Yangtse Valley, and culminating in the riots at Wuhu in May, and at Wusueh in June, 1891; the latter being a particularly bad case, involving the brutal murder of a

missionary and a Customs official, both Englishmen. The charges against foreigners in nearly all these outrages were the familiar ones of kidnapping children, turning bodies into medicine, subverting morals, and so on. In some instances official complicity in the disturbances was proved ; in others it was strongly suspected. An explanation of, though not an excuse for, this official attitude can be found in the dislike of the mandarins for the clause in the Tientsin Treaty permitting the travel and residence of foreigners in the interior, and in their disgust at the manner in which their traditional "squeezes" had been cut down both by the growth of the foreign-controlled Imperial Maritime Customs and by the necessity of contributing to the upkeep of an Army and a Navy on modern lines. Moreover, the reactionary party at Peking had concentrated its forces against the men set up by the Empress Regent and the still more progressive government instituted by the Emperor, and was giving encouragement to the anti-foreign officials.

With Western historians of China it is a commonplace that riots against foreigners (whether missionaries or others) are made to order from Peking. They habitually quote in support of their charge the old Chinese proverb : When the wind blows, the grass bends. The justice of such a contention concerning the riots from 1883 onward depends on what is meant by "made to order from Peking." If by Peking it is intended to convey the Central Govern-

ment as a whole, or the leading personages in that Government, then the contention cannot stand. Perhaps those who look on the Empress Dowager as bigotedly anti-foreign throughout her career may be able to imagine her inspiring attacks on foreign missionaries, merchants, and travellers in Kwangtung, Shantung, Szechuan, and the Yangtse Valley, while employing statesmen of liberal tendencies in her administration as a cloak for her designs. But the facts are against such a theory. When the Dowager allowed herself to be led into a violent campaign against the foreigners she threw herself into the arms of men like Prince Tuan, Tung Fu-hsiang, and Yuhien, upsetting the balance of power which she had previously maintained between the forces of progress and reaction. Except during this brief period of madness when the nineteenth century was giving place to the twentieth, Tze-hi was scarcely more an enemy of foreigners than every patriotic man or woman of China is bound to be. And, in any case, how low a view of her statecraft it is which makes her put in control of affairs men whose policy it was to build up a China strong enough to defend herself against the aggressions of the outer nations, while at the same time she stirred up troubles which might prematurely plunge the country in a struggle in which it was bound to suffer heavily.

If, however, it be said that the influence at Peking which gave encouragement to the provincial organizers of attacks on foreigners was that of highly

placed people of reactionary views, more than usually ignorant members of the Imperial clan, Bannermen of the old-fashioned type, and narrow-minded Chinese *literati* eager to upset the plans of their more enlightened fellow-countrymen, then we may readily believe that many, if not most, of the disturbances in various parts of China during the sole regency of Tze-hi and the opening years of Kwanghsu's reign were made to order from Peking. The provincial authorities, with their various grievances against the foreigners who lessened their gains and increased their work, wanted but little suggestion from above to take part in a persecution of the troublesome intruders ; while at the same time the forces beneath, the "villains not few in number and to be found everywhere," as Kwanghsu called them, were constantly driving the magistrates on, terrorizing them with threats and even putting them to death if they resisted, along the road which led to the mission-buildings and the houses of consuls and other residents from abroad. So came about the wrecking of chapels, incendiarism, violent assaults, tortures, and murders—and then indemnities, apologies, and cashiering of officials, and a fresh crop of hatred against the "foreign devils."

Such was the state of affairs, reaching its worst crisis so far in 1891, which Kwanghsu tried to remedy by his proclamation in the June of that year. The stamp of sincerity was on that decree, but unhappily the best decrees of the Emperors of

China are often those which command the least obedience. "The mountains are high," say the Chinese, "the Emperor is far away." A brief lull in the persecution was followed in 1895 by an extremely violent outburst in Szechuan in the remote West, and a smaller but more murderous riot in Fuhkien in the South-east. In both cases it was the missionaries who were the objects of the attack ; but it was claimed, by the missionaries themselves chiefly, that it was as foreigners that they were assailed, owing to the irritation throughout China at the news that the soil of the Celestial Empire had been invaded by an army from abroad—by the Japanese, in fact, in the autumn of 1894.

This year 1894 witnessed several remarkable events. There was the war between China and Japan, the final settlement of the foreign Audience question, and the Jubilee of the Empress Dowager. The war, with its tremendous consequences for China, may be left for the present, although the outbreak of hostilities preceded both the celebration of the Jubilee and the reception of the foreign ministers.

The Imperial audience of November 12th, the culminating triumph of over a century of Western diplomatic efforts, was not an unsolicited act of grace on the part of China. The representatives of the Powers notified the Tsungli Yamen that they had letters of congratulation for the Emperor on the event in his "august mother's" life. It was hardly

possible, without the gravest discourtesy, to refuse to receive these letters, which must, of course, be presented personally, within the Palace. Accordingly, China being embarrassed and the foreigners firm, the usual fight was omitted and an invitation was issued for November 12th, within the "Inner Palace" or Forbidden City. The hall appointed was the *Wen Hua Tien*, somewhat quaintly translated into English as the "Hall of Blooming Literature," where the Emperors of China are wont to listen to the exposition of the writings of Confucius by learned members of the Hanlin Academy. It was not as imposing a building as those in which foreign ministers had hitherto been received, but it had the all-important virtue of being in the Forbidden City. Decorated for the occasion with rose silk hangings relieved with yellow cords, it was found to contain no furniture except the Emperor's Dragon Throne, with a small yellow satin-covered table in front of it, and behind it a large silk curtain embroidered with peacock's feathers—which concealed no less a person than the Empress Dowager herself, invisible to foreign eyes, but able to hear all that went on. Raised on a dais above a throng of all the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Peking Boards and the high officials of the capital, the Emperor sat cross-legged, clad in a sable robe and wearing the hat of State, with the leading Imperial Princes standing on either hand, of whom Princes Kung and Ching acted as masters of ceremonies.

The foreign ministers being introduced in the manner hitherto prescribed, their doyen, the representative of the United States, spoke a few words of congratulation on the occasion and presented his letter. Interpretation, first into Chinese, then into Manchu, followed. Each minister in turn followed the doyen's example, on each occasion one of the two senior Princes giving a Manchu translation of the letter and laying it on the yellow-covered table, whereon the Emperor bowed and spoke a few words of Manchu, which were translated first into Chinese and then into the language of the particular country's representative. The audience concluded with the ministers bowing themselves out of the hall.

And so the notable first entry of the representatives of the West into the jealously guarded Forbidden City was the consequence of an event in the life of Her Majesty Tze-hi, little as was the part which she played in the ceremony.

It was on the seventh day of November that the Empress attained her sixtieth year of life, according to the Chinese mode of reckoning. It had been arranged that she should emerge from her retirement for a brief while to take part in the festivities in connection with the happy event. The Board of Rites was set to work by Kwanghsu to discover the proper ceremonial to be observed in honour of his adoptive mother. Fortunately for themselves the officials had not to search very far back into past history to find a model. One hundred and forty-



two years earlier the mother of the reigning Emperor Kienlung had attained her Jubilee. It was intended to follow closely the example of 1752, omitting one remarkable feature. Kienlung, in the profundity of his filial piety, had dressed himself up in clothes of a childish cut and frolicked before the eyes of his old mother, in order to give her once more the illusion of being in her young womanhood. It was not proposed that Kwanghsu should go so far as this.

But the misfortunes of the war with Japan caused the programme to be otherwise curtailed also. The Empress Dowager herself seems to have expressed a desire that no great display should be made in view of the calamities which were befalling the Empire. (It was said by some that she only did so after pressure had been put upon her by various people, including Prince Kung; apparently they could not admit that she ever acted decently on her own initiative.) The people refused altogether to check their manifestations of loyalty, especially in the provinces. But in Peking the celebrations were kept within modest limits. The Ta Tsing gate of the Forbidden City, sacred to the use of the Emperors, was indeed gorgeously decorated as on the previous great public occasion, the marriage of Kwanghsu. In other respects the occasion passed very quietly, and it was announced that the funds which would have been devoted to festivities were to be spent on military needs. The example was set in a very notable manner by an act of the Empress Dowager herself.

One of the principal ways in which it was incumbent on the dutiful Emperor to mark his pleasure at the Dowager reaching her sixtieth year was by the bestowal upon her of a new title of honour. In the ordinary course of events, a Chinese Empress has honorifics granted to her upon the birth of a son, upon the completion of ten years of married life, and upon various solemn occasions, such as the attainment of the end of a decade in her existence. Such honorifics consist of two Chinese characters, and carry with them an income of ten thousand taels (at this period worth between £1500 and £2000) for each character. There was, therefore, a very gratifying flavour about an honorific, apart from the satisfaction in its complimentary meaning,<sup>1</sup> to a woman who enjoyed spending money so much as did the Empress Dowager Tze-hi ; and in her long life she surpassed any of her predecessors in the amassing of such pleasing titles, sixteen characters in all being bestowed on her before she died.

With the new honorific and its attendant income came also gifts of great value, both in money and in kind, from officials all over China, eager to prove their loyal regard for the ex-Regent, so that her birthday presents reached a stupendous sum. But Tze-hi rose nobly to the occasion. She handed over to the Government, to assist it in the prosecution of the war against Japan, the bulk of what she had re-

<sup>1</sup> For the translation of the Empress Dowager's final sixteen character title, see p. 335.

ceived—no less than £1,500,000, it was said. For one so wealthy as she was, the surrender of this sum seems no doubt not a very serious sacrifice. But when we compare with her conduct in 1894 her abnegation on the occasion of her seventieth birthday celebrations also, we must (unless we agree with those who find behind all good actions of the Dowager the promptings of other minds) allow her to have been capable of genuine patriotism, remarkable in a woman of such an appetite for money and pleasure, and must set such acts against the stories current among her enemies in Peking about the diversion of public funds into her pocket.<sup>1</sup>

The war which was the occasion of this munificent gift from the Empress Dowager to her country was thus a serious check on her enjoyment of the festivities and honours of her sixtieth year. All Chinese rulers are wont to connect public misfortunes with their own lack of merit, as we have seen in the case of Hienfung; and Tze-hi, being extremely superstitious, could not have been expected to dissociate two such events in the same year as her Jubilee and the invasion of China. It is significant that when she approached the end of another decade in her life, instead of observing her seventieth birthday on the correct Chinese date, November, 1904, she held the

<sup>1</sup> On one occasion, it was alleged, out of a contribution of three millions sterling from the Imperial Treasury for naval purposes, the bulk found its way into the hands of the Empress Dowager. She used it mainly to build a new palace; and, in order to "save face," an inscription was put up over the gateway: "Admiralty Office!"

celebration a year earlier—as if to elude the wrath of Heaven or cheat the powers of evil which were waiting to mar her happiness.

The actual declaration of hostilities between China and Japan was made on August 1st, and the fighting commenced a week before that. The cause of the quarrel was, as almost invariably between the two countries, the question of supremacy in Korea, which had brought them to blows as early as the end of the sixteenth century. The unhappy Land of the Morning Calm had been compelled from that time onward to recognize two suzerains, China voluntarily, Japan much against the wish of all but a few Koreans who used Japanese influence to further their own ends. We have seen China's predominance restored in the early eighties. But Japan, though in 1885 she agreed with China to a joint withdrawal of forces from the peninsula, had not ceased to intrigue at Seoul. Li Hung-chang, sagacious as ever, fully foresaw that his country would have to fight for her position in Korea before many years passed, and his expensive military and naval preparations in his province of Chihli were principally directed to this end. Long before the war actually broke out, his son-in-law, Chang Pei-lung (who if a knave was not a fool) presented a memorial to the throne calling for war against Japan. But Li, more prudent than his son-in-law, though equally convinced that war must come, held the rasher spirits of China in check, while he went on with his preparations to meet the crisis when it arose.

With his great position in the esteem of the Empress Dowager he was able to do this, in spite of the growth of new influences at the Court of Peking bitterly opposed to the power of the Li family.<sup>1</sup>

The immediate cause of the war of 1894-5 was an appeal from the King of Korea for Chinese help against a half-religious, half-political rising of the Tong Hak or "Eastern Doctrine" sectarians, remotely resembling the Taipings, against his authority. China sent a small force to help her vassal, whose country was in a terrible state of faction apart from the Tong Hak rebellion. Japan thereon despatched a much larger force, following but also exceeding the terms of that provision of the China-Japan Convention of 1885 which allowed either country to send troops into Korea when the other did so. In the condition of affairs, Japan eager for war, China resigned to it, a collision was certain. It occurred on July 25th between warships of the two countries off the Korean coast. It is unnecessary to go into the details of the war. As is well known, China's military and naval reputation was utterly shattered, and at the end the only question was how cheaply she could buy herself off. Naturally, recourse was had to the offices of Li Hung-chang. The old Viceroy, who had celebrated his seventieth

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1894 the anti-Li party's domination over the Emperor was so strong that the Empress Dowager thought it necessary to write a letter to her old friend, assuring him of her continued confidence.

birthday in 1892, had fallen into disgrace when it appeared that his vast expenditure of money on war-materials of every kind had been in vain. But there was no one else with a tithe of his experience in treaty-making ; and, moreover, the Empress Dowager intervened to call for his appointment as plenipotentiary on behalf of China.

Li went to Japan, accompanied by his son, Li Ching-fong, the present Chinese Minister in London, and on April 17th, 1895, signed the Treaty of Shimonoseki, recognizing Korea's complete independence of China, ceding to Japan Formosa, the Pescadores group, and the Liaotung peninsula, promising an indemnity of two million taels, opening several new ports to foreign trade, etc. A tremendous outcry went up in China—"the howling of the dogs," the brave old Viceroy called it—and memorials poured in upon the throne once more denouncing Li as a traitor, as ten years before, and calling for his death. But again, as after he had made peace with France in 1885, the Empress Dowager came forward to protect the man whom she at least recognized to have saved China from the full penalty which might have been inflicted. Undoubtedly in so doing the Dowager drew upon herself no little share of the wrath of the Chinese people over the war.

Although China, however—thanks to the courage of Li Hung-chang and the steadfast loyalty of the Empress Dowager—escaped comparatively lightly at the hands of Japan, there was a sequel to the

Shimonoseki Treaty which, at first appearing to better China's position considerably, was soon to prove far more disastrous to her than ever the exactions of Japan. This was the famous "triple intervention" of Russia, France, and Germany to compel the conquerors to forego a portion of the spoil. As the American writer, the Rev. A. H. Smith, so admirably puts it : "For reasons known perhaps to the directors of her so-called 'foreign policy,' Great Britain elected to remain entirely neutral."<sup>1</sup> Japan silently yielded to the threat of a war with three European powers, handed back to China the Liaotung peninsula in return for an increase in the idemnity, and modified her demands for new treaty-ports. This done, she waited eight years for her revenge. Meanwhile, China was to experience the true meaning of the intercession of her European friends on her behalf.

<sup>1</sup> *China in Convulsion*, 104.

## CHAPTER XII

### KWANGHSU THE REFORMER

**I**N connection with the celebration of the Empress Dowager's Jubilee in 1894 there occurred an event, small in itself, which, nevertheless, is supposed to have led indirectly to very important developments. In honour of the ex-Regent's birthday, a subscription was got up among the Christian women-converts of the various Protestant sects in China, some ten thousand in all, to present a gift to Her Majesty. On the suggestion of their teachers, these women decided to give a specially printed copy of a Chinese version of the New Testament, in a fine binding of solid silver. On November 11th the Ministers of Great Britain and the United States took the book, in an elaborate casket which had been made for it, to the Tsungli Yamen, with a request that it should be forwarded to the Empress Dowager. Now we do not hear that she took any further notice of this birthday present beyond sending back a suitable acknowledgment, accompanied by gifts to the women missionaries who had organized the subscription. But the Emperor, as soon as he learnt what had happened at the Tsungli Yamen, ordered copies of both New and Old Testaments in Chinese from the American Bible Society at



Peking, and set to work with the Palace eunuchs to read them.

There is no suggestion that Kwanghsu had any intention of becoming a Christian himself or of converting the eunuchs, who by custom formed his sole regular company, beside women, in the Forbidden City. He merely received an impulse to study Western thought more closely. His passion for the collection of translations of European literature was quickened, and he became an omnivorous and, it would seem, indiscriminating reader of all works, on which he could lay hands, which had been rendered into Chinese. Also, whereas he had already commenced after a fashion to learn English, he now devoted more labour to the task, and began to speak at least a few words.

Kwanghsu's closer study of Western ideas was not yet to bear fruit, for he still lacked a guide of sufficient strength of character to lead him along the path which attracted him. Among the Palace eunuchs, though they might include in their ranks men of literary ability, he was not likely to discover a suitable mentor. Had the "Marquis" Tseng survived, he might have been able to turn in a safer direction the enthusiasm for which Kang Yu-wei was soon to find so dangerous an outlet.

Before dealing with the Reform movement which gave the Empress Dowager her pretext for emerging from the retirement of Iho Park and taking upon herself once more the government of China, we must

stop to look at the external political consequences of the "triple intervention" of Russia, France, and Germany in 1896, so unfortunate for Kwanghsu when he was endeavouring to introduce Western ideas into the government and education of his people. Nothing could have done the reforming Emperor so ill a service at this time as the exhibition of unscrupulous greed on the part of those nations whom he was proposing for the admiration and imitation of China.

The war between China and Japan had been followed by a recrudescence of anti-foreign troubles in various parts of the former country, which the hostile critics of the Chinese Government attributed to that Government's own promptings. No serious punishment befell China until on November 1st, 1897, a band of about twenty men set upon and murdered two German Roman Catholic missionaries in a West Shantung village. It was never proved whether this outrage was an isolated act of outlaws, an ordinary anti-missionary affair, or again the outcome of a special agitation on the part of a secret society which had arisen in the province in the previous year. But the precise cause was immaterial to Germany, who was obviously prepared beforehand to enforce her claim to play a leading part in any division of Chinese territory. With remarkable speed her fleet was in Kiaochau Bay, the best harbour in Shantung, if not on the whole coast of North China, and celebrated in Chinese history as the place whence the pious Buddhist pilgrim Fa-hien, in 414 A.D., set out on his

journey to India in search of copies of the sacred scriptures and statues and relics of the Buddha. Tsingtao Island was occupied, and an enormous claim was presented to Peking by the German representative—a heavy indemnity, drastic punishment of the murderers and the local officials, removal of the Governor of Shantung, a ninety years' "lease" of Kiaochau, all coal-mining rights in Shantung, as well as other mining and railway privileges there.

The rest of the world looked calmly on while China, conscious of her inability to fight and her total lack of friends, acquiesced in the monstrous demand. No sooner had she done so when Russia stepped in with requisitions for a lease of Port Arthur and Talienwan, on similar terms to the Kiaochau lease, as well as for permission to carry the Transiberian Railway through Manchuria to these ports.

There is a Japanese expression "fire-thieves," denoting those who take advantage of a conflagration to steal property from the burning houses. China's house having been set on fire by Japan, Germany and Russia (clearly at an understanding, seeing the promptitude with which they acted as soon as the occasion arose) had now very profitably taken on the rôle of fire-thieves. Two others speedily made their appearance, Great Britain and France, who demanded and obtained leases of Weihaiwei and Kwangchowwan. Thus, on no other pretext than that of reparation for the murder of two Ger-

man missionaries (without the slightest proof of official complicity), China was bereft in a few months of four great harbours—two in Shantung, one in Manchuria, and one in Kwangtung. The significance of the “triple intervention” was clear, and Great Britain, though taking no part in that pact, had come to share the proceeds.

Nothing could have demonstrated more cynically the effect upon the Western world produced by Japan's revelation of China's helplessness. To the Great Powers China was a huge prey waiting to be dismembered. It only remained for minor Powers to put in their claims—as we shall see that they did, in due course.

But we must retrace our steps a short way. The commencement of the struggle for the partition of China was accompanied by a distinct widening of the gulf between the Emperor and those left of the old advisers of China, who had brought the Empire with fair credit through its troubles at the time of the war with Japan, but found it impossible to cope as successfully with the situation which arose afterwards. Kwanghsu, eager to devote his attention to the internal reform of his country, was bent on avoiding foreign complications, but at the same time was not prepared to sacrifice China's dignity entirely in the interests of peace. Li Hung-chang experienced the force of this when he returned home after his mission to Saint Petersburg in 1896 to represent his country at the coronation of the new Tsar Nicholas II, which

was followed by his famous trip round the world. It was seen with surprise that after he had called at the Summer Palace and taken tea with the Empress Dowager he was suddenly denounced to the Board of Punishments, stripped of his Yellow Jacket and Peacock's Feather, and fined half a year's salary. But for the intervention of Tze-hi he might have suffered a worse fate. It was not mere caprice on the part of Kwanghsu which induced him to allow such a blow to be struck at Li Hung-chang. The Cassini Convention, which was one of the results of the mission to Saint Petersburg, was too much for those to swallow who had not arrived at the conception of the "policy of the weak." Li was suspected of having sold himself to Russia. Had the Emperor been able to free himself completely from his aunt's control, the old statesman and all his adherents in the Tsungli Yamen would undoubtedly have been swept away.

Failing earlier to carry matters as far as he wished, Kwanghsu seized upon the German action at Kiaochau as his chance of emancipation. Threatening to abdicate if he were not put in full possession of the Imperial power, he found the Empress Dowager unprepared for such a constitutional crisis. She had not yet in her eye, it seems, a suitable successor to her nephew, which, indeed, is not strange, seeing that Kwanghsu had himself produced no heir, and that it was, to say the least, unadvisable to risk a disputed succession. She therefore handed over to Kwanghsu



**LI HUNG-CHANG**

**(From a caricature by the late Alfred Bryan)**

certain of the privileges which she had retained on her retirement, including, perhaps, the use of the Great Seal. Even now, however, she seems to have kept some checks upon the Emperor, though their nature is not clear. She seldom emerged from her seclusion to take part in the ceremonies of Peking. A notable exception was when Prince Henry of Prussia, out on the China Station in his capacity of Admiral of the German Fleet, paid a visit to Peking, and on May 15th, 1898, was received in audience by both Emperor and Empress Dowager. This was the Dowager's first meeting face to face with a "Western barbarian"—and, of course, a very notable new departure in the history of China.

Kwanghsu felt himself more secure after his self-assertion and his aunt's surrender of some of her privileges, and very soon events began to move rapidly.

There was already in existence at the time of the Emperor's accession a strong body of young men who, partly or entirely educated on Western lines—some in Government colleges, others in mission schools, only a very few as yet in foreign countries—and imbued with an enthusiasm for the new ideas which had been presented to them, burned with a desire to see all their fellow-countrymen offered the advantages which they had received themselves. Japan's success in 1894-5, though a deep humiliation to the defeated nation, yet proved an inspiration

to such young men in it and an incitement for them to call for a Westernization of China on the lines laid down in Japan. Had they been wise enough to follow the example of the Japanese in one respect, and, while innovating, clung also to the great traditions of their own country, instead of deriding them as did many of the Young China party, it would have gone better with them and their native land alike. However, under the influence of their solicitations, the ambitious crowded in increasing numbers to institutions which provided in their educational course the teaching of Western sciences. The old-fashioned scholars, lovers of the sages, might rail bitterly at such ideas and stir up the mob to violence against those who disseminated them ; but, nevertheless, the modern movement steadily went on. With the energy of the rising generation of China behind it, it only required leaders to become a formidable power in the State. Would the Emperor become one of these leaders ?

The Emperor was more than willing ; and at the beginning of 1898 he found the man to introduce him to the inner councils of the Young China or Reform Party. He had already received a copy of a book on the rise and development of Japan by an author whose name was Kang Yu-wei. In January, 1898, this Kang Yu-wei asked for and obtained an interview with the Tsungli Yamen. He talked with the ministers for three hours, advocating China's imitation of Japan, the thorough renovation



of the judicial system,<sup>1</sup> and the replacement of China's old-fashioned advisers by young men trained on Western lines. This was rather bold pleading, seeing that none of the Tsungli Yamen themselves had received Western education. But the Yamen showed an open mind and asked Kang to present a memorial bringing his ideas to the Emperor's notice. Kang complied, and, having sent in his memorial, had the satisfaction of being invited to a special audience with Kwanghsu. According to the official account in the *Peking Gazette*, one of the Censors recommended Kang Yu-wei to His Majesty's notice. The credit of first introducing him, however, has been claimed by various persons, including the Emperor's tutor, Weng Tung-ho, one or two other members of the Tsungli Yamen, and a brother of the Emperor's first and second concubines, the two sisters mentioned in an earlier chapter.

Before receiving the advocate of reform, Kwanghsu asked the Tsungli Yamen to report upon his memorial. Prince Kung and other Manchus condemned it. But Kwanghsu himself was instantly taken by the sugges-

<sup>1</sup> It is curious to reflect that judicial reform, which Kang Yu-wei called for in 1898 A.D., was spoken of as necessary nearly twenty centuries earlier. In 67 B.C. a certain Lu Wen-shu presented to the throne a memorial, in which he said: "Of the ten thousand follies of our predecessors one still survives in the maladministration of justice which prevails. . . . Nothing is wanting to make this a golden age, save only reform in the administration of justice" (Giles, *History of Chinese Literature*, 89-90).

tions which it contained. He admitted the writer into his presence, and from that moment Kang was his supreme adviser and his familiar friend, to the intense disgust alike of the Imperial clansmen and the high office-holders at Peking.

Foreign critics have been very much divided in opinion concerning Kang Yu-wei ; but on the whole their verdict, after his failure, was unfavourable to him. While he received some sympathy from individuals and (what was very necessary to him after the Empress Dowager came back to power) the protection of British, Colonial, Japanese, and other Governments, he was the object of much abuse, being called a dangerous agitator, self-seeking, and half-educated.<sup>1</sup>

The judgments of his countrymen upon him were still more diverse. In his native province of Kwangtung he was early hailed as "the young Confucius" and "the Modern Sage," and when as a result of his success in the examinations for official posts he obtained a senior clerkship at the Board of Works, Peking, he had already secured for himself a strong following in the ranks of the Young China party. But the old-fashioned scholars would have

<sup>1</sup> Meeting him myself in the latter part of 1904, when he was in London, an exile from China and an outlaw, I was favourably impressed by his conversation, though I judged that his enthusiasm excelled his depth of intellect. He allowed himself to be exploited by the "prophet" Dowie in the United States soon after this. He did not strike me as self-seeking.

none of him, and he had bitter enemies even among Chinese of more modern education.<sup>1</sup>

Having now the Emperor's ear, Kang Yu-wei poured into it not only the aspirations of the Reformers, but also the opinions of the Chinese on their rulers. He told him, it is said, that the Empress Dowager, although feared, was very unpopular, especially since the national humiliation by Japan, and began to urge upon him the necessity of removing from her hands all power yet remaining in her grasp. Kwanghsu was uneasy at the suggestion, being still bound by strong ties of gratitude to the woman who had placed him on the throne. Consequently we find his policy in the first half of 1898 marked by extreme inconsistency and, apart from the actual Reform programme, hard to follow.

In May Prince Kung died, aged about sixty-six. His death was almost at once followed by a rearrangement of high posts. Weng Tung-ho, the Emperor's tutor, was dismissed from his offices, his place on the Tsungli Yamen being filled by Wang Wen-shao, Viceroy of Chihli, and Chihli being transferred to Yunghu, an able and handsome Manchu, nephew of the Empress Dowager, and therefore cousin by marriage of the Emperor. Rumours were rife in

<sup>1</sup> The anonymous writer of a letter in the *Hongkong Daily Press* of October 29th, 1898, denounces him as "vain, egotistic, conceited, selfish, no statesman, envious of English-speaking Westernized Chinese, a pilferer who does not acknowledge the sources from which he borrows." "The mad Hong" was a name sometimes flung at his head—Hong Yau-wei being a dialectical variant of Kang Yu-wei.

Peking as to the meaning of these changes. It had been hinted for months past that Prince Kung's death would be a signal for the Dowager to reassert herself. The removal of Weng was attributed to his ideas of reform being too slow for his Imperial pupil, his friendship with Prince Kung having hitherto preserved him. But the fresh honours for Yunglu, who with his appointment to Chihli became also Generalissimo of the Peiyang or Northern Forces, and therefore was in a position to overawe the capital when the occasion arose, was clearly due to the Dowager, with whom he was a great favourite. Four years earlier he had only been an officer in a provincial garrison town, whence she had brought him to put him at the head of the Peking gendarmerie. Tze-hi was therefore still exercising her right to control promotion to high offices. It was suggested that Kwanghsu, by yielding to her in such matters, was endeavouring to salve his conscience while plotting to introduce a programme to which he could not ask her consent. A check on Yunglu's supremacy in his province was provided by making Yuan Shi-kai the actual commander of the Peiyang Forces, semi-independent of the Viceroy. The credit of this appointment has been claimed for the Dowager—an illustration of her theory of the balance of power—but it is clear from what happened in September that the Emperor at this time imagined Yuan to be a friend of his.

While this reshuffling of official posts was in progress, Kwanghsu had embarked upon his scheme

of reforming the Empire from top to bottom. A truly astonishing stream of edicts poured forth from June 11th to the beginning of September. We need, however, only notice the salient points in the Imperial programme, which was developed in a series of twenty-seven decrees.

In that of June 11th the Emperor gave notice of a number of changes which he wished to bring about, particularly in military and educational matters, and spoke of the weakness and emptiness of the arguments of the old Chinese officials against his ideas. He concluded by ordering the institution of a central University at Peking, on modern lines, and hoping that all would take advantage of the education there offered to them. This University, of which the foundation was almost the only item in her nephew's programme the Empress Dowager did not cancel on her return to power, remains to this day a memorial to China's Reforming Emperor.

The establishment of the Peking University was followed in subsequent edicts by a number of drastic changes in the national educational system. The "literary essay," the pride of the Chinese candidate for official honours, was abolished. Schools and colleges of all kinds, it was ordered, must be opened in the provincial capitals and other large cities of the Empire. Former temple and memorial schools were to be converted into academies for Western teaching—a step which could not but give great offence to the founders and supporters of these schools, as we

shall see that the Empress Dowager recognized when she came to deal with the education question. Then, as a culmination of this part of his programme, the Emperor, on August 9th, appointed Dr. W. A. P. Martin head of the foreign staff of professors at the new University, with the rank of *Ta Jen*, or "Great Man."

Military and naval reforms went on concurrently with educational, European drill, hitherto only adopted for portions of the Chinese Army, being recommended for all the Manchu troops in the Empire, preparations being ordered for a new system of military examinations, and naval academies and training ships being provided.

Other decrees were designed to promote railway and mining enterprise, to assist the development of trade and agriculture, to encourage and protect inventors, and to stimulate authors and journalists. A bold measure was the adoption as the official organ of the Government of a Shanghai paper, *Chinese Progress*, of which Kang Yu-wei was to be the editor as soon as he had finished his task as assistant to the Emperor at Peking.

To meet the opposition which he felt his schemes to be arousing, Kwanghsu in an early decree expressed himself willing to hear all objections against them. But he also censured those who put obstacles in the way of the new University's progress, and went on to call upon the authorities, metropolitan and provincial, to co-operate with him in introducing

reforms, menacing with punishment those who clung to out-of-date ideas. On the other hand, he cordially invited suggestions concerning desirable innovations.

The Emperor's zeal was evidently growing with each new decree, and by the end of August he determined on a heavy blow at the old official system. With one stroke he abolished no less than six Government Boards, including that which was up to now concerned with the supervision of public instruction. Their duties were apportioned among other existing Boards, and so a large staff of office-holders was thrown out of employment. This was a rash enough step. But on September 1st Kwanghsu went further and dismissed from their posts the two Presidents (one Manchu and one Chinese) and four Vice-Presidents of the Board of Rites, because, in defiance of his order that memorials should be allowed to come to him sealed, the Board had opened a memorial from one of their own clerks, an ardent Reformer. The clerk had recommended the abolition of the queue, the adoption of Western dress, the establishment of Christianity as the State religion, a national Parliament, and a visit to Japan of the Emperor and Empress Dowager. His superiors sent the proposals up to the throne with a counter-memorial denouncing them as ignorant and wild. The Emperor was furious at the Board's presumption in instructing him as to how he should regard advice to himself, and summarily turned the whole body out of office.

This was the beginning of the end. The dismissed officials went off to the Iho Park and laid their case before the Empress Dowager. With many a graceful compliment to the skill with which she had for so many years handled the affairs of State, they pointed out how different was the position now, when her nominee and adopted son was subverting the whole constitution of the country. They besought her to return to Peking and restore the old condition of things sanctioned by tradition and the teaching of the sages. The Dowager listened in silence to the complaints of her petitioners. When they had finished, she let them go without declaring her intentions. But her mind must now already have been decided, even if she preferred to adopt toward the Emperor the course known to politicians as "filling up the cup."

Kwanghsu played into her hands with all the rapidity which could have been desired. His next edict abolished the provincial governorships of Kwangtung, Hupeh, and Yunnan,<sup>1</sup> and on September 7th he dismissed from the Tsungli Yamen Li Hung-chang and a Manchu named Chin Hsin, President of the Board of Revenue. Li's dismissal was hailed with delight by the British residents in China, owing to his pronounced pro-Russian tendencies and his open rudeness to Sir Claude Macdonald when they

<sup>1</sup> These are three of the Chinese provinces which, although under the Viceroyalties of the Liang Kwang, Liang Hu, and Yun-kwei, have also Governors of their own.



met in Peking. But it was not to be expected that Li would fall unavenged. No more formidable addition could have been made to the ranks of the unemployed officials of China.

Three more edicts, the most important of which provided for the introduction of a Budget for China on Western lines, completed the Emperor's task as far as he was allowed to carry it out. Then came the crash, and the destruction of the hopes of Young China's leaders for many years to come—the description of which must be left for the next chapter.

The chief error which Kwanghsu committed, according to his friendly critics from the West, was that he attempted to crowd into a short space of time a very ambitious scheme of reform, affecting every branch of Chinese life. There was not one among his changes which was not for the better, in the eyes of foreigners; yet even to them his pace appeared precipitate. And undoubtedly the criticism is just. China was not ripe for so rapid and wholesale a reconstitution of her state. Misled by the enthusiasm of his friends of the Reform Party, Kwanghsu seems to have counted on the popular welcome given to his innovations silencing the objections of the old-fashioned Conservatives. But the old brigade were intrenched in office all over the Empire. When their offices began to be threatened their corporate spirit was aroused, and each successive assault directed against them only found them more desperately resolved on fighting to the end. It was easy for them

to appeal to the innate Chinese reverence for antiquity, which coexists with a very considerable capacity for appreciating modern inventions, especially when they make for increased comfort and luxury. And, as has been pointed out already, into the hands of the reactionaries a fatal weapon had been put by the very nations of the outer world whose ways the Emperor was calling upon his subjects to admire and imitate. While he was giving China education and institutions of all kinds on foreign lines, the foreigners were taking from her her best harbours and openly marking out her territory for future dismemberment. At the very time when Kwanghsu was pouring out his edicts, Great Britain, following the lead of her three principal rivals, was securing from the Tsungli Yamen a "lease" of Weihaiwei and an extension of her territory on the mainland facing Hongkong. There were many enlightened men in China who could see the force of the argument that it was necessary to imitate the ways of foreigners in order to be able to resist their aggressions and preserve the integrity of the Celestial Empire. It was no matter for wonder, however, that they should not have been able to recognize the benefit of the introduction of Western institutions combined with the surrender of the keys of the Empire to the robbers from the West. Kwanghsu was in the first place betrayed by those very people whose civilization had inspired him with so much enthusiasm.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE REACTION

**A**T the beginning of September, 1898, the position of affairs between the Emperor in the Forbidden City and the Empress Dowager at the Iho Park had become too critical to allow any hopes of a compromise. The reforming Emperor found that all those of whom he had made enemies were flocking to the Dowager's Court to ease their rebellious hearts with complaints against him. His friends were urging him to take measures which would put an end to this. Kang Yu-wei and his intimates were pressing, it was said, for the conversion of the ex-Regent's palace into a prison, where any further interference in matters of State would be impossible for her. And as a first step they counselled the Emperor to get rid of the man in whom his aunt reposed most trust now that Li Hung-chang had grown too old to be relied on for bold action. Nothing less than the death of Yunglu would satisfy them. Kwanghsu appears to have given his assent to both the removal of his cousin and the arrest of his aunt, having at last conquered his feelings of gratitude toward the latter by the reflection that she now was the chief obstacle in the way of the completion of his schemes for the regeneration of his country.

On her side, Tze-hi, although she had refused to express any opinion before the deputation of dismissed officials of the Board of Rites, had made up her mind that the time had come to put an effective stop to the proceedings of her adopted son. Those who misjudge her character most and look on her as an opponent of all progress find no difficulty at this time in imagining her eager to strike at the Reformers because she hated Reform. But subsequent events showed her to be by no means averse from Reform, indeed an introducer of innovations as bold as those of Kwanghsu himself. No doubt there was much inconsistency in her attitude, as was inevitable with one who made so much of opportunity. But the bitterness of her campaign against the Emperor's friends in 1898 was due not to her dislike of progress, but to her jealousy of their attacks on her remnants of authority and her apprehension of imprisonment, perhaps even of death.

Nor was she without justification in her fear of the Young China Party. They were bent on banishing her for ever from public life, whatever the cost, and would not hesitate at murder of her supporters. Of the gossip at Peking she had kept herself well informed ever since she had retired to Iho Park. While she refused to act upon gossip and surmise, she made her preparations. When the warning came in unmistakable form she was ready to act upon it without an instant's delay.

She had, as we know, taken care that the Viceroy

of Chihli and titular Generalissimo of the Peking Field Forces should be her own sister's son. Yunglu's influence in his province, however, was held in check by the fact that Yuan Shi-kai was the actual commander of the Field Forces. The Emperor thought that he could trust Yuan, and, having agreed to the Reformers' proposals, summoned him from his headquarters at Tientsin and told him to return, to arrest and execute Yunglu, and then to march on the Iho Park and make a prisoner of the Dowager.

The man in whose hands the success or failure of the Reform movement was thus placed has commended himself to foreigners by his combination of courage, honesty, and broad-mindedness. At the same time he must be admitted to be not only somewhat of a trimmer, but also rather lacking in scruples as to the manner in which he performs his duty. Divided in his allegiance in September, 1898, he elected to betray the Emperor and be faithful to his immediate military superior. He left Peking to go straight to Yunglu and inform him of the task which had been entrusted to him. Thereby he gained the bitter hatred of the Reform Party and also of Kwanghsu's brother Chun, the present ruler of China, who as soon as he became Regent took the opportunity of dispensing with Yuan's services.

But Yuan Shi-kai had saved the Empress Dowager. Yunglu, as soon as he was informed of the plot, went secretly to Peking, called on Prince Ching, and with him hastened to Iho Park. The Dowager received

them, listened to the story they had to tell, and without a moment's delay called for her sedan-chair. Accompanied by an escort of eunuchs only, she sped down from the Mount of Ten Thousand Ages to Peking, made her way through the Tartar quarter into the Forbidden City, and seized the "Solitary Man" in the Palace which he shared with women and eunuchs. Never was a revolution accomplished with less of a struggle. Bloodshed was to follow, but the Government had first changed hands without a blow being struck—except one which Tze-hi is said to have dealt the Emperor with her fan after she had come into his presence and overwhelmed him with a torrent of reproaches. Kwanghsu made no attempt to resist, and allowed his aunt to resume possession of the Great Seal, which had been his to use for so short a time. He seems to have been paralysed with fear. All he could do was to send a couple of messages or secret decrees to Kang Yu-wei. In the first of these he states that the Reform schemes do not commend themselves to the Empress Dowager. "We have repeatedly given advice to Her Majesty," he says, "but she becomes more and more enraged, and we are now afraid that we shall not be able to protect our throne." In the second, more personal in tone, he informs Kang of what has happened, and adds: "My heart is filled with very great sorrow, which pen and ink cannot describe. You must go abroad at once, and without a moment's delay devise some means of saving me."

Thanks to the Emperor's warning, Kang Yu-wei was able to seek a night's refuge at the Japanese Legation, and then with a few friends he was smuggled away to Tientsin, whence he took ship for Shanghai and Hongkong. His brother Kang Kwang-jen and other leading Reformers, less fortunate, were arrested before they could leave Peking.

Kwanghsu was now entirely under his aunt's control. On September 21st an edict appeared in his name as follows :—

“Whereas at the present moment many urgent and complicated affairs of public importance call for attention, and We are afraid that in spite of Our utmost exertions some of these may be mismanaged; and whereas Her Majesty the Empress Dowager has twice successfully conducted the administration since the reign of Tungchih; We therefore, giving due regard to the greatness of the Empire bequeathed to Us by Our ancestors, having repeatedly asked Her Majesty to associate Herself again with the management of Imperial affairs, have at length succeeded in obtaining Her consent. This is a great blessing to all subjects of this Empire. From this day forth We will attend to affairs of State in the Side Hall, and will go, together with all the high officers of the Empire, on the eighth day of the present moon, to congratulate Her Majesty in the Administrative Palace.”

On the eighth day, accordingly, which was September 23rd, the Emperor, who little more than a week before had been issuing his stream of decrees

affecting every portion of the Empire, went and did obeisance humbly to the August Ancestor who had so suddenly reminded him of her existence. Rumours were current in native circles in Peking that he was seriously ill, and hinting at his probable early death. It is not strange that the continued appearance of edicts gave no comfort to his well-wishers ; for it was easy to see that the mind which composed them now was not his. An astounding recantation of his reform views was put into his mouth in a decree three days after the homage in the Administrative Palace. "The reforms recently ordered by Us," he was made to say, "were designed to give the masses better chances of improving their condition. . . . We never ordered them for the mere pleasure of changing things nor with the wish to do away with the old traditions which had been handed down to Us. We feel sure that the great body of Our officials and Our people will recognize that these reforms were occasioned by the dangers which threatened this Empire. . . . Our real desire was to abolish superfluous posts for economy's sake. We find, however, that rumours are flying about that We intended a wholesale change of the customs of the country, and that in consequence a vast number of impossible suggestions for reform have been made to Us. If We tolerated a continuance of this, no one could tell to what a pass things would come."

If Kwanghsu was in such a position that he was obliged to father such sentiments as these, then there



was little hope for him, in the opinion of his native sympathizers. As for the foreign residents of Peking, consternation seized them as they came back from their annual holiday on the Western Hills, fifteen miles outside the walls of the capital, hastened by the tales which reached them of ominous unrest in various parts of the country. One of the first pieces of news which greeted them was that the younger Kang and five other Reformers, one a Censor and four secretaries of the Tsungli Yamen, had been beheaded on the execution-ground in the Western section of the Chinese City.

On September 28th the six young men met their fate bravely, with curses against the Empress Dowager on their lips and confident assertions that, easy as it was to take their lives, for each one of them slain a thousand others would spring up to take their places in the battle for freedom and reform.

The Emperor was made to give his approval to this deed in an edict next day, in which he denounced Kang Yu-wei's doctrines as opposed to the ancient Confucian tenets and, accusing him of nefarious designs against the dynasty, ordered his immediate arrest and trial. He went on to speak of the punishment of Kang's brother and his five companions. "Fearing that if there should be any delay in sentencing them they might endeavour to entangle many others, We yesterday ordered their immediate execution, thus preventing further troubles."

A rapid destruction of almost every Reform

measure followed. The six abolished Boards were restored, together with the three governorships. While the University of Peking and the schools in the provincial capitals were allowed to remain, the compulsion to establish lower schools was done away with, and the conversion of existing religious and memorial schools into Government institutions was cancelled. The invitation to send in memorials suggesting desirable changes was withdrawn. The journal *Chinese Progress* was suppressed as "of no real use to the Government, but on the contrary an incitement of the masses to evil." Very shortly all newspapers throughout the Empire were ordered to cease publication as being incentives to the subversion of order, and their editors were branded as "the dregs of the literary classes." Kwanghsu's liberal encouragement to journalists had resulted sadly for them.

Concurrent with the overthrow of the programme of June-September, a reign of terror was instituted in Peking against the adherents of the Young China Party holding official posts. Kang Yu-wei had escaped, but for some time it went very hardly with anyone known to have been connected with him in any way.<sup>1</sup> Even the captain of the gunboat which had been sent to cut off his flight to Shanghai was

<sup>1</sup> According to Professor Headland, the Reform Party in Peking numbered two hundred and forty members, of whom sixty were Hanlins, and the first intention was to punish them all. But Yunglu and Prince Ching counselled moderation, and so only the ringleaders were prosecuted. It was never known to what extent the sympathizers with the movement inside the Palace suffered.

thrown into prison for not bringing him back, although his capture would certainly have produced international complications. But in the virulence of her hatred for Kang Yu-wei (explicable by the fact that she knew he had planned the death of her nephew Yunglu, and may well have suspected him of worse designs against herself than imprisonment for the rest of her life) she recklessly associated herself with the enemies of Reform, and allowed herself to appear in the light of a reactionary and a hater of foreigners.

So "the wind blew and the grass bent." Anti-foreign disturbances began in the very capital and in its neighbourhood. On the last day of September a Peking mob, shouting "Death to the foreign devils," attacked two Legation officials, one British and one American, returning home with some ladies from the railway-station outside the walls. In alarm the Legations telegraphed to Tientsin for a guard, and an international force of marines was sent up, to remain until the following spring. This quieted the Peking populace, but on October 23rd an attack was made on a party of Englishmen about eight miles away from Peking while they were inspecting operations on the Lu-Han railway, which was to connect Peking and Hankow. The only serious casualty was the death of a native employee on the engineering staff, but the Legations took the matter up vigorously owing to the assailants being Chinese soldiers and not a mere mob.

When the Empress Dowager made her memorable return to Peking in Mid-September, orders had been sent to a Chinese general, Tung Fu-hsiang by name, to come to the capital with his troops—a force of irregulars, Mohammedans by religion and recruited in Kansu province. Tung Fu-hsiang himself was an ex-rebel who had entered the Imperial service, a bullying ignorant man, who had nevertheless made for himself a reputation by his suppression of a revolt in Kansu. He came to Peking full of pride, and, securing an interview with the Dowager, boasted that he could drive every foreigner into the sea. Tze-hi, it was said, merely smiled and told him that the time had not yet arrived for that. But Tung's "braves" were eager to make good their general's words, and took the opportunity to attack the first party of foreigners with whom they came in contact. On the complaint of the Legations the Dowager was compelled to take action, and the guilty men were courtmartialled and punished in the presence of the foreigners whom they had assaulted. Tung Fu-hsiang, however, lost nothing by the affair, and began to grow very influential in Peking.

While these troubles occurred outside, within the Palace mystery reigned. It was reported that the Emperor had been conveyed to the Iho Park, and that he was a close prisoner on an island in the ornamental waters there; or that he was a captive in one of the island-palaces on the Lotus Lake in the Forbidden City, cut off from the mainland by a raised draw-

bridge and guarded by the Imperial eunuchs. The ranks of these eunuchs were carefully thinned out. On October 5th fourteen were said to have been strangled by the Dowager's orders for "disloyalty." Three days later several more were beheaded, and in the following week others suffered the same fate, the alleged charge against them being that they had without orders provided the Emperor with warmer clothing. Much comment was aroused by the disappearance of a troupe of well-known actors whom the Emperor had favoured with command performances at the Palace during his freedom. It was declared that they had prudently fled after their manager had smuggled into the Palace, with the help of certain eunuchs, a suit of European clothes to help the Emperor to escape. The Dowager discovered the plot, but the actors had vanished, and only the eunuchs remained to bear the brunt of her wrath.

It was only natural that stories of intended foul play against the Emperor should multiply, especially as it was given out officially that his health was bad. The Legations took the matter up, although up to now there had been a tendency to dismiss the Palace revolution as nothing more than a mere Manchu family quarrel; and it is supposed that Sir Claude Macdonald warned the Tsungli Yamen that serious consequences might be expected if His Majesty died suddenly. Tze-hi thereupon issued an edict inviting foreign doctors to see her nephew. On October 17th

Dr. Dethève, of the French Legation, went to see Kwanghsu, but found nothing seriously amiss with him, though he appeared to be suffering from the effects of close confinement.

Perhaps in consequence of this Kwanghsu was allowed more liberty. At any rate, before October ended a rumour went round Peking that he had made an attempt to escape. It was said that he had contrived to get away from the island on the Summer Palace lake and reach the gates of the Park, with a crowd of frightened eunuchs pursuing him. At the gates he found his way barred by creatures of the Empress Dowager, who shut them against him. At his feet the eunuchs threw themselves, weeping and beseeching him to go no further, as that would mean their death at the Dowager's hands. Kwanghsu turned back and re-entered his prison. We next hear of him in Peking on November 8th, suffered by his aunt to join her in an audience to the Japanese Minister. This was held, it must be noted, in the Empress Dowager's audience-hall, not in the room where since 1894 Kwanghsu had been wont to receive the foreign ministers.

The Chinese were firmly convinced that it was the Dowager's intention either to put Kwanghsu out of the way altogether or to force him to sign an abdication of the throne. According to them, it was Yunglu who intervened to save his life. If there was any truth in this, it was very generous of Yunglu, who certainly owed no gratitude to the Emperor for the

fact that he himself was alive at the present moment. But the accusation of intending Kwanghsu's murder cannot be considered proven against the Empress Dowager. There is a serious suspicion that she desired him out of the way of all opportunity of interference with her power. Would she have ventured to attain her desire by poisoning him, had there been no foreign representatives resident in Peking and had Yunglu been thirsting for revenge? Her enemies all say Yes, her admirers No.

Whether or not his life was in danger, the Emperor Kwanghsu was condemned to perpetual misery. He becomes from this time onward a most pathetic figure. The enthusiastic young dreamer in his palace-prison watched with his mournful eyes the reversal of almost every measure which he had considered necessary for the welfare of the mighty Empire handed down to him by his ancestors. "The great and arduous work of putting our country on a level with the best of the Western Powers," of which he had spoken in his first Reform edict, had all gone for nought. In place of his liberal edicts he saw issuing in his name a series of reactionary measures which he could only regard as ruinous to China. He witnessed the murder and harrying of those whom he had made his friends—again in his name. He found in the woman who had first given him the chance of being Kwanghsu the Reformer a stern gaoler, who locked him up in a tiny island, with a retinue of eunuchs now changed daily to prevent any growth of sympathy

between them and him, and who clearly never meant him to influence his country any more.

In his wretchedness the Emperor is said to have conceived the notion of a day of vengeance. On such few occasions as he had a chance of talking with anyone in whom he could find a confidant, he spoke of making others suffer as he suffered now. In particular he desired to have the power of dealing with Yuan Shi-kai. Against the Dowager he is not known to have said anything except that her death, provided that he did not fall a victim to the machinations of his enemies first, might be the signal of his reckoning with those who had betrayed him. Was it terror or exaggerated reverence for the "august ancestress" which prevented Kwanghsu from cherishing any hope of asserting himself again while she remained alive? We must be inclined to suspect a mixture of both feelings. Active courage was not one of the qualities of the unhappy Kwanghsu. He needed the inspiration of a bolder spirit to make him daring. And, iconoclast as he was in many ways, one idol which he could never throw down in his heart was that of Filial Piety, which China enjoined should be shown toward adoptive as much as toward natural parents.



## CHAPTER XIV

### BEFORE THE STORM

**W**HILE Kwanghsu gazed with melancholy eyes across the waters at the capital of an Empire no longer his, she who had given him the Empire and taken it away was bestowing punishments and rewards with a free hand on those who had taken part in the events of June–September, 1898. We have seen how bitterly she persecuted the Reformers, and what scant mercy those of Kang Yu-wei's friends received who fell into her clutches. For those who had helped her to upset the machinations of Kang her favours were abundant. Yunglu was elevated to the Grand Council and made Comptroller General of the Board of War, which in conjunction with his previous command of the Peiyang Forces, gave him almost unlimited authority over China's Army and the modern portion of her Navy. Yuan Shi-kai was made a Vice-President of the Board of Works, and then Acting-Viceroy of Chihli in succession to Yunglu. Li Hung-chang, in compensation for the treatment which he had received from the Emperor, was given a special commission in connection with the conservancy of the Yellow River (which had been in flood in August), and was soon to have further honours.

Owing to the control which the Dowager had always insisted on maintaining over the high appointments during her retirement, she did not find it necessary to make many changes in the administration. The Emperor had carried out his reforms chiefly with the co-operation of junior officials. Tze-hi, returning to power, had a body of councillors, viceroys, and governors ready to do her behests. It only remained for her to mark out those in whom she preferred to put most confidence. Very naturally, Yunglu was one of these. Another was Kangyi, ex-governor of Kwangtung, a distant relative of the Imperial family. Foreigners have condemned him unsparingly as a bigoted reactionary, but the Empress Dowager apparently thought highly of his capacities, especially in the matter of finance,<sup>1</sup> and used him as a counterpoise to the excessive influence of her powerful nephew. In general her tendency now, whether conscious or unconscious, was to give undue favour to the Manchus as against the Chinese, in contravention of the understanding which had long held good that the two races should divide the high offices—except, of course, the highest of all—between them.

In her zeal against the Reformers the Empress Dowager had allied herself with men whose views were destined to put her in a very unfavourable light with all who wished well for China. The writer

<sup>1</sup> They gained him the nickname of "Lord High Extortioner" among foreigners.

of her obituary notice in the *Times* observes: "It has been said on Her Majesty's behalf that the *coup* was the outcome of a patriotic fear that the rapid pace of reform to which the monarch had set his seal would cause a great and lamentable reaction. But reactionary forces could not have been more in the ascendant than was the case in the period following the *coup* alleged to have been intended as a preventive." Yet at the very time when she was committing the administration of the Empire to the ultra-conservatives and forming for herself a special bodyguard of forty thousand troops, mostly Manchu—a step which did not fail to excite the comments of the foreign residents in China—she suddenly showed herself in a new and unexpectedly friendly attitude toward the very foreigners who had greeted her return to power as the end of all hopes of China's regeneration.

It is not correct to say, however, that Tze-hi took the initiative in arranging for a reception of the ladies from the Peking Legations. It appears that Prince Henry of Prussia, when about to pay his visit to the Imperial Palace in May, 1898, had laughingly asked Lady Macdonald what he could do there on her behalf. "Please tell Her Majesty that she ought to let us come to Court," said the British Minister's wife. "It shall be done," replied Prince Henry; and when introduced to the Empress Dowager next day he ventured to tell her that she would not only find it a pleasure to receive the foreign ladies, but also

further her country's interests by doing so. The Empress graciously said that she would be delighted to have them visit her.

Early in the following December, therefore, hearing that the ladies of the Legations were anxious to offer her their congratulations upon the recent attainment of her sixty-fourth birthday, she sent out an invitation for ten of them to come to the Palace on the 15th. The party, headed by Lady Macdonald, set out in chairs, with a retinue of bearers and an escort, for the gates of the Forbidden City. Here they were met by the Tsungli Yamen and a number of Imperial princes. Leaving their private chairs and their escorts, they were carried in Imperial sedans to the Marble Bridge, whence the miniature electric railway built by the Emperor's orders conveyed them to the audience hall. At this point they found Prince Ching, surrounded by princesses and Court ladies, waiting for them. Tea was served, after which they were ushered into the throne-room. To their surprise, not only the Empress Dowager herself was present, but also the Emperor. After a general introduction, Lady Macdonald read a congratulatory address in English, the Empress Dowager expressing her thanks through Prince Ching in Chinese. Next each foreign visitor was presented in turn, first to the Emperor, who shook each by the hand, and then to the Dowager, who held out both her hands in welcome and slipped on a finger of each lady a heavy gold ring set with a large pearl. The party then

backed out of the Imperial presence, bowing as they went.

But the affair was not over yet. A luncheon was laid in a room adjoining the reception-hall, of which the visitors partook in the company of Prince Ching, his wife, and five other princesses. Tea followed in yet another room, after which all were led back to that in which they had lunched. The Empress Dowager was waiting for them, seated in a chair upholstered in Imperial yellow. She talked freely and amiably to them all. Mrs. Conger, wife of the United States Minister to Peking,<sup>1</sup> thus described her: "She was bright and happy, and her face glowed with goodwill. There was no trace of cruelty to be seen. In simple expressions she welcomed us, and her actions were full of freedom and warmth. Her Majesty arose and wished us well. She extended both hands to each lady, then, touching herself, said with much enthusiastic earnestness, 'One family—all one family.'"

Another interlude followed for a theatrical performance, at which the Empress Dowager was not present. She received the visitors again after the show, however, and questioned them as to how they had enjoyed themselves, regretting that she could provide them

<sup>1</sup> From her account (*Letters from China*, pp. 39-42), and from that of a Peking correspondent (evidently one of the ladies present) writing to the *Hongkong Daily Press* in December, 1898, the above description is mainly taken. The *Hongkong Daily Press* correspondent says of the Empress Dowager: "Her manner is affectionate amiability personified."

with nothing like what they were accustomed to at home. Another drinking of tea was the signal for departure. The Empress "stepped forward," says Mrs. Conger, "and tipped each cup of tea to her own lips and took a sip, then lifted the cup, on the other side, to our lips and said again, 'One family—all one family.'" A further gift to each visitor and a ceremonious leave-taking concluded the day, the ladies departing "full of admiration for Her Majesty and hopes for China."<sup>1</sup>

A truly extraordinary piece of acting on the part of Her Majesty this must appear to anyone who looks upon her as foreign-hating and narrowly conservative at heart. But such a view is a hasty deduction from her conduct in the period 1899-1901, when the Empress cast herself at the feet of the Boxer leaders, awaiting their promised miracles, and ignores the rest of her life. No doubt it is necessary to discount a little the very glowing estimates of her character which some of her visitors, especially three American ladies, Mrs. Conger, Miss Carl, and Mrs. Headland,<sup>2</sup> have published to the world. What they were inclined to attribute to superabundance of amiability, we may more safely put down chiefly to wonderful tact. Nevertheless Mrs. Conger and her two countrywomen are certainly nearer the truth than

<sup>1</sup> Rev. A. H. Smith, *China in Convulsion*, p. 28. Mr. Smith has no approval to bestow on "this touching interview," as he derisively calls it.

<sup>2</sup> In her contributions to her husband's book.

those writers who have held Tze-hi up to hatred as a cynical and hypocritical anti-foreigner, lying in order to lull her visitors into a false sense of security and so make them her easier prey. Of all imaginary portraits of the Empress Dowager of China, this is surely the least deserving of acceptance.

It was natural that the very gracious welcome accorded to the Legation ladies should arouse hopes that, after all, the reaction against the Reform programme planned by the Emperor in conjunction with Kang Yu-wei did not mean a long set-back to the Empire's progress and a new era of bad relations between China and the foreigners. These hopes, it should be mentioned, were not shared by the majority of European merchants and journalists resident in the coast-ports. They had put their confidence in the Emperor—if in any one at all in China—and looked on the Empress Dowager with most unfriendly eyes, denouncing any attempts which she made in the direction of liberal government as “paper reforms,” and drawing insistent attention to the presence of notorious reactionaries among her chosen administrators. And while they could point the finger of scorn at Yunglu (unduly condemned by foreigners, it is true), a towering political figure at Peking and, in addition, in almost full control of all the effective forces, military and naval, in North China; Li Ping-heng, degraded on Germany's demand from the governorship of Shantung, now commander-in-chief of the army in the Yangtse region; Kangyi, now

made Inspector of Fortifications throughout the Empire; Yu-hien, an arrogant, ignorant, and foreign-hating Manchu, promoted from the post of Tartar General at Nanking to the governorship of Shantung; Yulu, another anti-foreign Manchu, made Grand Councillor in 1898 — while they could point at such examples of her choice of instruments, ignoring the favour bestowed by her at the same time on men like Yuan Shi-kai, Chang Chih-tung, Liu Kun-yi, and such progressive Manchus as Tuan-fang (who has since visited Europe as a member of the Constitutional Mission a few years ago) and Kwei-chun, it was easy for them to make out a strong case against her. Like many other sovereigns, Tze-hi had to suffer in general estimation for some of the company which she kept.

Unhappily, too, anti-foreign outrages continued to occur. In the midst of his Reform Programme in July, 1898, the Emperor had issued an edict calling on the high provincial authorities to be stricter in their enforcement of the regard for missionaries and their converts which past treaties had enjoined. The fall of the Emperor had been the signal for fresh disturbances, as was to be expected. As early as September 13th there was an attack on some missions in the neighbourhood of Chungking. At the beginning of November a China Inland Missionary, the Rev. W. S. Fleming, was murdered in Kweichow province. In January a French priest, Father Victorin, was very brutally tortured and slain in Hupeh



and his remains were publicly exhibited at Ichang. In the same month Szechuan provided one of its periodical risings against foreigners. Punishment overtook some of the guilty parties eventually, but in the circumstances it was scarcely a happy step on the part of the Legations to dismiss their guards, brought up to Peking in October, in the spring of 1899. To say the least, this measure showed a want of appreciation of the influence which the reactionaries at the capital had over the provinces.

Soon after the opening of 1899 the aged Li Hung-chang was summoned back to Peking and given an audience by his mistress. It was noted that he was treated with extreme consideration, and that after he had performed the proper kowtow he was given the privilege of a stool to sit upon in the Imperial presence, an extraordinary favour. Whether there was any peculiar significance in the recall of Li Hung-chang from his Yellow River work was not known. But certainly a change was soon manifest in China's foreign policy. There became visible a firmness of purpose which ought to have been welcomed by the friends of China. Kwanghsu's last year of power had witnessed a lamentable spoliation of the Empire by the Western Powers. The Empress Dowager on her resumption of rule found them all pressing hard for fresh concessions and marking out for themselves provinces as their "spheres of influence." Russia, Germany, France, and Great Britain were by no means content with what they had

already got, France indeed threatening a naval demonstration if her demands both at Shanghai and in Szechuan were not granted. Portugal wanted her territory at Macao extended, Belgium asked for a concession at Hankow, Japan was believed to have designs on Fuhkien, and Spain was thought to be seeking for the opportunity of putting in a claim. But it was Italy who for the moment gave the most trouble. In the early months of 1899 she presented a request for a "lease" of Sanmoon Bay, in Chekiang province, south of Shanghai, on similar terms to the leases of Kiaochau, Port Arthur, etc. So forcibly did her representative state his case that at the end of March the common talk in Peking was of war with Italy. For the Chinese Government had developed a backbone. The Empress Dowager sent out a secret edict to all the viceroys and high officials of the maritime provinces, commanding them to resist by force any attempt at an armed landing by foreigners. The Tsungli Yamen showed no disposition to listen to the Italian demands. Had Italy desired war, or been in a position to wage it against China, she could have had it. She contented herself, however, with pressing her claim diplomatically. But, although at the end of November the position was still acute, China did not yield an inch, and at last the matter dropped.

During this war-scare one of the Empress's cherished schemes was for an offensive and defensive alliance between China and Japan, who had shown a

friendly disposition when she returned to her former enemy the remains of the old Peiyang or Northern fleet, captured in 1894-5. A mission, indeed, was actually sent to Japan, whose object was believed to be the conclusion of such an alliance ; but for some reason, perhaps because its members were not men of much ability, nothing came of it. China was thrown upon her own resources if she was to resist the plot for her dismemberment, of which Europeans were now talking with the utmost freedom.

In estimating the folly of the Empress Dowager in throwing herself completely into the hands of the " patriots " who caused the great outbreak of 1900, it is only fair to point out that she seems to have first ascertained that there was no hope of China finding any protector from without to save her from the encroachments of the greedy Western nations, that she must rely wholly on her own resources if she was not to be parcelled out into " spheres of influence " or entirely " broken up." Now the Reformers, with all their enthusiasm for the ideas of the West, had entirely failed to check the aggressions of the people whose civilization they wished China to admire. Li Hung-chang could suggest nothing better than relying on Russia, most Asiatic of the European nations, as a protector against the rest ; but Russia's price was tremendously high, and her help only threatened the Empire with annexation by one Power in the place of several.

To whom could Tze-hi turn ? There came for-

ward in her hour of need men ready to promise everything—the protection of Heaven, the active co-operation of the spirits in a Holy War, the sweeping away of the intruders into the sea whence they came, the restoration of the old glories of the Celestial Empire. She was an intensely superstitious as well as a fiercely patriotic woman. She believed the gigantic promises and trusted herself to the “Boxers” and their heavenly allies. She “mounted the tiger,” heedless of the national proverb that it is hard to get off when you are riding upon that animal.

Yet in July, 1899, she was decreeing the re-organization of the finances of the Empire and the abolition of the corrupt system of “squeezes” in the provinces, and was commonly reported to be studying Reform literature !

In the task of correcting provincial corruption she employed Kangyi, although he had asked her rather to give him the Viceroyalty of the Liang Kwang. She appointed him Special Commissioner of the Imperial Revenues, and was justified by the fact that he raised enormous sums of money for the Exchequer, gaining him his English nickname of “Lord High Extortioner.” This furnished his mistress with a very useful abundance of funds when the quarrel with the outer Powers broke out, and she was accused (perhaps with some reason) of having this in her mind when she decided to send him to the provinces.

In the summer of 1899 rumour was very busy

with the intrigues at Court. The Emperor was still believed to be ill and in danger of a sudden death. It was said that the Empress Dowager, too, was in fear of poison, and that she had added to her favourite Yunglu's duties that of superintendence of her kitchen. Yunglu was reported to be on very bad terms with Prince Ching, whose position as Commander-in-Chief of the Peking Field Forces was the only serious check upon his predominance in all military matters in the North of China. At the end of August Peking gossip made the rivals on the point of open strife, Ching having a strong backing among the Imperial princes, jealous at the position of Yunglu, who was only one of them by his relationship to the Dowager. If an actual fight did not break out, at least the struggle between the partisans of the two great men was very bitter, and the Censors belonging to either party were busy with memorials denouncing their leader's enemy. "So frequent have their memorials been," one of the Chinese papers published in the coast-ports<sup>1</sup> amusingly states, "that they have actually bored the Empress Dowager, who recently showed her displeasure by commanding the Grand Council to reprimand Prince Ching's head Censor. Little time was given, however, to the friends of Yunglu to rejoice at this proof of the Empress Dowager's leaning toward her nephew's party, for not long after, at an audience of Yunglu before the Empress Dowager in the Grand

<sup>1</sup> The *Universal Gazette*, September, 1899.

Council Chamber, she pointedly asked him who was Yu Cheng-ko. Knowing that his aunt was aware of the antecedents of this Censor, Yunglu boldly confessed that two years ago when the Reformer Kang Yu-wei went up to Peking from Canton for the Doctor's degree at the Triennial Examinations, Yu Cheng-ko had charge of the ward in which Kang was writing his essays, and that it was he who passed the Reformer's papers and strongly recommended the bestowal of the Doctor's or *chinshih* degree on the candidate. When Yunglu had explained this, the Empress Dowager simply smiled at her nephew, and although she said nothing everyone in the Chamber knew perfectly well that she meant Yunglu to feel that since he was the chief instrument in destroying Kang's party there was no love lost between them and their destroyer, and that it struck her as odd that he should keep at his side one of Kang's friends. . . . Although both parties have received a rebuff people seem to think that Yunglu is really more in favour than his rival."

In September it was reported that a conspiracy had been discovered among the Manchu Bannermen to make a clean sweep of the Dowager, Yunglu, Prince Ching, and all those at present in power, and to replace them by others who thought they ought to have had a share in the spoils of office. The Dowager, it was said, was much alarmed, and went nowhere without an escort of fifty eunuchs, armed with Mauser rifles, and thirty picked eunuch swords-

men. It was remarked about this time that Kwanghsu, who was seen in public on September 22nd on his way to the Temple of Heaven to pray for rain, was receiving greater freedom and was encouraged by his aunt to speak at the meetings of the Grand Council, although since his deposition he had been regularly a silent witness of proceedings there. But still, at an audience to the Russian Minister toward the end of October, it was the Empress Dowager who sat upon the principal throne, the Emperor being on a lower seat beneath her. There was obviously no intention of restoring him to his former position. Indeed, the apparent encouragement given to him in the autumn of 1899 was only the prelude to a cruel blow in the opening month of the following year. The real designs of Tze-hi with regard to her nephew are difficult to fathom. At times she seemed to relent in her severity toward him, only to deal with him more rigorously, we might almost say vindictively, immediately afterwards. Nothing but caprice appears to explain her conduct satisfactorily. It was as though now and again she recalled that he was the same little child, her sister's son, whom she had carried out of his nursery into the snow to make of him an Emperor, and then suddenly recollected that he was the patron and friend of Kang Yu-wei, whose triumph might have meant her death, and would certainly have involved her political extinction.

In estimating the motives of the men and women of China there is too great a tendency to assume

that they *must* be different from those of other men and women in similar positions. Yet in no way can the maxim of Confucius, "Under the Four Heavens all men are brothers," more truly be applied than in the study of motives in mankind, East and West. It is unnecessary to seek for the "topseyturveydom" which Europeans delight to find in China, or to talk of "the inscrutable East." The East is no more inscrutable than the West. But all human nature becomes inscrutable if one begins by rejecting the simple explanations on account of their simplicity.



## CHAPTER XV

### THE EMPRESS AND THE BOXERS

FOR the useful term "Boxers," applied to the great society which made the attempt in 1900 to free China from the obnoxious presence of foreigners, we have to thank the missionary writers. The Chinese name of this society was *I Ho Kwan*,<sup>1</sup> literally "The Patriotic Harmony Fists." The name was not new, a Boxer organization having existed in Southern Shantung early in the nineteenth century, while some historians have professed to be able to trace it two thousand years back. The identity of name, however, is not a proof of the affiliation of the ancient and modern Boxers, the latter in their tenets most resembling the "White Lily" sect, most famous of all the innumerable secret societies in which the annals of China abound. The White Lilies, to whom was largely due the fall of the Mongol dynasty and the establishment of the Mings, were militant Buddhists,<sup>2</sup> and so were the Boxers, though the word "Buddhist" must be understood, of course, purely in its Chinese sense, there being exceedingly

<sup>1</sup> Or *I Ho Chuan* in Pekingese.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Parker sees in the Boxer movement "a protest by the spirit of militant Buddhism against the spirit of militant Christianity" (*China*, p. 291).

little left of the teachings of the Buddha. The Boxers' pantheon included a very miscellaneous assemblage of gods and goddesses, with a strengthening of canonized heroes from the ancient history of China. The souls of these dead worthies were claimed by the Boxers as their active allies, their banners being inscribed with the words: "Spirits and Fists give Mutual Aid." A great feature of the movement was the liability of the adherents to cataleptic trances and fits, naturally enough attributed by some of the missionaries to demoniacal possession. Magic incantations were freely used, by which it was believed that the devotee could be rendered proof against wounds. Nothing seemed able to shake the faith in this, not even when Yuan Shi-kai as Governor of Shantung invited a number of Boxer chiefs to dinner and, after discussing with them their invulnerability, lined them up in his courtyard and had them shot.

Another striking note of the movement was the way in which it attracted women and children. Women of the "Red Lantern" society were prominent in Boxer demonstrations; small boys formed themselves into companies and drilled in imitation of their seniors, while bands of children of both sexes marched at the head of processions and even rushed into battle later.

The effect of the Boxer claims, supported by a few spurious miracles, upon the ignorant peasantry was lamentable. As in the case of the Taipings, *et nunc*

panic spread far and wide, and it was considered hopeless to withstand those who could control supernatural agencies. Even in Peking, when the movement got so far, the wildest credulity prevailed. A Boxer was believed to have set fire to the Chartered Bank building by pointing his finger at it !

In Shantung province, which was one of the hotbeds of trouble, the beginning of the agitation was due to a body called the *Ta Tao Hui*, or "Big Sword Society," which may have been a direct descendant of the "White Lilies," but gradually amalgamated with the Boxers. According to an early proclamation by Yuan Shi-kai in Shantung, the Big Swords came into existence in that province in the middle of 1896. They are said to have been at first sworn foes not only of foreigners and converts, but also of the Manchu dynasty, though this is difficult to reconcile with the story of the society's foundation by the infamous Yu-hien, a Manchu himself and soon afterwards selected for favour by the Empress Dowager. The Big Swords, at any rate, when they became prominent, had adopted the Boxer motto : "Support the Tsing Dynasty, Exterminate the Foreigners !"

Although the mischief started before, it was the overthrow of the Reformers which gave the impetus to Boxerism. Great distress in the Yellow River region, consequent on the floods, encouraged anarchy ; and when the villagers organized themselves, as it was quite legal for them to do, into armed bands to cope with the outlaws who were wandering about,

it soon became evident that their activities would not cease there. Attacks on missionaries and converts increased in number, and anti-foreign placards appeared everywhere. As became evident later, from the identity of wording in so many of these placards, the Boxer organization was very complete. All the old charges against Christians, of child-murder, etc., were raked up, coupled with protests against the violation of *Feng-shui* by railroads and telegraphs. Here is a typical Boxer proclamation on the latter subject :—

“The iron roads and fire-carriages disturb the Earth Dragon and destroy the good influences of the soil. The red liquid which drips from the iron serpent [the rust from the telegraph-wires] is nothing less than the blood of the outraged spirits of the air. Ills beyond remedy overtake us when these crimson drops fall near us.”

Disturbances were particularly frequent in Shantung, Anhui, and Kiangsu, and it was found that, while the indemnities demanded by foreigners were paid, the officials were clearly interested in shielding the guilty parties, even if they could not be shown to be implicated themselves. In Shantung, where Yu-hien was appointed Governor in the spring of 1899, matters seemed to have come to a crisis when the Germans felt compelled to despatch a punitive expedition inland from Kiochau in revenge for an attack on two of their nationals in June. But Yu-hien found the indemnity, and in response to a telegram

from the Viceroy of Chihli, instigated by the threats of foreigners, collected some troops to deal with the secret society men. As, however, after the first collision between the two parties, resulting in the death of ninety-eight Boxers or Big Swords, he dismissed the commander of his troops, it was plain with whom his sympathies lay.

Matters grew steadily worse, and at the beginning of December, 1899, the United States Minister at Peking received a telegram from American missionaries in Shantung stating that the rising covered "twenty counties." A protest to the Tsungli Yamen produced orders to Yu-hien to give his protection to foreigners. But the regulars refused to attack the rioters, and the official placards were torn down as soon as they were posted up. The Legations made a very strong protest, in reply to which Yu-hien was removed from his Governorship on December 26th and ordered to Peking. On his arrival the Empress Dowager received him in audience, appointed him Governor of Shansi, and presented him with a scroll bearing the character for "Happiness" written with her own hand.

Yuan Shi-kai succeeded Yu-hien in Shantung, and before he had properly taken over the reins was confronted with the brutal murder of the English missionary, the Rev. S. M. Brooks, at Taianfu. He sought out the murderers with commendable vigour, and otherwise comported himself admirably in his dealings with the Boxers, within the limits of his

power. But he could do little, for the provincials were convinced that Peking was behind the Boxer movement.

Their conviction was correct. The process of conversion of the Empress Dowager had gone on apace, aided largely no doubt by the ever-growing menaces of the Western Powers. On November 21st, 1899, when Italy's pressure for the lease of Sanmoon Bay is known to have been very strong, we find her addressing a secret decree to the Viceroys and high provincial officials, civil and military, in which she picturesquely states that the foreigners "cast upon us looks of tiger-like greed, hustling each other in their endeavours to be the first to seize upon our innermost territories. They think that China, having neither money nor troops, would never venture to go to war with them." The decree goes on to denounce the evil habit among the high officials of believing that every case of international dispute must eventually be "amicably arranged," wherefore they make no preparations to resist hostile aggression. The command is now given that when such officials find that nothing short of war will settle matters they must do their duty. "Never should the word Peace fall from the mouths of our high officials, nor should they even allow it to take its place for a moment within their breasts. . . . Let no one think of making peace, but let each strive to preserve his ancestral home and graves from destruction and spoliation at the ruthless hands of the invader."

Following the Empress's decree came a recommendation from the Tsungli Yamen to the Viceroy and Governors that she and the Emperor expected them to resist forcible aggression without telegraphing to Peking for orders.

It cannot be said that there was anything unjustifiable about these instructions from the Empress Dowager to her representatives in the provinces. She did not accuse the foreign Powers of anything of which they were not guilty, judged by the utterances of their own writers. But unfortunately, while recognizing that matters had come to a desperate pass, she could see no allies more worthy of being called in to the aid of herself and her representatives than a horde of ignorant fanatics. She had in her campaign of vengeance against Kang Yu-wei made bitter enemies of Young China, and in spite of the report of her study of Reform literature in July, 1899, she was seen at the end of the year sending Li Hung-chang to the Viceroyalty of the Liang Kwang with an admonition to do all he could to capture Kang and other fugitive Reformers ; bidding Liu Kun-yi on his appointment to the Kiangnan to wipe out the Reform Party ; and as late as March 9th, 1900, issuing an edict for the arrest of about fifty people in Peking whose only known offence was sympathy with Reform.

Failing any hope of reconciling Young China, she might still have put her confidence in the Moderates. This, however, was not a very attractive policy,

seeing that there was not one strong Moderate party to whom she could appeal. Yunglu might in a sense be considered a Moderate, the old Li Hung-chang was one, Yuan Shi-kai, Chang Chih-tung, and Liu Kun-yi had even more right to be called so. But Li could only advise her still to rely on Russia, while the three last-named were wary men, adepts at trimming their sails to the breeze, and not given to making large promises where they did not feel sure of success. Moreover, their acceptability to foreigners may scarcely have seemed a recommendation when the problem was how to check foreign aggression.

The only people who were willing to guarantee to the Empress Dowager success against the foreigners were the patrons of the Boxers. Owing to the extent to which the Manchus, including numbers of the Imperial princes, took it up, the Boxer movement has sometimes been called Manchu. This it certainly was not, in its origin, although it is true that the Manchus exploited it to the fullest possible extent. Perhaps they were not altogether unwise in doing so, as if it had remained a purely Chinese movement it might well have included among its patriotic objects the setting up of a Chinese dynasty on the throne. The Imperial clansmen naturally preferred to ride the storm rather than risk falling before it.

The man who is supposed to have had whatever credit attaches to the introduction of the Boxers to the



notice of the Empress Dowager is Prince Tuan,<sup>1</sup> son of Hienfung's brother, Yitsung, who was adopted from the family of the Emperor Taokwang into that of his childless brother, the Prince of Tun. Tuan himself was adopted as heir to Prince Juimin, son of a brother of Kiaking. Both his father and himself having been removed by adoption from senior into junior branches, the result was to keep them out of touch with foreigners and foreign affairs—in the case of Tuan, until the Empress Dowager made him a member of the Tsungli Yamen, the Foreign Office, of which he became President in June, 1900!—and make them bigoted Conservatives. Tuan, as far as could be ascertained during his period of power, was an ill-educated, violent, and ambitious man. When he first attracted the Empress's attention is unknown. In the autumn of 1899 he was permitted to enlist a force of ten thousand Manchu soldiers, who were known as the *Hushêng*, the "Tiger Genii" or "Glorified Tigers." His influence grew very rapidly, and when the Empress began to turn more and more toward the reactionaries Tuan was the one who struck her as most useful for her ends. In his turn he put forward the claim of that patriotic association the *I Ho Kwan*, whose tenets he admired and whose supernatural claims he was fully prepared to believe,

<sup>1</sup> Tuan, if he had any pretensions to be a scholar, ought to have remembered the saying of Mencius: "The crime of him who aids the wickedness of his ruler is small; but the crime of him who anticipates and excites that wickedness is great."

having allowed them to give exhibitions of their miracles in the courtyard of his palace in Peking.

Tuan's praise of the Boxers was supported by other Imperial princes, like Prince Chuang, and by officials such as Kang-yi and Yu-hien, who made their way into the favour of Tze-hi. A very remarkable interview between the Empress and a certain Censor, Wang by name, is reported by the Peking native correspondent of the *North China Daily News*<sup>1</sup>:—

“The subject of the Boxers having come up, the Empress Dowager said to the Censor: ‘You are a native of this province and so ought to know. What do you think of the Boxers in Chihli; do you think that when the time comes for action they will really join the troops in fighting the Foreign Devils?’ ‘I am certain of it, Your Majesty. Moreover, the tenets taught by the society are: Protect to the death the Heavenly Dynasty, and death to the Devils.’ For your servant's own part, so deeply do I believe in the destiny of the society to crush the devils, that young and old of your servant's family are now practising the incantations of the Boxers, every one of us having joined the Society to Protect the Heavenly Dynasty and drive the devils into the sea. Had I the power given me, I would willingly lead the Boxers in the van of the avenging army, and before that time do all I can to assist in organizing and arming them.’ The Empress nodded her head in approval, and after

<sup>1</sup> May 10th, 1900. The date of the interview is not given, but it was before the Empress Dowager left for Iho Park this spring.

ruminating in her mind, cried : ‘Aye! It is a grand society! But I am afraid that, having no experienced men at their head just now, these Boxers will act rashly and get the Government into trouble with these foreign devils, before everything is ready.’ Then, after another pause : ‘That’s it. These Boxers must have some responsible men in Chihli and Shantung to guide their conduct.’ The next morning a decree was issued naming this Censor, Wang, Governor of Peking.”

Convinced apparently by the many representations made to her about the merits of *I Ho Kwan*, the Empress took a decided step in support of the movement. The Legations had been pressing for a decree against seditious societies. On January 11th, 1900, she produced one, in which she alluded to the demand for the suppression of such, and went on to draw a distinction between the different kinds of societies. “When peaceful and law-abiding people,” she said, “practise themselves in mechanical arts for the preservation of themselves and their families, or when they combine in village fraternities for mutual protection, this is in accordance with the public-spirited principle enjoined by Mencius of ‘keeping mutual watch and giving mutual aid.’ Some local authorities, when a case arises, disregard this distinction, and listening to false and idle rumours against all alike as being seditious associations, mete out indiscriminate slaughter. The result of this failure to distinguish between good and evil is that

men's minds are filled with fear and doubt. This proves not that the people are lawless, but that the administration is bad."

This decree entirely failed to please the foreign residents in China, who looked upon it as "the Boxers' bulwark and charter."<sup>1</sup> The representatives of the Great Powers, with the notable exception of Russia, decided to call for a decree specifically suppressing both the Boxer and the Big Sword associations. But an event occurred first which promised ill for their success. On January 23rd a command appeared in the *Peking Gazette* for the assembly in the Palace next day of the leading Imperial princes, the members of the Grand Secretariat, and other high officials. Such an order usually signified the occurrence of a national crisis, such as the sudden death of the Emperor or the appointment of a new heir to the throne.

The public was not kept long in suspense as to the meaning of the move. Next day the following edict appeared in the Emperor's name :—

"While yet in Our infancy, We were by the grace of the Emperor Tungchih chosen to receive from Him the heavy responsibilities of head of the whole Empire, and when His Majesty died We sought day and night to be deserving of such kindness by Our energy and faithfulness in Our duties. We were also indebted to the Empress Dowager, who taught and cherished Us assiduously, and to

<sup>1</sup> Rev. A. H. Smith, *China in Convulsion*, p. 189.

Her We owe Our safety to the present day. Now be it known also that, when We were selected to the throne, it was agreed that if ever We should have a son, that son should be proclaimed heir to the throne. But ever since last year We have been constantly ill, and it was for this reason that in the eighth moon of that year the Empress Dowager graciously acceded to Our urgent prayers and took over the reins of government in order to instruct Us in Our duties. A year has now passed, and still We find Ourselves an invalid ; but ever keeping in Our mind that We do not belong to the direct line of succession, and that for the sake of the safety of the Empire and Our ancestors a legal heir should be chosen for the throne, We again prayed the Empress Dowager to choose carefully from among the members of the Imperial clan such an one, and this She has done in the person of Puchun, son of Tsaiyi, Prince Tuan. We hereby proclaim that Puchun, son of Tsaiyi, Prince Tuan, be made heir to the Emperor Tungchih."

After signing this—almost an act of abdication—the unhappy Kwanghsu, according to the gossip of the Palace, fainted away, whereon the Dowager, with every appearance of solicitude, hastened to arrange a pillow beneath his head ! But she did not fail to publish the decree.

The plot was revealed. Prince Tuan guaranteed the Empress help in her administration and protection against foreign aggressors, and she in return

appointed his nine-year-old son next Emperor of China. A stalwart defender of her conduct, Professor Headland argues that she did not select Puchun as the new Emperor of her free will, but because he was the son and grandson of ultra-Conservatives in whose hands she had placed herself. She had voluntarily placed herself in their hands, nevertheless.

A storm of protest arose among the Chinese, especially among those resident abroad, for whom it was safer to protest. The head of the Telegraph Department, King Lien-shan, after wiring to the Tsungli Yamen from Shanghai a memorial to which twelve thousand officials and others had put their names, wisely fled from Chinese jurisdiction. The Empress Dowager, however, strong in the support of Tuan's ten thousand "Tiger Genii," and promised (it was said) the benevolent regard of Russia, disregarded all protests and took the heir-apparent into her private quarters in the Western Palace to train. His education does not seem to have been a success. He appears to have been an ill-mannered little boy, and we shall see that she ultimately cut him off from the succession.

There was, of course, no objection to the selection of an heir to the throne. This had, indeed, been provided for in 1875, in the event of Kwanghsu not being blessed with a son,<sup>1</sup> and it was said that it was now certain this could never happen. His childlessness had long been looked upon by the superstitious

<sup>1</sup> See p. 107.

as a sign of the wrath of Heaven against China. It was also in accordance with the arrangement of 1875 that he who came after Kwanghsu should be accounted heir to Tungchih in order to correct the dynastic irregularity of Kwanghsu's own succession to the throne. But the rumours of the Emperor's illness had increased again, and the nomination of his successor provoked the thought that preparations were being made for his sudden death. It is no reason for wonder, therefore, that stories of his spitting blood and wasting away were eagerly caught up by the populace of Peking, and partly believed by the foreigners resident there and in the coast-ports. In the middle of February, however, he gave audience to the foreign ministers, the Empress Dowager being present behind a screen. It was noticed that he looked really ill. Early in March the members of the Imperial College of Physicians were called to the Forbidden City to prescribe for him, and there was a talk of removing him to Jehol, where the Empress Dowager was having repaired the Palace, unoccupied ever since her husband's death. By the end of the month the reports had grown to such an extent that they made out that the Court officials had already given orders for mourning clothes in expectation of the Emperor's immediate decease.

All these stories came to nothing. But it must be admitted that the Empress Dowager encouraged them when she commenced a new persecution, already mentioned above, of some fifty people

suspected of being sympathizers with Kang Yu-wei's views. If she was still actuated by feelings of revenge toward those whom her nephew had befriended, she was not likely to have forgiven him. It was believed that the chorus of protests against the nomination of an heir checked her to this extent, that she abandoned her idea of deposing Kwanghsu at once. Content with what she had achieved, she started off with him to the Summer Palace on April 7th, in spite of the presentation of several memorials begging Their Majesties not to leave Peking while the country generally was so disturbed.

Next month, as a variation on the rumours of the slow poisoning of Kwanghsu, we hear of an attempt to make away with the young Puchun. An eunuch brought him a cup of tea while he was at his studies, saying that the Empress had sent it. Puchun, polite on this occasion at least, hastened to thank her before he drank his tea, whereon it was discovered that she knew nothing about it. The cup was found to be poisoned, an enquiry followed, and two eunuchs were beheaded. We are not told why the eunuchs wished to remove the heir-apparent.

Meanwhile the demand of the Legations for the suppression of the two anti-foreign societies had been met, so the Tsungli Yamen informed Sir Claude Macdonald on March 1st, by the issue of "Confidential Instructions" to the Viceroy of Chihli and Governor of Shantung to prohibit Boxerism. Next day, the German Minister pointing out that this did



not include the Big Swords, the Yamen said that there had been an amalgamation of the societies; and they refused to countenance such a violation of precedent as the publication of an edict, which the foreign ministers required, on the top of Confidential Instructions. The ministers, with difficulty in some cases, procured from their Governments warships to join in a demonstration off Taku. They failed, however, to procure the decree, and at last waived the point. Instead, an edict appeared on April 13th in the Emperor's name, avoiding all reference to the Boxers, but otherwise satisfactory in tone. A warning was issued against good people allowing themselves to associate with bad in raising trouble against native Christians, and a command given to viceroys and governors to issue plain proclamations, when occasion required, calling on everyone to attend to his own affairs and live in harmony with his neighbours.

Further, Yulu, Viceroy of Chihli, published in the *Peking Gazette* a memorial describing the activity of the Imperial troops against the Boxers in his province, which was quite true. But in Chihli, as in Shantung, the sympathy of the province was with the Boxers, and the minor officials were at no pains to conceal the fact.

These two pronouncements look suspiciously like an attempt to throw dust in the eyes of the Legations. As we find Sir Claude Macdonald writing home that "I think I am justified in expressing an opinion that

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the Central Government is at last beginning to give evidence of a genuine desire to suppress this anti-Christian organization," some of the Legation people were evidently willing to be blinded. Fortunately not everyone was in a similar state of mind, the United States Minister in particular being kept well supplied with the subject-matter for protests. The Tsungli Yamen, however, now well packed with Boxer sympathizers, while listening to the protests with courtesy, threw doubts upon the correctness of the information. Additional proofs only led to vague promises of enquiry. So matters dragged on until at last, with great difficulty, the Legations were stirred to make a joint demand for the serious suppression of the Boxers.

This was brought about by a letter from Monseigneur Favier, Roman Catholic Vicar Apostolic of Peking. No foreigner in the Chinese capital was better supplied with information, or knew the whole neighbourhood better than Monseigneur Favier, who had lived there forty years. He wrote to the French Minister on May 19th, calling his attention to the growing gravity of the situation, as evidenced by a massacre of native converts which had just taken place in the prefecture of Paotingfu, Chihli ; warning him that behind the religious persecution lay the design to wipe out all foreigners, and that as soon as the Boxers reached Peking they would be joined by their accomplices within the walls ; and stating that the whole city, with the exception of the foreign

residents, knew the date when the attack was to be made. M. Pichon was so impressed by this letter that he called on the Diplomatic Body to meet and consider it. Opportunely the news came at this very moment of the murder of a native preacher within forty miles of Peking. The diplomatists met and resolved to ask the Tsungli Yamen to prove they were in earnest. This demand produced two edicts, but not before the Boxers had sacked and burnt the buildings, etc., at Fengtai, the junction of the Lu-Han and Peking-Tientsin Railways, and caused the foreigners in the neighbourhood to fly for their lives.

Next day, May 29th, a wordy decree complained that "large numbers of disbanded soldiers and secret society men" had entered the Boxer organization to use it as a cloak for their own designs. "They have even gone so far as to kill some military officials, burn telegraph-poles, pull up the lines and destroy railways. What difference is there between such conduct and actual rebellion?" Yunglu and the local authorities must accordingly combine to capture the leaders of these ruffians. "People's hearts are nowadays most excitable and liable to be inflamed to a dangerous degree, which will surely lead to an attempt to trouble the Christians. We command the local authorities to protect the latter from harm and prevent a catastrophe."

On the 30th another decree ordered a number of high officials in Chihli to hunt out and capture "the

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real disturbers of the peace," while those who merely followed in the wake of the rioters were to be warned and "dispersed on pain of condign punishment." In neither of these decrees were the Boxers denounced.

On the same day that the second of them was published, the Tsungli Yamen refused permission for Legation guards to enter Peking, on the ground that the Court, which was still at the Summer Palace, must first be consulted. The Ministers, however, warned by the Fengtai affair, were firm, and on the 31st three hundred and sixty-one British, French, Russian, American, Japanese, and Italian marines entered the Tartar City, orders to resist their entry being only withdrawn at the moment of their arrival. Three days later eighty-five Germans and Austrians followed them. All the Legation people who had been holiday-making on the Western Hills had already been called back to Peking, and every other foreigner who could be reached was hurried in too to be placed under the protection of the small garrison.

The agitation had now reached the very gates of Peking. Within, the natives who did not belong to the organization were in a terrible state of panic and ready to believe the Boxers capable of anything they claimed to be able to do. The troops, especially Tung Fu-hsiang's Kansu braves, were burning with a desire to join the society men in an attack on the Legations. All that was awaited was a signal from the Empress Dowager.

## CHAPTER XVI

### WAR AGAINST THE WORLD

**S**OME time, we do not know how long, before the Empress Dowager finally made up her mind to stake all upon the ability of the Boxers to save China from the grasp of the foreigner, she was induced by Prince Tuan to witness a Boxer performance. A party of fanatics were accordingly introduced into her presence. They went through their incantations, and no doubt produced some of their miracles for her benefit. At any rate, she seems to have been convinced of their supernatural power, and to have dismissed at last all doubts as to the advisability of throwing down the gauntlet to her country's oppressors. Then, the Boxers having reached Peking, she resolved to return thither herself.

One of her last acts before she quitted the Iho Park was the publication of a decree (in the Emperor's name, as usual) referring to her new allies in terms calculated to give little satisfaction to the foreign residents in Peking. Yet this decree was very skilfully worded. It began by admitting that "the Western religion" had been for many years disseminated in China without disturbing the peace of the Empire. Of late years, however, it went on to

say, owing to the great increase in the number of the churches, evil characters had crept into them, and under pretence of being Christians had harried and bullied the country folk, "although perhaps such a condition of affairs cannot have been viewed with favour by the missionaries themselves." The history of the Boxer movement was then traced, and it was shown how numbers of discontented and lawless people had joined the patriotic movement to serve their own ends. The severest punishment was threatened to those who had been ringleaders in stirring up trouble ; but at the same time a warning was issued that if the Army were found guilty of excesses against the country folk the responsible officers would be summarily executed. To Viceroy Yulu was entrusted the duty of investigating whether such excesses were actually being committed.

Clearly such a decree was not calculated to frighten the Boxers as much as their enemies. Yet when the Legations heard that the Court was on its way back to Peking, the hope was expressed that this move signified the approach of a better state of things. The cutting of the telegraphic connection along the railway line to Tientsin on June 4th had occasioned anxiety, as intercourse with the outer world was now precarious. But it was trusted that the home-coming of the rulers of China would be followed by a restoration of communications.

On the evening of the 9th the Empress Dowager, accompanied by the Emperor and the whole Court,

returned to the capital, a great display of military forces being made in the streets and perfect order being kept. But that very day a crowd of Boxers went to the race-course three miles West of Peking, burnt down the grand stand, and threw a native Christian into the flames ; while a native informant brought news to the British Legation that the Empress Dowager had been heard to express openly her desire to drive the foreigners out of the city. Tung Fu-hsiang, it was added, had all in readiness to attack the Legation quarter.

There was plainly no time to be lost now. Sir Claude Macdonald wired to Tientsin by the postal telegraph for Admiral Seymour to march on Peking, the other Powers' representatives similarly instructing their chief naval officers. On the 10th the message came back that Seymour had started with nine hundred men to restore the railway, with the consent of Viceroy Yulu. From this moment all telegraphic communication with the coast was entirely cut off, the postal line being destroyed that day. Except for the line to Kalgan, which survived to June 17th, Peking was isolated from the world, and the Western residents, their numbers enormously swelled by the presence of their guards and the crowds of refugees from the surrounding country, were in a position already closely resembling a siege. On the 11th the Chancellor of the Japanese Legation, Mr. Sugiyama, was murdered while attempting to visit the railway station outside the walls. On

the 12th the German Minister, Baron von Ketteler, captured a man in full Boxer uniform in Legation Street ; and that night the Boxers began to enter the Tartar City in great force. Fires now started all over Peking, mission-buildings, foreign property, and the houses of native Christians suffering alike, while the converts themselves were massacred right and left.

It could not be expected that we should be able to follow the proceedings of China's rulers at this time with any exactitude. From various accounts drawn originally from native sources, however, it is possible to arrive at a rough idea of what was happening in the Councils of State. The first step was the dismissal from the Tsungli Yamen of Prince Ching and the Chinese President of the Board of Rites, on the ground that they showed too much timidity. Prince Ching was succeeded at the head of the Yamen by Prince Tuan, in spite of the latter's protests of unwillingness to take the post. At the same time three violent reactionaries were added to the body, which was now so constituted as to be ready to vote for a definite alliance with the Boxers.

On June 16th, the day on which the Western admirals were delivering their ultimatum to the officer in command of the Taku Forts, the Empress Dowager called first a meeting of clansmen and then a joint council of Manchus and Chinese. Addressing the council, she spoke of the long-continued oppression of China by the foreigners and the necessity of now fighting to the last to preserve the



Empire. The Manchus had unanimously called for war to the knife, and she approved of their advice. She waited for suggestions.

An enlightened Chinese, Hsu Ching-cheng, former Minister to St. Petersburg, at once declared his opinion that it was impossible to fight the whole world. Kangyi answered that this war would differ from all China's previous foreign wars, since now they had the invulnerable Boxers on their side. On someone breaking in to point out that numbers of them had been slain already, the Empress silenced him with the remark that he must be mistaken. The head of the Tseng family appealed for the removal of the battle-ground from Peking, respect for the sanctity of the Legations, and an abandonment of the intention of fighting all the Powers, some of whom were friendly to China. He was followed by Natung, a Manchu, wing-commander under Prince Tuan of the "Tiger Genii," and a member of the Tsungli Yamen. This able man, bitterly but unjustly attacked by foreigners during the events of 1900-1, spoke in favour of peace, or at least war near the coast. Shouts of traitor from his fellow Manchus greeted him, and the Empress "glared at him." Kangyi then proposed that, since they were in favour of peace, Natung and Hsu Ching-cheng should be sent to stop Admiral Seymour's advance.

The Emperor, who had listened in his usual silence so far, now begged his aunt not to ruin China by declaring war against the whole world simultane-

ously. But he was disregarded, and the meeting broke up in disorder, the reactionary Manchus being loud in their accusations of treachery against every one who opposed them.<sup>1</sup> All that was decided was to send Natung and Hsu to see if they could dissuade Admiral Seymour from advancing. They set out on their mission, but the Boxers prevented them from going any further than Fengtai by threats of instant death. Hsu was executed in Peking next month on a charge of using foreign affairs to promote his own ends! Natung survived to serve his country later, and we find him in 1906 reckoned as one of the Moderate party in Peking politics.

Another meeting—possibly that of the Manchus before the general council on June 16th—was described by one of the Manchu princesses to Mrs. Headland.<sup>2</sup> The Empress Dowager sat on the throne, the Emperor and Prince Tuan, as father of the heir-apparent, standing at her side, and all the Imperial and hereditary princes being present. She began by telling how China was being despoiled by the foreigners, how the patriot-braves, with their magic powers and invulnerability to bullets, offered to drive them out. Should she accept the offer? Prince Tuan proclaimed his belief in the Boxers. The hereditary princes, as ignorant as Tuan himself and still less acquainted with foreigners, were perhaps

<sup>1</sup> This account is abridged from the story of "a refugee" in the *North China Daily News* of August 8th, 1910.

<sup>2</sup> *Court Life in China*, pp. 161 ff.

afraid to speak against him, even if they wished. Only Prince Su ("a man of strong character, widely versed in foreign affairs, and of independent thought," says Mrs. Headland) derided the possibility of the Boxers vanquishing foreign armies, and denounced the superstitious belief in the efficacy of their incantations. But the Empress told him that she had herself seen exhibitions of their powers in the Palace, whereon he held his peace. An appeal being made to Prince Ching, he said that he considered the undertaking most risky, but that if Her Majesty decided to throw in her lot with the Boxers he would do all he could to further her wishes. (This was the man who had been for so many years at the head of the Foreign Office and was popular with foreigners, though by no means liked by Kwanghsu!) "The Emperor," said the princess, "was not asked for an expression of his opinion on this occasion, but when he saw that the Boxer leaders had won the day he burst into tears and left the room."

After further councils, at which Kwanghsu vainly gave warning that China's failure must mean her dismemberment by the Powers, it was decided to send a circular note to the Legations in the name of "the Princes and Ministers." This note, dated 4 p.m. on June 19th, stated that since the Viceroy of Chihli had announced the foreign admirals' demand for the surrender of the Taku Forts, this showed the Powers' intention of breaking off friendly relations with China. In view of the rising of "the Boxer ban-

"ditti" in Peking, China would find it a difficult matter to afford complete protection to the Legations. The diplomatists and their families were therefore begged to leave Peking within twenty-four hours, "in order to avoid danger." An escort of troops had been provided to guard them on their way, it was stated, and the local authorities had been notified to pass them safely on to Tientsin.

It was said that when this note was sent out the "Princes and Ministers" were perfectly aware not only that the admirals had presented an ultimatum at Taku on the 16th, but also that the forts had fallen on the 17th; but that, for motives of their own, they decided to keep this information to themselves. Perhaps it is hardly natural to expect them to have hastened to announce their country's "loss of face." By suppressing what they knew, however, and leaving the foreigners ignorant of the outbreak of war, they certainly encouraged the customary charge of Chinese treachery.

On receiving the note, the heads of the Legations, though expressing in their reply their willingness to leave Peking, declared that it was impossible to accept the twenty-four hours' notice, and asked for an interview with Princes Tuan and Ching next morning. No answer coming back, on the morning of the 20th Baron von Ketteler, a very courageous man, but (although long acquainted with the country) offensive in his manner to the Chinese, volunteered to go to the Tsungli Yamen. Taking only his German inter-

preter and his Chinese chair-men and outriders, he set out. In Hatamen Street, the Eastern boundary of the Legation quarter, he met his fate. Near the spot where now stands the memorial arch erected in remembrance of the tragedy, a Chinese officer in command of some men walked up to the Baron's chair and shot him through the head, killing him instantly. The interpreter escaped with a shot in the leg, and with difficulty got back to the Legation, preceded by one of the outriders, the rest of the native escort having dispersed in haste.

The imprisoned foreigners had received their warning that it would be criminal folly to attempt to reach Tientsin, whatever were the precise intentions of the Chinese Government. A message received from the Tsungli Yamen in the afternoon, announcing that "two Germans" had fired on the crowd and that one of them had been killed by the return-fire, and asking for their names, was calculated to inspire the worst suspicions of these intentions.<sup>1</sup> But all doubt as to what was about to happen was removed when precisely at 4 p.m., twenty-four hours after the letter of the previous day, rifle-fire began to pour into the exposed Austrian Legation, followed by a general fusillade all round the quarter.

<sup>1</sup> It is a remarkable fact, which has never yet been satisfactorily explained, that the London evening and New York papers of June 16th, published a Laffan's Agency telegram from Tientsin to the effect that Baron von Ketteler had been murdered—more than three days before the event! Was the murder a pre-arranged act of revenge for the seizure of Kiaochau three years previously?

So began the famous siege, which lasted until the early morning of August 14th, with a partial armistice in the middle of July. It is not within the scope of this book to describe the blockade of the Peking Legations. We shall only take note of the official attitude of China during this period.

On the day after the German Minister's murder and the beginning of the assault on the Legations, an edict was published in Kwanghsu's name. After mentioning the foreign demand for the surrender of the Taku Forts, the Emperor was made to say: "We have now reigned nearly thirty years and have treated the people as Our children, they honouring Us in return as their God; and during Our reign We have been the recipients of the gracious favour of the Empress Dowager. Furthermore, Our ancestors have come to Our aid, and the Gods have answered to Our call, and never has there been so universal a manifestation of loyalty and patriotism. With tears We have announced the war in the ancestral shrines." The edict concluded with an assurance that, while the foreigners relied on craft, China put her trust in the justice of Heaven.

Various proclamations eulogizing the Boxers and providing for their maintenance, etc., followed in rapid succession. The most remarkable was that of July 2nd, exhorting all members of the "Boxer Militia" to loyalty, calling on all converts to repent of their errors if they wished to "escape from the net," and ordering that, since hostilities had broken

out between China and the foreign Powers, missionaries of every nationality should be driven back to their own lands. "But," it was added, "it is important that measures be taken to secure their protection on their journey," and the high provincial authorities must accordingly take the necessary steps.<sup>1</sup>

The Boxers were thus now expressly recognized as patriotic "militia," excellent servants of the Government in its war against the world; and the presence alike of foreign missionaries and of native converts in the country was declared intolerable. Yet all the while China refused to withdraw her Ministers from the capitals of Europe and the United States, and allowed the great Viceroys of the Centre and the South of the Empire to maintain an attitude of friendly neutrality with regard to foreigners.

It must be noted that even at the period when the Boxer leaders exercised their fullest control in the counsels of the Empire, in June and early July, the wording of the decrees never became violent. There was some restraining influence at work. We shall not go wrong, probably, in attributing this to Yunglu, whose power with his aunt was always used to oppose the extremists. An indication of the Empress's shaken confidence in the reactionaries is given in the

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. A. H. Smith calls this an edict "under the ægis of which the slaughter of all foreigners, missionaries not more than others, and the extermination of all native Christians who would not recant became a duty" (*China in Convulsion*, p. 378). Surely this is a distortion of the words of the edict as given by Mr. Smith himself, involving an unwarrantable amount of reading between the lines.

appointment, on July 9th, of Li Hung-chang as Viceroy once more of Chihli. Few Chinese officials could be found less likely to sympathize with the Boxers than Li, whose openly expressed opinion was that the shortest and best way to deal with them was to behead their leaders.

Had the Empress then ceased to enjoy her "tiger ride"? A change began to come over the spirit of the proclamations put into Kwanghsu's mouth, and the siege of the Legations commenced to slacken. On July 18th an armistice was concluded (though only partially observed), and on the same day an edict, omitting all reference to the Boxers, regretted the murders of Mr. Sugiyama and Baron von Ketteler, insisted on the necessity of protecting foreigners, and ordered investigation into cases of loss of life or property by them. The question of the retirement of the Legation people and other foreigners to Tientsin was now again brought up, and Yunglu was bidden to select officers and trustworthy troops to give them safe conduct on their way.

The tiger, however, was out of hand. The Government could not control Tung Fu-hsiang's men or the Boxer hordes. After a recrudescence of firing on July 25th, followed by a present of fruit from the Tsungli Yamen to the Legations three days after, a very violent assault was begun in the early hours of August 6th. The Tsungli Yamen sent in a message of regret—that the foreigners had opened fire on the Chinese troops! But the siege



was nearly at an end. On the 8th the Yamen announced that Li Hung-chang had been appointed plenipotentiary to negotiate for peace. Four days later they asked for an interview with the foreign Ministers to discuss terms. That same night firing was exceptionally heavy all round the Legation quarter. On August 14th, the fifty-sixth day of the siege, the relief columns entered the Tartar City.

No account has ever been made public of the Empress Dowager's personal conduct between the councils of war in mid-June and her abandonment of Peking in August. Only from the wavering tones of the edicts and the inconsistent manner in which the siege was carried on can we deduce anything concerning her feelings. The early explosion of the Boxer claims to personal invulnerability and to aid from the spirits seems to have shattered her hopes of driving out the foreigners, in spite of the undoubted bravery with which the Chinese met the advance of the Seymour relief expedition and contested the possession of Tientsin. Her appeal to her old friend Li Hung-chang was, as has been said, a sign of her failing faith in the Boxers. She was returning to sanity—and coming to despair. In late July and the first half of August there was no real Government in Peking. The Imperial edicts ignored the past and made light of the situation, the Tsungli Yamen talked of peace, and the soldiery carried on a species of warfare which would have been comic had it not been attended by a large number of

casualties. And at last the Allies were at the gates of Peking. Some severe opposition was offered to the Japanese at the Northern end of the East Wall of the Tartar City, but otherwise the resistance was trivial. The Imperial troops mostly fled precipitately from their posts, leaving arms, uniforms, banners, food and teacups behind them. Was it intended that they should fight, or was an assault on the North expected and the entry from the East therefore a surprise?

The Chinese Court had good precedent for the policy to be adopted when the foreign troops forced their way to the capital. Hiengfung had fled with his whole Court in 1860, leaving a younger brother behind to negotiate. So now Tze-hi fled with her Imperial nephew, all the leading princes and princesses, and the high officials. Rumours had been current in the city in July that this would happen if the Allies came to Peking, and it was known that carts were kept in readiness. Either on the night of August 14th or the morning of the 15th, at any rate some hours after the invaders were in the Tartar City, the fugitives left the Palace, made their way to the North-western gate, and started off in their carts for the mountain barrier fifty miles South-west of Peking, a terrified crowd of Imperial princes and princesses, officials of all ranks, banner-men, eunuchs, Court ladies, and servants of both sexes. Prince Ching accompanied them as far as the mountains, and was then left behind to do as Prince Kung had done forty years earlier.

According to M. Pierre Loti,<sup>1</sup> the Empress Dowager spent her last night before the flight in a palace on a small island in the Southern part of the Lotus Lakes. This palace he describes as "a little marvel of grace" in its setting of cedar trees, raised on a white marble terrace, with roofs of green tiles enriched by gilding. Though it was looted by the Allied troops before him, M. Loti was able to secure for himself a pair of little red silk shoes, embroidered with butterflies and flowers, with heels twelve inches high, which had belonged to the Empress herself. He also visited in October her bedroom in the Forbidden City, and in the oratory attached to it saw an old wooden image of the Buddha, with its gilt all tarnished, but with a necklace of fine pearls about it, before which there still lay a withered offering of flowers. This an eunuch told him had been laid on the altar by Her Majesty at the last moment before her flight.

In her haste the Empress left jewels, treasures, and rich dresses all behind. She was consumed with panic, apprehended the worst fate at the hands of the provincials if they recognized her, and disguised herself in the costume of a woman of the people; while, further to conceal her identity, she cut the long finger-nails of which she was so proud all her life. She had, indeed, exchanged ease and luxury for their extreme opposites. The discomforts of the journey can hardly be imagined by those who have not

<sup>1</sup> *Les Derniers Jours de Pékin.*

travelled in the springless Peking carts. Provisions, too, ran very short, and the Emperor dutifully stinted himself of food in order that his adoptive mother might have more. So she herself narrated to one of her foreign lady visitors after her return to Peking. She would often tell a vivid tale of her flight to such visitors, quite appreciating the humorous side of it when all was over, though confessing that she did not do so at the time.

Nor was the flight devoid of casualties. Kwanghsu's chief concubine seems to have been left behind in the Forbidden City, whether intentionally or not, and committed suicide by throwing herself into a well, the Empress Dowager later decreeing to her posthumous honours for "protecting her virtue." At Paotingfu, the first halting-place, ninety miles across country from Peking, Chungyi, father of the former Empress Ahluta, put himself to death, followed by all his family. And Kangyi fell ill and died between Taiyuanfu and Sianfu.

The former of these two towns, about three hundred miles distant from Peking, was reached before the end of September, by which time Prince Ching had timidly made his way back to the capital and, carefully guarded by the Japanese, was waiting for Li Hung-chang to join him from Tientsin, where he was a similar honorary prisoner in the hands of the Russians. Li was allowed to come to Peking on October 10th, and negotiations at last began. On his way North Li had received from the Empress

Dowager a disclaimer of all connection with the attack on the Legations, and he commenced operations by producing a private decree which he said Their Majesties had sent to him, proposing some mild punishment for the Boxer leaders. This he endeavoured to persuade the United States Minister to recommend for his colleagues' acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

Such an attitude of mind on the part of the Government of China was clearly not to be tolerated by the Powers, and they therefore, without breaking off negotiations, continued their military activity. Punitive expeditions were sent out unceasingly from Peking over the neighbouring countryside until the end of 1900. It cannot be said that punishment was uncalled for, and severe punishment, too, for the many outrages which had been committed during the Boxer rising. Unhappily for their reputation, the Allies did not stop short at just punishment, but went on in such a way that their conduct could only be called a gross scandal to Western civilization. The Germans had been bidden by their Kaiser to act "like Huns," and they did so. But they were no worse than many of their fellow-soldiers, and better than some. We cannot go into details here, and will content ourselves with one quotation from the Rev. A. H. Smith, who was far from being the most severe critic of the Allies at this period. He says:—

"It would be a gross misrepresentation to affirm that all the commanders or all the soldiers of any

<sup>1</sup> See Mrs. Conger's *Letters from China*, p. 187.

section of the allied armies have been lawless and violent, for in that case the results would have been such as took place along the banks of the Amur River, where helpless, inoffensive villagers by the thousand were slaughtered and their bodies thrown into the broad stream until it was positively choked with them. But armies, like individuals, will be judged not by the best, but by the worst which they have done; and in this case the worst must be admitted to have been very bad indeed. There have been times when it seemed as if the foreign troops had come to Northern China for the express purpose of committing within the shortest time as many violations as possible of the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth Commandments. The combined result has been such a state of chaos in many districts as is at once incredible and indescribable."<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not it was prompted by the news which reached it of what was happening around Peking, the Chinese Court had not stayed at Tai-yuanfu. Crossing over the frontiers of Shansi into Shensi, it at last took rest in the very early Chinese capital Sianfu, in modern times merely the head city of the province, and chiefly known to Westerners hitherto as the place where stood the celebrated Nestorian Christian inscription on stone. Here, seven hundred miles from Peking, Tze-hi at last felt herself safe from pursuit; and here she and the whole Court stayed until the following October.

<sup>1</sup> *China in Convulsion*, p. 715.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE RETURN TO PEKING

**W**HILE the dreadful work of punishment went on in North China, accompanied by promiscuous murder, rape, and loot, the negotiations over the terms of peace gradually drew to a close. On December 24th, 1900, the representatives of the Powers handed to Li Hung-chang and Prince Ching the Joint Note embodying the details of the arrangement which had been reached. Six days later Li and Ching formally accepted the terms on behalf of China, while on the 16th of the following month they returned the Note with their signatures attached.

The treaty in its final form provided for apologies from China to Germany and Japan for the murders of Baron von Ketteler and Mr. Sugiyama, that to Germany to be conveyed by the Emperor's brother Prince Chun, that to Japan by Natung, now Vice-President of the Board of Revenue ; for the punishment of the surviving Boxer leaders<sup>1</sup>; for the

<sup>1</sup> Among these Prince Tuan was condemned to death, but allowed to be "exiled to Turkestan" and there imprisoned for life ; Prince Chuang ordered to commit suicide ; Yuhien sentenced to execution ; Tung Fu-hsiang suspended from office until a fitting penalty should be devised ; and Kangyi and Li Ping-heng posthumously degraded. Prince Chuang committed suicide on February 21st, 1901, while

erection of various expiatory monuments; for the payment of an indemnity of 450,000,000 Taels (£67,500,000) within thirty-nine years; for the prohibition of the import of arms into China, the razing of the Taku Forts, and the continued occupation by the Powers of certain points between Peking and the sea; for the abolition of the Tsungli Yamen and the substitution in its place of a new office, the Wai Wu Pu (Ministry of Foreign Affairs), to take precedence over the six other Ministries of State; etc. etc.

One odd clause which the Powers insisted on inserting was for the suspension of official examinations for five years in all cities where foreigners had been maltreated. The measure was no doubt calculated to hurt the pride of the cities so punished. Yet there are two small incidents in Chinese history which afford a curious contrast to the action of the Western nations in 1901. About 1873, when Kwangtung province was being much disturbed by clan-fights, the Governor memorialized the throne that the best remedy would be the dissemination of copies of the Book of Poetry! Again, when the Shenkan provinces were emerging from rebellion in the Seventies, the Literary Chancellor recommended the resumption of the interrupted examinations in the Yuhien was executed next day. Tung Fu-hsiang ultimately escaped with a sentence of banishment and reappeared in Kansu in 1906, living in harmless obscurity at the age of 84; while Prince Tuan seems never to have gone further into exile than Manchuria, where he was heard of again toward the end of 1908.



two provinces, in which case he did not despair of the Book of Poetry having its duly mollifying effect on the people's manners! By the West, however, the Book of Poetry and examinations which required its study were evidently not looked upon with equal favour as an incentive to peaceful life.

It was not stipulated in the Treaty that the Emperor Kwanghsu should be restored to power, although many foreigners would have liked to see this provision inserted. The diplomatists, however, maintained what appeared to them the "correct" attitude of not interfering in a domestic affair of the Manchu reigning family.

Li Hung-chang's share in the conclusion of this Treaty was the old Viceroy's last great service to his country. It is true that in the interval between its signature and his death (at the age of seventy-nine) on November 7th, 1901, he was engaged in long and tortuous negotiations with Russia concerning the regularization of her occupation of Manchuria. He was once more freely denounced as a traitor to China for these dealings with Russia. But from a letter written by him to Yunghu thirty-eight days before his death, it appears that he was only attempting to make the best of an evil situation. Russia was in armed possession of Manchuria and resisted every attempt of the other Western Powers to make her withdraw. Li's idea was that to leave her there was bound to bring about one day a collision between her and Japan, in event of which China could throw in

her lot with the victors and was bound to benefit. This was, indeed, "the policy of the weak." But neither from his own countrymen nor from the majority of foreign residents, especially the British, in China did the astuteness of his diplomacy meet with approval at the time. As we know, Li's expectation of a Russo-Japanese collision was perfectly justified. Unhappily, it only led to a division of the spoils between the two nations, not to a restoration of China's authority in Manchuria.

Li Hung-chang had the satisfaction before his death of hearing that his Imperial mistress was on her way back to the capital which he had preserved for her ; for she started from Sianfu on October 6th. The departure must have been a striking spectacle, according to the accounts of native eye-witnesses. The lucky road and day and hour had been fixed by the astrologers, and it was by the North gate that the procession emerged on the morning of the 6th. A vanguard of modern-drilled troops led the way, followed by Imperial heralds and eunuchs and Manchu officers. Amid a throng of princes and high dignitaries on horseback—Prince Tuan and his son ; Yunglu, recently made Grand Secretary ; the head eunuch Li Lien-ying, etc.—a yellow sedan-chair was borne by eight red-clad bearers, in which sat Tze-hi herself, in a robe of Imperial yellow bordered with white fox-fur. In another similar chair came the Emperor, in a crimson mantle edged with arctic fox, followed by the chairs of the Empress Yehonala, the

concubines and other inmates of the Palace, the rest of the Court, and a train of baggage, the rear being brought up by a strong force of cavalry.

So slowly came back over the seven hundred miles to Peking those who had fled to Sianfu in such terror in the summer of 1900. When they got as far as Kaifengfu, capital of Honan, a long halt was made. It was said that Tze-hi was still extremely nervous and was most unwilling to approach Peking, although the Forbidden City (stripped, it is true, of some of its most valuable treasures) had been handed over to Chinese military possession on September 17th, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty. For some time Yunglu in vain pressed his Imperial aunt to continue her journey. At last, during the celebration of her sixty-seventh birthday, an attempt was made by members of a secret society, the Kolao Hui, to fire the temporary palace where she and the Court were residing at Kaifeng. This decided her, and in December the procession set out again North-eastward.

An example of the evil extent to which Tze-hi tolerated the influence of the head eunuch, Li Lien-ying, was seen on the journey between Sian and Kaifeng. While the travellers were still in Shensi province, many complaints were made of the inadequate arrangements for the comfort of the Empress Dowager and her companions. As soon as the Honan frontier was passed all was changed, and there were no more complaints on the score of com-

fort. The explanation was that the high authorities of Honan had taken the precaution of making a substantial present to Li Lien-ying which those of Shensi had refused to do. The head eunuch had provided that the difference between conditions in Shensi and Honan should be manifest.

Before leaving Kaifeng the Empress Dowager took a step which was welcomed by the friends of Kwanghsu, though wrongly, as a sign of the approach of better days for him. In a decree of November 30th she disinherited Puchun. It was said that the young prince was wanting in respect for the august lady who had chosen him as heir-apparent. But it is not known whether the fact that his father had nominally been sentenced to death by the Treaty with the Powers had not also something to do with his son's disinheritance. At any rate, Puchun was now disgraced, reduced to rank of a Duke, and ordered to travel several days in the rear of the Imperial procession when it recommenced its journey. His subsequent lot at Peking down to the death of the Dowager was a kind of honourable imprisonment.

At length, at the end of December, the Chihli frontier was reached, where it became possible to make use of the restored section of the Lu-Han railway line running to Paotingfu and Peking. Viceroy Yuan Shi-kai met the Court at Shengte and Prince Ching at Paoting, where a stop of three days was made. Owing to the astrologers finding that the proper hour for the re-entry in the capital was

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2 p.m. on the twenty-eighth day of the twelfth moon, January 7th, 1902, there was no reason to hurry. The Empress Dowager, however, was extremely nervous lest the lucky hour should go by, and was eager to leave Paoting by night. The preparation of the roads, an essential part of every Imperial journey in China, had not been completed, and she was forced to wait until 7 a.m. She appeared on the platform, however, before dawn, feverishly anticipating the starting of the train.

It was, indeed, a curious fate for the late patroness of the Boxers, haters of all things foreign, to be coming back to her capital by the aid of the "fire-carriages" which "disturbed the Earth Dragon and destroyed the good influences of the soil."<sup>1</sup> Both she and the Emperor, however, were said to have been enchanted by their first railway journey. But even more remarkable was the entry into Peking. For months beforehand the city had been making its preparations for welcoming the sovereigns with paint, plaster, scaffolding, and all manner of decorations. At the railway station where they were to disembark from the train tents of yellow satin had been put up, so that Their Majesties might at once begin to feel that they had reached their Imperial home. The vast gateways of the city having been considerably damaged by fire during the siege, had been patched up with temporary erections. The streets were cleared of would-be sightseers, who were

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 215.

compelled to take refuge either in the closed shops or behind screens of matting stretched at the mouths of the side-alleys, and were lined by modern-drilled Chinese troops, backed by Manchu soldiery and the city police, with whom stood the officials of Peking and the privileged gentry. Foreigners were assigned seats in front of three large shops set apart for the purpose, while many of them, especially ladies, lined the wall near the principal gate of the Tartar City.

At noon the procession left the station, having two hours in which to make its passage to the Forbidden City. "Prince Ching was the first conspicuous man to lead the way," says an eye-witness of the scene.<sup>1</sup> "Then followed soldiers on foot and on horseback, eunuchs and other attendants, likewise on horseback, the red carts of nobles and ordinary carts, yellow-covered sedan-chairs with the Emperor, the Empress Dowager, the Empress, the concubines of the Emperor, the concubines of the former Emperor Tungchih, and others, with yellow satin pillows, and a fine company of high officials and nobles with yellow jackets. Banners with beautiful decorative honours were here and there carried by gaily decked attendants. . . . As the yellow banners drew near, everyone knelt on the ground. Here and there a foreigner might have been seen standing with hat

<sup>1</sup> A Peking correspondent of the *North China Herald*, writing on January 7th. Another witness, writing in the *Peking and Tientsin Times* of January 11th, says that the procession was "of that tawdry, shoddy character that Chinese shows usually present to occidental eyes."

lifted, though the Ministers, at the request of the Foreign Office, had directed all foreigners to remain off the main street."

The Ministers themselves refrained from being present to witness the entry. But the Empress Dowager did not fail to notice the presence of other foreigners. Kwanghsu, who came first, in a chair carried by eight bearers in long coats of red and purple silk embroidered with the character signifying "Long Life," sat silent, melancholy, and apparently unconscious of all that went on about him. Not so his aunt. When she caught sight of a foreign face she drew back the curtains of her yellow sedan, borne in the same manner as the Emperor's, and graciously bowed. She smiled and nodded to the ladies on the wall, and even called out, shook her hands, or pointed a friendly finger to some whom she recognized personally. And so she swept on through the Chienmen entrance from the Chinese into the Tartar quarter, leaving behind her almost a feeling of goodwill.<sup>1</sup> It was clearly not to be her fault if the events of 1900 were not soon forgotten by the nations who banded themselves together in that year to punish China for the wrongs which they had suffered.

As for the Empress herself and those who had fled with her, it was doubtless a harder task for them to bury the past in a real oblivion, however they

<sup>1</sup> The *Times* obituary notice compares her conduct toward the foreign ladies on this occasion to that of "a real and misunderstood friend."

might conceal their feelings behind a mask. When, forty years earlier, the rulers of China came back from Jehol to Peking there was a vague sense of desecration after the entry into the capital of armed "barbarians." But now matters were a thousand times worse. Not merely had the outer sections of Peking been used as barracks and encampments and their architecture changed to suit the invaders' need, but the sanctity of the Imperial and Forbidden Cities had been grossly violated. The Six Palaces, the Imperial libraries, and the holiest temples had been robbed of their treasures. The Temple of Heaven had lost its nine ancestral tablets of the Manchu Emperors, the astronomical instruments presented to Kanghi by Louis XIV of France had been carried off by the German Kaiser's "Huns" to decorate Potsdam, and within the Palace walls were great gaps where once precious objects had stood or hung, while on the floors or in the gardens were the scattered fragments of porcelain, jade, marble, ivory, bronze, silken stuffs, etc., to show where the representatives of another civilization had manifested their contempt for the art of the Celestial Empire when not readily commutable into cash.

Times were indeed greatly changed at Peking. The return of the Court was marked by a speedy reception by the Emperor of six foreign Ministers newly accredited to China since August, 1900, and now waiting to present their credentials. There was no procrastinating discussion about the ceremonial



to be observed on this occasion. Chinese arrogance had been bitterly humiliated, and for the first time in the history of the Empire the foreign representatives entered the Forbidden City through its front gate on their way to the reception hall. Here they saw first the Emperor and then the Empress Dowager. Again, on January 28th, another reception took place, this time of the whole Diplomatic Body. The audience was remarkable for two things beside being held in the Palace. In the first place, the use of the Manchu language was entirely dispensed with. In the second, the Empress Dowager, for the first time in her life, openly occupied the throne in the presence of foreigners ; indeed, for the first time met them face to face on a State occasion. The Emperor sat on a chair covered with a sable robe, on a low platform in front of the throne, with the usual table before him. The foreign Ministers' address was directed to him, and it was he who, through the mouthpiece of Prince Ching, made the reply. But at presentation of each Minister in turn to the Emperor and the Empress Dowager, the former only uttered a few words of greeting, whereas the latter added an expression of regret for the events of 1900, and an assurance that they should not happen again. It seems, therefore, rather unkind of the writer of the *Times* obituary notice on Her Majesty to say merely that she "made some indistinct remarks which were supposed to express her sorrow for the troubles."

But Tze-hi was prepared to go further with her

apology. She issued an invitation to the Legation ladies and other prominent foreign ladies in Peking to visit her, with their children. She had already decided to do this, it appears, before she reached Peking, an edict having been published on January 2nd mentioning her intention of holding such a reception as well as that of the Ministers themselves.

The Legation ladies met and anxiously debated whether the invitation should be accepted, some vigorously protesting against the idea of making courtesies to one who ought to be begging them to forgive her. At length it was decided to go, to the fierce indignation of the majority of the coast-port foreigners in China, who at this time were unable to find any epithets bad enough for the Dowager. At the appointed hour the visitors entered the Forbidden City and were conducted to the throne-room, where the Empress Dowager was awaiting them with the Emperor, Empress, Imperial princesses, and many high officials of the Court. As they came into the presence, Mrs. Headland narrates that they involuntarily gave the three courtesies desired. "We could not but feel that this stately woman who sat upon the throne was every inch an Empress."<sup>1</sup> Tze-hi gave a smile of recognition to Mrs. Conger, the only one of the visitors whom she had met before; and, after listening to an address from her, as doyenne of the

<sup>1</sup> *Court Life in China*, p. 71. Mrs. Conger's account will be found in *Letters from China*, pp. 317-22.

diplomatic ladies, offering congratulations on the return to Peking and hoping for friendlier relations between China and the outer world, she handed a reply for the kneeling Prince Ching to read. Then as each lady or child was presented to her in turn she grasped their hands. All were presented also to the Emperor. At an informal reception in another room Tze-hi asked for Mrs. Conger, took her hands in both of her own, and in a voice shaken with emotion, said: "I regret and grieve over the late troubles. It was a grave mistake, and China will hereafter be a friend to foreigners. No such affair will again happen. China will protect the foreigner, and we hope to be friends in the future."

After this apology,<sup>1</sup> which she repeated several times in similar words later, Tze-hi showed astonishing affability. She distributed rings, bracelets, and other gifts to adults and children alike, accompanied them to a luncheon, drank wine with some of them, lifted a tea-cup to Mrs. Conger's lips, and personally placed fragments of food in the mouths of the Minister's wives and on the plates of other guests. Finally she bade them farewell, saying: "I hope that

<sup>1</sup> The *Times* obituary notice states that "she asked them too if she did not suffer in common with them from the wickedness of the Boxers, who acted in direct opposition to her orders." Mrs. Headland reports her saying, on another occasion, to a lady who had been through the siege: "I deeply regret all that occurred during those troublous times. The Boxers for a time overpowered the Government, and even brought their guns in and placed them on the walls of the Palace" (*Court Life in China*, p. 98).

we shall meet oftener and become friends by knowing one another better." It was noticed with astonishment that Her Majesty had picked up some English phrases, which a Peking correspondent gives as follows: "*Hao tu yiu; Ha-p'i niu yerh; Tè rin-kò t'i!*"<sup>1</sup>

Speaking of her impressions of the Empress Dowager on this day, Mrs. Conger says: "Her manner was thoughtful, serious in every way, and ever mindful of the comfort and pleasure of her guests. Her eyes are bright, keen, and watchful that nothing may escape her attention. Her face does not show marks of cruelty or severity; her voice is soft, low, and attractive; her touch is gentle and kind."

Foreigners who were not brought under the spell of Tze-hi like the United States Minister's wife not unnaturally failed to understand how Europeans or Americans could be on friendly terms with a woman who, less than two years back, had at least given her consent to a scheme involving possibly a massacre of the whole foreign population of Peking; and, as has already been said, fierce indignation was expressed at the sight of the intimacy springing up between the Empress Dowager and the Legations.<sup>2</sup> But, neverthe-

<sup>1</sup> A Peking correspondent, writing to the *North China Herald* on February 28th.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Archibald Little puts the case mildly when she writes (*Round about my Peking Garden*, p. 57): "The American Minister's wife speaks of 'my friend the Empress Dowager' or 'Her Majesty.' But at each fresh foreign visit to the Old Buddha, as the Chinese call the Empress Dowager, Chinese Christian women weep and protest bitterly, thinking of their murdered relations, whom they esteem martyrs."

less, the intimacy continued to grow, and receptions of foreign ladies in the Palace became frequent. Tze-hi was a most amiable hostess on all occasions, and for those to whom she took a liking she could not do enough. She showered presents upon them—from specimens of her own breed of lap-dog, scrolls written by her own hand, fans painted by herself, jewelry and jade ornaments, to gifts of flowers, fruit, cakes, and tea on Chinese festival-days.

Beside loading with marks of her favour those among her foreign visitors of whom she made friends, the Empress Dowager freely discussed questions of the day with them, and none more freely than that of education in China. This she not only expressed her firm intention of liberalizing, but actually set about remodelling on Western lines before she had been back in the Forbidden City more than a few weeks.

Tze-hi, in fact, declared herself a Reformer !

The foreign critics who are most unfavourably disposed toward the late Empress Dowager of China accuse her of having, after the return to Peking, made a great pretence of being a sincere advocate of reforms, restrained by her country's inability to move otherwise than slowly, while as a matter of fact she was nothing of the kind. They do not fail to admire the ingenious opportunism of her conduct, and her extreme cleverness in using for the furtherance of her own ends both the presence of foreigners in her capital on a more privileged footing than before and

the native demand for better methods in the administration of the Empire which the Boxer catastrophe had awakened. Putting her down, however, as at heart steadfastly anti-foreign and anti-reform, they can only see in her attitude from the beginning of the year 1902 an exhibition of skilful posing.

In justice to these critics—or to some of the best known among them at least—it must be admitted that they did not at the time hesitate to denounce the apparent fervour for new things as a sham, especially in 1906, the year when there was so much rejoicing over China's progress. As it will be necessary to return to the subject later when we endeavour to examine somewhat more closely into the Dowager Empress's character, we will say no more here than that if Tze-hi was merely posing during the period 1902–8, as these hostile critics allege, she had evidently studied her pose marvellously well. But first her actual programme of reforms must be dealt with in another chapter.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### LAST YEARS: THE EMPRESS AS REFORMER

**T**ZE-HI lost no time after her return from exile in the provinces before setting to work to show that the lessons of her period of adversity had not been disregarded. The criticism which would most naturally occur to an observer of the events of 1900 was that China suffered so heavily as she did in consequence of her ignorance, that what she most lacked was practical wisdom. The Court had not been back in Peking a month when an edict appeared, directly inspired by the Empress Dowager, which provided for the selection of boys from the Manchu Banner families to be sent abroad at the expense of the Government for travel and study. They were instructed to "avail themselves of the opportunity of familiarizing themselves with foreign methods and enlarging their experience, so that they may assist the Court's design of cultivating talent for the services of the Administration." Never yet had Manchus been encouraged to go abroad, except in one of those edicts of Kwanghsu which the Empress herself had cancelled four years earlier.

Another revolutionary decree (also previously introduced by Kwanghsu and cancelled by the

Empress) was that abolishing the Literary Essay and substituting essays on modern subjects in the public examinations. This was promulgated in the August after the return to Peking. Other measures followed, reconstructing the whole examination system which had been China's pride for so many centuries—over twenty, if the tradition ascribing its foundation to the Han dynasty be correct—and setting up schools of Western learning all over the country. At Peking itself there were established annual competitions for degrees among students returned from foreign countries, the first being held in 1906. Only fourteen presented themselves on this occasion ; but next year forty-two came forward, of whom twenty-three had been educated in Japan, sixteen in the United States, two in England, and one in Germany, and as a result eight received the *chinshib* (commonly translated “Doctor's”) degree. The candidates were allowed to submit their papers in the language of the country in which they had been educated, and as examples of the questions asked them we may take the following :—

(1) Define Philosophy and distinguish it from Science and Ethics. Explain the following systems of philosophical thought : Dualism, Theism, Idealism, Materialism, Pantheism, Agnosticism. How would you classify, according to the Western method, the following Chinese philosophers : Chuang Tzu, Chan Tsai, Chu Tzu, Su Tzu, and Wang Yang-ming ?

(2) Explain fully Mill's four methods of induction,



and mention some of the scientific discoveries and inventions which may be directly traced to them.

One of the essay-subjects set before these students was : "Is it expedient for China to adopt a system of compulsory education ?"

That the Empress Dowager, with her reputation for Chinese scholarship of the strictest sort, should be responsible in any degree for an examination which demanded from her subjects the knowledge necessary to answer such questions was surely remarkable. And not only the male portion of the population was affected by the new order of things. In Peking several of the great Manchu ladies, headed by the Imperial Princess herself, opened girls' schools in their own palaces, so that by 1907 there were no less than seventeen such institutions in the capital. Tze-hi herself made a grant of one hundred thousand Taels (in round figures, £15,000) from her privy purse for the establishment of a normal school for girls, only stipulating that two of the subjects taught should be sericulture and embroidery.

Even more astonishing than her educational changes were those which the Empress proposed to make in the government of her country. Chief of all, she determined to give China a Constitution, and appointed a special commission under the presidency of the "Duke" Tsaitse and of Tuan-fang,<sup>1</sup> that en-

<sup>1</sup> Last year dismissed from the viceroyalty of Chihli, after being severely censured for causing photographs to be taken of the Dowager Empress's funeral and for other offences against the spirits of the dead!

lightened Manchu official who had in 1900 so ably backed up the efforts of the Chinese Viceroys, Yuan Shi-kai, Chang Chih-tung, Liu Kun-yi, and Li Hung-chang to keep on good terms with the Western Powers while the Boxer horde was dominating Peking. The duty of this commission was to travel round the world and examine the Constitutions of the great civilized nations with a view to selecting the best model for China to imitate. The commissioners on their return in June, 1906, concluded a vast report, extending to one hundred and twenty volumes, by recommending Japan's Constitution as most suitable for China. In September an edict was put forth promising the issue of such a Constitution at an early date. Much scepticism, of course, was expressed by European critics as to the likelihood of a fulfilment of this promise; and it is true that, although there were other proclamations issued during her lifetime in which she spoke of the coming of the Constitution, it was not until after she had died and the new reign had opened that an edict was published announcing the Imperial intention of carrying out a definite programme, beginning with the inauguration of an Imperial Assembly in the October of the present year and leading up to the final establishment of Constitutional government in China in 1917.

If, however, the country had to wait for this greatest of all governmental changes, Tze-hi showed no hesitation in pressing forward reforms in the administrative system, which, if less in magnitude,

were yet of no small importance. Indeed, she refused to tolerate the advice of those who pleaded for a moderation of the pace. In the year of the Constitutional Commission's report, another Imperial commission had been appointed to consider what improvements could be made in the organization and working of the great departments of the capital. These commissioners found their labours considerably increased by the opposition of many of the highly placed Manchu dignitaries. Prince Ching and his son Tsaichen, it is true, with one or two other princes of the blood, were in favour of drastic changes, and Prince Chun also lent them his support—somewhat timidly, it was said. But the opposition was keen, and when the report was ready four out of the six members of the Grand Council, including the powerful Manchu Tieh Liang, President first of the Board of Revenue and then of the Ministry of War, were anxious to suppress it. News of the situation came to the Dowager Empress's ears, whereon early in November she summoned the Councillors into her presence and at once demanded who among them were for the reforms recommended. Only Prince Ching and one Chinese colleague declared that they were, the other four remaining silent. Concerning the scene which followed we take leave to quote the report given in the *North-China Herald*<sup>1</sup>:—

“The Empress Dowager's eyes shone ominously on the recalcitrant Councillors when she gave them

<sup>1</sup> “Notes on Native Affairs,” November 6th, 1906.

to understand that she and His Majesty were strongly in favour of executing the reforms and would therefore brook no opposition. In reply, the obstructionists declared that they would rather lose their places in the Council than allow themselves to be put down in future histories as bad councillors to Their Majesties. When Her Majesty heard the declaration she replied : "Be it so ! You [mentioning the four] are excused from further attendance in the Grand Council, and we would also impress upon you the inadvisability of making any more obstructions against reform, for we are determined to make it a success for our own and for the Empire's sake."

On the following day two edicts appeared, one dismissing the four Conservatives from the Grand Council, and the other sanctioning the reforms suggested by the Imperial Commission.

Whether the Empress Dowager herself took any active interest in Army reform is uncertain ; but the man on whom she now most relied, outside the circle of the Imperial family, Yuan Shi-kai,<sup>1</sup> was the most

<sup>1</sup> The extent of his Imperial mistress's trust in him may be partly gauged by the number of posts which he held at the beginning of 1906. He was not only Viceroy of Chihli and head of the Peiyang military and naval administrations, but also Associate High Commissioner of the Army Reorganization Council ; Vice-Commissioner of the Peking Banner Corps Reorganization Bureau ; Associate Director of the proposed Tientsin-Chinkiang Railway ; Associate Commissioner for Tariff Revision ; and occupant of some minor offices in addition. He was said at this period to be anxious to give up all except his Chihli and Peiyang duties, although he would thereby sacrifice more than £20,000 a year in salary, because he had not

successful of China's military organizers, and did invaluable work in the vast sphere over which he had personal control. In the provinces generally the task of reorganization was left to the local authorities, and hence, although there was much keenness displayed here and there, concentration of purpose was lacking. Still worse, there was a fatal lack of funds. As Lord Charles Beresford had pointed out when he visited China in 1898-9, it was essential that financial reform should precede Army reform ; but financial reform in such a home of official corruption as the Chinese Empire was too great a task for Tze-hi to tackle—especially since her own privy purse benefited so largely from the existing state of corruption. It is not surprising, therefore, that the work of putting the Army into an effective condition still remains at the present day one of China's most arduous duties.

Some of the steps taken to "modernize" the troops during the Dowager's last years were rather ludicrous. For instance, at the beginning of 1906 we read that in future air-guns are to be substituted for the bows and arrows formerly used in the competition for military degrees among the Manchu Bannermen, the reason for this half-measure being

enough time for his work (*North-China Herald*, January 24th, 1906). In 1907, on the occasion of the Empress's seventy-third birthday, Yuan received the decoration of the three-eyed peacock's feather. The Yellow Riding Jacket he was awarded as early as 1902. No Chinese except Li Hung-chang received as many honours as Yuan Shi-kai.

that firearms were not permitted within the sacred precincts of the Imperial palaces (where the competitions were held under the presidency of the Emperor) for fear of disturbing the serenity and repose of the Imperial occupants!

A reform which the majority of Western observers, including the whole of the missionary body in China, hailed with expressions of delight was the order for the entire suppression of opium-smoking. In September, 1906, Tze-hi declared that "within ten years' time this injurious filth must be swept away." In March, 1908, there was an important supplementary proclamation. The earlier decree, while allowing a period of ten years for the stamping out of the evil and commanding that consideration should be given by officials to the question of the land given up to poppy-cultivation, had omitted to indicate how the Government proposed to meet the gigantic loss of revenue necessary if its programme was to be carried out—a fact upon which hostile Western critics seized at once as evidence of China's insincerity in the matter. The decree of 1908, however, said: "As for the manner of obtaining other revenue to make up for the losses on that from opium, We hereby order the Ministry of Finance to arrange about this matter"—adding: "No matter how difficult the task, We must succeed in entirely eradicating the opium habit within the limit of time set by Imperial Edict." A month after the decree we hear of the Empress Dowager

calling to her the Special Commissioners entrusted with the duty of making the prohibition of opium effective, and asking them what measures they were taking. When they had delivered to her their report, she remarked that delay would be fatal, and warned them that severe punishment would attend upon any neglect on their part. She had already insisted on all the Palace eunuchs giving up the drug, on penalty of a hundred blows with a heavy rod, followed by permanent expulsion from the palaces, while officials known to indulge in opium-smoking were doomed to disgrace.

There was hardly a department of public or private life in China which was not affected by Tze-hi's zeal for reformation, from women's fashions (as early as February, 1902, she issued an edict against foot-binding) and men's indulgences, like opium, to office-holding under Government, a wholesale abolition of superfluous posts, both in Peking and in the provinces, being carried out by her orders, in face of the most strenuous opposition; and she was contemplating in 1907, it was reported, the reform of the currency, though she died too early to mature her plans. In some respects she appeared to follow very closely the lines laid down by her nephew in 1898, in others she actually went beyond him, as in the matter of opium-suppression and in her policy of merging the five million Manchus resident in China in the rest of the nation. In the latter case she began by removing the hitherto prevailing prohibition against the inter-

marriage of Manchus and Chinese, and, as we shall see, actually promoted a most striking Chinese-Manchu union.<sup>1</sup> She abolished the distinctively Manchu garrisons in the big provincial cities; and in early 1908 she ordered the Bannermen generally to learn trades, in order to be able to support themselves instead of depending upon an allowance from the Throne for their livelihood. It is curious to reflect that this same Empress who was now insisting upon the breaking-down of the walls of Manchu exclusiveness was the same under whom, during the period of reaction following the Liberal programme of 1898, the tacit understanding hitherto existing as to the sharing of high offices between Manchus and Chinese had been largely ignored and a quite undue proportion of posts given to the Manchus.

Tze-hi refused to go so far as to abolish the whole Banner organization, which Prince Tsaichen proposed to her should be done. In fact, she took the suggestion in very bad part at first, and roundly charged both the Prince and his father with revolutionary and anti-dynastic designs. Old Prince Ching, in terror, sent in his resignation to the Grand Council, over which he presided. But the Empress, annoyed as she had been, declined to part with a trusty friend, and seized the occasion of his next birthday to treat him with especial favour as a sign of her forgiveness. As

<sup>1</sup> See p. 292. Another notable example of the new order of things was the marriage of Natung's daughter to Li Koh-chieh, a grandson of Li Hung-chang.



for Tsaichen, not long afterwards one of the censors addressed to the Throne a severe impeachment of his conduct, whereon he resigned his Presidency of the Board of Commerce and retired into private life. His father now again offered his own resignation, but again was told by the Dowager that she could not spare him.

While considering the subject of the Empress Dowager as reformer, we must note that in one respect she showed a wisdom greatly superior to her nephew's. Unlike him, she did not attempt to rush all her changes through in a period of a few months. Kwanghsu had provoked the criticism that he appeared to desire not to take a conciliatory course, but to compel submission. He had relied on the Young China Party's unsound estimate of the strength of the opposition and their very imperfect assimilation of Western ideas. The Dowager prudently spread her changes over a number of years, and where she sought advice sought it from the moderate politicians, well acquainted alike with their own countrymen and with foreigners. She met with fierce opposition and innumerable difficulties, but faced them firmly; as when we see her issuing a rescript in June, 1906, speaking of "the great hardships of the mass of the people owing to the heavy financial demands made on them by the Government for the payment of the foreign indemnities and the expenses of carrying out administrative reforms," but stating, nevertheless, that "these reforms must not be abandoned" and

that "the money required for them must be levied upon the people." When she had made up her mind to innovate, she was not lightly to be turned from her purpose.

## CHAPTER XIX

### LAST YEARS—*Continued*

IT might be deduced, merely from an examination of the internal political history of China from the beginning of 1902, that the Emperor Kwanghsu was coming to the front again. Foreigners, when they learnt that Puchun had really been cut off from the succession in November, 1901, had hoped to see this happen. But nothing of the kind was witnessed, either immediately after the return of the Court to Peking or later. The Empress Dowager had emerged from behind the screen which had hitherto hidden her almost completely from foreign gaze, and in the shadow of her figure the Emperor was observed nearly as much as when he was still a captive languishing in his island palace. He was not deposed in name, but he wielded as little influence as if he had been so in fact. In certain purely ornamental rôles it was necessary that he should figure. No one but he, as being the Emperor, could offer the great sacrifices to the Elements and the Ancestral Shades. But Tze-hi, even if she had been able, had no desire to relieve her nephew of these solemn but scarcely power-conferring duties. Where she took care to usurp his place was wherever the usurpation brought

with it a gratification of her ambition to rule over men. Kwanghsu here was not allowed to taste authority. When seen at official assemblies and receptions he always sat near, but always below, Tze-hi; and, except at the audiences to the foreign diplomatic body, it was to her, not to him, that addresses and State documents were handed. Mrs. Headland, whose opportunities for learning the truth of affairs were shared by few if any foreigners, writes: "Every time we were in the Palace the Emperor accompanied the Dowager Empress—not by her side, but a few steps behind her. When she sat, he always remained standing a few paces in the rear, and never presumed to sit unless asked by her to do so. . . . No minister of State touched forehead to floor as he spoke in hushed and trembling voice to him, no obsequious eunuchs knelt when coming into his presence; but on the contrary, I have again and again seen him crowded against the wall by these obsequious servants of Her Majesty. . . . I am told that at times the Empress Dowager invites the Emperor to dine with her, and on such occasions he is forced to kneel at the table at which she is seated, eating only what she gives him."<sup>1</sup>

So, while reforms went on at a steady pace, the one-time reforming Emperor was allowed to take no share in the government. He was less of a prisoner

<sup>1</sup> *Court Life in China*, pp. 166-8. Mrs. Headland is careful to explain that on this last point the Empress's conduct was dictated by custom, not by malice.

now than in the reactionary period of 1898-1900, in that he had exchanged an island for a place in the retinue of Tze-hi ; but he was none the less a non-entity now than in 1898-1900. To guard against the possibility of his attempting to interfere in any way with affairs, not only did his aunt, when they were together, watch him as persistently as a cat watches a mouse, but also she had his movements spied upon by the eunuchs when he was out of her sight. Kwanghsu seemed completely cowed. It was suspected that he was still nourishing his designs of revenge, especially against Yuan Shi-kai ; but he gave no outward sign. Perhaps the rumours were true which made Kwanghsu about this period undergo a violent mental and moral crisis, accompanied by a temporary loss of memory and extreme nervous prostration. It was said that for several weeks he lay in his own apartments in the Palace, buried in cushions, for the most part gazing vacantly into space, but giving way at intervals to paroxysms of tears. In one of his worst attacks he uttered a shriek which brought the eunuchs of his suite flying to his room, to be greeted by him with frenzied blows and a shower of valuable vases and other treasures about their ears before he would allow himself to be led away to one of the other palaces for a change of scene. The doctors called in by the Dowager could suggest no better treatment for their patient than a more nourishing diet. They cannot be blamed, however, for finding no cure. For the hapless Kwanghsu

was beyond all medicine—perhaps ever since he made his gallant but premature attempt to reform his Empire and was checkmated by his aunt.

As if to prove that, in spite of her embarkation on a policy of far-reaching reform, she had not forgotten 1898 nor forgiven those reformers who had threatened her with extinction then, in June, 1904, the Empress Dowager published an edict stating that, in her desire to commemorate the year of her seventieth birthday by bestowing a mark of Imperial mercy even on those who had offended against the laws of China, she now pardoned all who were implicated in the events of 1898 except "the rebels Kang Yu-wei, Liang Chi-chao, and Sun Wen."<sup>1</sup>

Already in the summer of 1902 it was reported that an attempt had been made to decoy Kang Yu-wei, then at Darjeeling, back to Peking by means of a pretended telegram of recall in the Emperor's name. Certainly Kang came as far north as Hong-kong, where he was met by local leaders of the Reform Party and persuaded to return to India.

<sup>1</sup> Liang Chi-chao is one of Kang Yu-wei's chief supporters, living (until very recently at least) in exile in the Straits Settlements, while Sun Wen is better known to foreigners as Dr. Sun Yat-sen. With regard to Liang Chi-chao, it is worthy of note that in October, 1907, at a meeting of Chinese reformers in exile in Tokyo he was driven off the platform as a reactionary and a traitor. It was not so much that his views had changed since the day nine years ago when he fled to escape the death penalty at the hands of the Dowager Empress's adherents; but they had now become part of the official programme of the Peking Government, and so appeared reactionary to the extreme reformers of the year 1907.

The story of the telegram, perhaps, requires confirmation. The edict two years later, however, is an indisputable testimony as to the Dowager Empress's state of mind.

This exhibition of vindictiveness, coupled with a crusade (her second) against the native newspapers, which she considered too free in their comments on State affairs—in the course of which she had one journalist at Peking beaten so severely that he died<sup>1</sup>—very naturally displeased the foreign critics of the Empress. Yet it is noticeable that, in spite of such lapses into evil ways, the general ability of her policy since her restoration to Peking was so indisputable that her detractors were deprived of one of their strongest weapons against her. They could no longer call her a bigoted reactionary, although they might (and did) cast doubts upon the genuineness of her desire for China's progress. They could make no complaint of her attitude toward foreign missions; for did she not issue an edict, instructing the Viceroy and Governors to explain for the benefit of their subordinates the provisions of the various treaties dealing with the missionaries, and declaring that converts and non-converts alike were children and subjects of the Emperor and must be treated by the authorities without distinction or favour? Since

<sup>1</sup> It was stated last July that "a Chinese publisher was about to start the first evening paper in Peking, to be printed in red, which is symbolic of happiness." In the Dowager Empress's reign red might have been considered symbolic of something very different where journalists were concerned.

they were thus unable to prosecute their campaign in one way, we now find her unrelenting enemies, while admitting that she was a stateswoman of very high rank, concentrating their attack upon her moral character, and by innuendo bringing up against her the scurrilous gossip of Peking—and Peking can be very scurrilous indeed. In the stories which were hinted at, but not reproduced, "Cobbler's-wax Li" played a great part. Few among the Empress's warmest admirers can fail to deplore the confidence which she put in this individual, whether he was an eunuch or not. But at the age of seventy Tze-hi's character might have been expected to be given a respite from attack; although Catherine of Russia, it is true, was not much younger when she commenced her "Platonic" affair with Zubof, last of her favourites.

One of the stories about Li Lien-ying and his mistress at this time has the merit of being amusing rather than scandalous. It seems that one of the foreign representatives at Peking made a present to the Emperor and Empress Dowager of a suit of European clothes apiece. Tze-hi was about to retire to try her new dress on, when suddenly Li appeared before her and threw himself at her feet with the profound kowtow which was prescribed in her presence. Asked why he was doing this, he protested that it would be procedure "degrading to the majesty and pomp vested in the person of the Ruler of the Empire to wear any clothes but those decreed by



Her Majesty's Imperial predecessors." At this the Empress laughed, and told the eunuch that his objections were womanish and silly. But he continued to kowtow, and steadfastly declared that he would knock his brains out against the floor unless she abandoned her intention. At last she gave way, telling her attendants to put the dress away in her wardrobe. It was hardly worth while, she said, for the chief eunuch to smash his skull over so trivial a matter!

This is an example of a very harmless assertion by Li Lien-ying of his great authority. The most mischievous ways in which he used it were in the direction of foreign affairs and in filling his own pocket. His fortune was estimated at between four and five millions sterling, accumulated during a life of unflinching accessibility to bribes; and he was master for a long time of most of the pawnshops of Peking. He was popularly supposed to have been a good friend of the Boxer leaders—no doubt at his own price. The charm of politics with him was that it was so lucrative a game. The Russian diplomatists in 1902 saw their chance with him in the matter of Manchuria. Having lost the support of the other Li (who if subsidized by them, as alleged, at least took the money with the reflection that he was outwitting them), they approached the head eunuch and promised him, it was said, a million Taels a year if he could induce the Empress Dowager to give her assent to the Manchurian Convention. It was signed

in the April following the Court's return to Peking and ratified in the following June.

Even Li Lien-ying, however, at last found that his power had limits when compared with that of the great Empress whom he served. His fall came about in the spring of 1906. There was much talk about revolutionary plots when that year opened, and one day a discovery of bombs was made within the very precincts of the Six Palaces. In a state of great anger the Dowager summoned Li into her presence and scolded him vigorously for his neglect of duty, telling him that only his long and faithful services saved him from instant death. She sent him from her with peremptory orders to discover instantly the guilty parties. The head eunuch went out and, laying hands on four of his juniors whose actions of late he declared to have been "suspicious," had them beaten to death. He then went back and reported to his mistress what he had done. She listened to him in silence, one of her most effective weapons when she was gravely displeased. At this Li waxed anxious, and finally broke down. He had grown too old, he protested, and was no longer fit to do his work. He therefore begged to be allowed to resign. The Dowager gave him permission to withdraw, and before a quarter of an hour had elapsed sent him a rescript in her own handwriting appointing him to the post of Inspector of the Iho Palace, his duties at Peking falling to another of her eunuchs, known as Tsui or Tsui An. Li, however, though retiring into obscurity, took with him

enormous riches. He had lost some fine property in Peking in 1900, but had ample consolation still left to him in ready cash. We shall hear of him again at the time of the Empress's death.

It has been said that Li Lien-ying was partly instrumental in the early signature of the Manchurian Convention by China. It is not our intention to enter upon the history of China's foreign affairs during the closing years of the Dowager Empress's reign. We shall leave untouched, therefore, the results of this Convention, of which the principal was the Russo-Japanese War, which robbed China of Manchuria, if not for ever, at least for many years. But we may note that the difficulties arising from the signature of the Convention so troubled the Dowager that she decided to celebrate her seventieth birthday in the November of 1903 instead of at the proper time, thus hoping to escape the ill-luck which befel her nine years earlier. Moreover, eager to give a proof of her concern for her country, threatened by Russia in the North and distracted by rebellion in the Kwang provinces in the South, she refused to accept the bestowal on herself of two more honorifics, with the accompanying additional income. In a decree of August 3rd, 1903, she says :

“ My people are in great distress, and I, labouring night and day in the interior of the Palace, have no heart for festivities. I am grieved to the soul at My people's sufferings. How then would it be right for Me to accept the proffered honorific title and to act

contrary to the principles which have guided Our Ancestors ? ”

The officials of the Empire did not refrain, however, from making their customary gifts to their mistress. In pearls and precious stones alone these reached the value of £24,000,<sup>1</sup> so that the Empress fared well enough on the occasion of her second Jubilee.

In this same year 1903 Tze-hi suffered a great personal loss, which must have marred her enjoyment of the rejoicings which she endeavoured on other grounds to curtail. Her favourite nephew Yunglu died, robbing her of her most sympathetic adviser among her own kin.<sup>2</sup> Only a year previously she had given a new mark of her high esteem for him when she induced Prince Chun, brother of the Emperor, to marry his daughter. That this union had a great influence on the choice of the heir to the Dragon Throne six years later cannot be doubted. As for the lady, now Dowager Empress of China, she is evidently no narrow-minded opponent of new ideas, for in the present year she has been seen on her way with her suite to a dinner in European fashion at one of the Peking hotels !

<sup>1</sup> It is said that one official, the Grain Superintendent, presented a beautiful diamond, which afterwards was discovered to be glass ! It was suggested by a coast-port wit that what happened to him afterwards was something which went against the grain.

<sup>2</sup> A very interesting account of Yunglu's funeral on May 15th, 1903, is given in Mrs. Archibald Little's *Round about my Peking Garden*, pp. 73 ff.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE END OF ALL

**D**ID the old Empress Dowager, before she died, begin to grow tired of the hardships of rule, or did even her robust constitution at last commence to fail her as her eighth decade of life rolled on and cause her to think of rest? In the middle of the summer of 1907 there was a strong belief prevalent in Peking that Her Imperial Majesty intended to abdicate, and to hand back to Kwanghsu the reins of power which she had torn from his grasp nine years earlier. It was said that she had fixed on the following Chinese New Year's Day, February 2nd, 1908, as the date for setting him up again in supreme command over the affairs of China, and that at the same time a new heir-apparent would be selected. The latter post had remained vacant ever since the deposition of Puchun in 1900, although early in 1906 it was reported that the Empress Dowager recently selected several young princes of the blood to reside and study in the Palace, so that she might find out who was best fitted for the part of successor to Kwanghsu when the necessity should arise. Gossip was busy with the names of three candidates—Puyi, infant son of Prince Chun and Yunglu's daughter; the present

head of the house of Kung, namely Puwei, son by adoption of the celebrated Prince Kung (originally Tsaiching); and Prince Pulun, who is variously stated to be "a great-grandson by adoption of Tao-kwang" and "grandson of an elder brother of the Emperor Hienfung." Of the three, Puyi and Pulun were most fancied, although there was a strong body of Manchu supporters of Prince Kung.

However, nothing occurred at the Chinese New Year to confirm the rumours of the Dowager's abdication. At the beginning of January a decree in her name intimated that the usual State Banquet on New Year's Day, on the occasion of the Emperor and the Court doing obeisance and offering congratulations to Her Majesty, would be omitted. This was understood to be on account of the Emperor's indisposition, and scarcely had New Year passed when there was a crop of rumours about the various doctors who had been called in to prescribe for him at the command of his aunt. At this time no anxiety was felt about Tze-hi's own condition. But in the second week in March it was suddenly reported that she too was indisposed—chiefly on account of certain diplomatic difficulties between China and Japan, it was said, arising out of the seizure by the Cantonese authorities of the *Tatsu Maru*, a Japanese vessel which the Chinese suspected of conveying arms and ammunition to the rebels in the Kwang provinces. The Japanese Government made a vigorous protest, China for a time stood firm,

and serious consequences seemed inevitable. The Empress Dowager took the matter very much to heart. According to a Peking correspondent of the *North China Herald*, during the course of an interview which she had with Prince Chun and two other Imperial clansmen at this period, she talked for over an hour on the subjects of China's critical position and her own advanced age. She twice burst into tears and told the princes that she had of late felt very depressed, and that although she had held the reins of government for over forty years she was now at a complete loss what to do to save her country. At the time the correspondent wrote the Empress Dowager was keeping her own room, with three doctors from the Imperial Academy of Medicine in attendance. By the end of the month, however, she was reported completely restored to bodily health, though still extremely nervous about the country's affairs. The situation in Peking itself was not calculated to reassure her. During the latter portion of March a series of fires in the capital gave rise to suspicions of incendiarism, the guilty parties, according to the favourite theory, being adherents of the violent anti-dynastic reformer, Dr. Sun Yat-sen. According to the Astronomical Board, indeed, the fires were caused by the departure of the fire-god from heaven to earth for a period of one hundred days, and they would cease after the god's return to heaven. This explanation failed to appease the public. A feeling of disquiet was general, and the arrest of fourteen

men, most of them students lately returned from Japan, did little to allay it. Tze-hi gave personal instructions to the President of the Ministry of War to increase the garrison entrusted with the care of the Imperial Palaces, and the police force of the capital was also augmented.

Away from Peking, too, in all parts of the country serious unrest was reported, and there was plenty of talk about impending revolution. Dr. Sun, it was well known, was wandering about on the borders of the native land in which it was certain death for him to set foot, and his agents were found or imagined to be present everywhere, arrests being made constantly. Peking, however, remained the panic-centre, and it was no doubt with feelings of considerable relief that on May 13th the Emperor and Empress Dowager left for their usual summer holiday at Iho Park. At this time the Dowager was apparently still in excellent health, while the Emperor was suffering severely from pains in the feet, which prevented him from walking about at all.

But the visit to the Summer Palace did not distract Tze-hi's attention from Peking affairs. A curious story is told of her at this period. She was well aware of the jealousy existing between her two leading Chinese subjects, Yuan Shi-kai and Chang Chih-tung, and though Yuan was her favourite she did not intend to allow the more conservative Chang to be alienated from the throne. Already when she had given Yuan his three-eyed peacock's feather she



had awarded one to Chang also, commending them both for their "pre-eminent services to the State." Now, seeing that there was a danger of the quarrel between the two growing dangerous, she took the opportunity of them both being in her presence one day for a conference over State affairs to tell them that it was her pleasure that the youngest son of one and youngest daughter of the other should be betrothed; in fact, she said she had already asked the Astronomical Board to report on the horoscopes of the two children with the view of discovering the lucky betrothal day for them! This was a plan which she had already tried with success in the case of Yuan Shi-kai and his other rival, the Manchu Tieh Liang, President of the Ministry of War. In the present instance, as in that, the two fathers-in-law had nothing to do but to submit to Her Majesty's wishes and patch up their quarrel with the best grace they could muster, unable to cope with this mixture of match-making and diplomacy on the part of their Empress.

During Tze-hi's last summer holiday at the Iho Park little occurred that was worthy of note. A small excitement was caused by her dismissal from office and permanent banishment from her Palace of her head eunuch Tsui, who had taken over Li Lien-ying's duties when the latter asked to be relieved of them, as has been told, on account of his old age and infirmities. What Tsui's offence was no one knew, but few regrets were wasted on him, for

he was scarcely more popular than Li Lien-ying had been.

It was expected that the return from the Summer Palace to Peking would be made about the end of September, and the Dalai Lama of Tibet, an exile from Lhasa since the British expedition thither, was known to be anxious for an interview with the Emperor and Empress Dowager. For the latter he had a number of gifts of Tibetan manufacture to present to her on her approaching birthday. But for some reason the return of the Court was delayed until October had commenced, and the audience to the Dalai Lama, when at last it came about, was by no means as cordial as had been expected. The head of the Tibetan Buddhists had hoped, apparently, to come to a satisfactory arrangement with Peking about the government of Tibet. Nothing of the kind occurred, and, as we know, he is still, two years later, an exile from Lhasa.

After this audience to the Dalai Lama, matters went very quietly at Peking until the month of the Dowager Empress's seventy-fourth birthday opened. Then suddenly there occurred an event which may truly be said to have startled the whole civilized world, attracting to the Chinese capital the attention even of those who concerned themselves the least with the affairs of the Celestial Empire.

At the beginning of November the Emperor was reported to be suffering from severe internal disorders. The Imperial physicians discovered a "dis-

turbance of the balance between the active and the passive principles." Subsequently a Western interpretation of this Chinese diagnosis stated his maladies to be chronic nephritis and neurasthenia, complicated by diabetes and sciatica. At the same time alarming stories spread through Peking about the Empress Dowager also. A slight congestion of the brain appears to have given rise to the rumours, some of which went so far as to make her out to be on the point of death or already dead. It was known for certain that she was unable to leave her own Palace, and that doctors were in constant attendance upon her ; but it seems that the doctors' visits were paid not so much on the old Empress's account as to keep her posted as to the condition of her nephew. The political situation caused her the gravest anxiety, and no illness of her own could distract her thoughts from the question of the succession to the throne if Kwanghsu should die at once and she not be on the spot to direct affairs.

With regard to the Emperor, after a fright on the 10th, caused by the report of a rapid turn for the worse, hope was aroused again when it was known, through the formal report in the *Peking Gazette* next day, that he had given an audience to the Grand Council on the 12th. At this Council, however, the subject under discussion was that of the succession to the throne, and on the 13th edicts appeared stating that Prince Chun had been appointed Regent, and that his son Puyi was to be "reared in the

Palace and taught in the Imperial Schoolroom." The foreign Legations this day received the following circular notification from the Wai Wu Pu : "It is the excellent will of Tz'ü-hsi Tuan-yu K'ang-i Chao-yu Chuang-ch'êng Shou-kung Ch'in-hsien Ch'ung-hsi, the great Empress Dowager, that Tsai-feng, Prince of Chun, be appointed *She Chang-wang* [i.e. Prince Regent]."

At two o'clock on the afternoon Kwanghsu's life was despaired of, and it was reported that he had been removed from his own apartments to the death-chamber, the "Pavilion of Peaceful Longevity," where it behoves an Emperor of China to breathe his last. Afterwards, however, it was affirmed, on the authority of the Palace officials, that, regaining consciousness on the 14th after a long period of coma, he had obstinately refused to allow himself to be moved to this pavilion and had died in his own quarters, without putting on the robes proper to the moment of an Imperial death. It was added that his relations with the Empress Dowager were strained to the last, although from her own bed of sickness she sent the old eunuch Li Lien-ying to attend upon him. On the morning of the 14th a long edict came out in Kwanghsu's name, in which he described how his health had been bad since the preceding August, in consequence of which he had ordered the Viceroys and other high officials to recommend clever doctors, who had gone to the Palace and treated him. "But their prescriptions have given no relief. . . . There

are ailments both external and internal, and the breath is choked, the stomach rebellious, the back and legs painful, the appetite failing. When we move breathing is difficult, and there is coughing and panting. In addition We have chills and fever, We cannot sleep, and We suffer from a general sinking of bodily strength which is hard to bear. Our heart is very impatient, and now the Tartar Generals, Viceroy, and Governors of every province are commanded to choose out capable physicians, regardless of official rank, and to send them quickly to Peking to await the summons to give medical aid. If any of them can bring about beneficial results they will receive extraordinary rewards, and the Tartar Generals, Viceroy, and Governors who recommended them will receive special favour."

There was no opportunity for these "capable physicians" to show their skill.<sup>1</sup> According to the notification sent to the Legations next day through the medium of Prince Ching, in the name of His Majesty Puyi, it was between the hours of 5 and 7 p.m. on the 14th that Kwanghsu "ascended on the Dragon to be a guest on high." An edict published that evening stated that since he was dead leaving no son, "there has been no course open but to appoint Puyi, son of Tsaifeng the Prince Regent,

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted that after the death of the Emperor all the doctors who had been in attendance upon him were censured and deprived of their official ranks, while those recommended by the Viceroy, etc., were also degraded.

to be successor to Tungchih and also heir to the Emperor Kwanghsu."

By this "succession to Tungchih" of a prince in the generation of the Pus<sup>1</sup> the irregularity committed by the Empress Dowager in 1875, when she elevated Kwanghsu, of the Tsai generation, to the throne, was at last rectified. At the Grand Council's meeting on the 12th there was a question of the desirability of appointing another Pu prince, Pulun, whom the progressives favoured as being one of themselves. But the Emperor's influence was of course in favour of the son of his brother Chun, who was very sympathetic to him; and the Empress Dowager, in her last, liberal phase, had allowed Chun to come to the front in a way which not only showed that he was not personally objectionable to her (she would not have married him to a daughter of her favourite Yunglu had that been so), but also gave a distinct hint as to the future in store for him and his son. Puyi being only five years of age and his minority therefore being necessarily long, Prince Chun, provided he lived, was guaranteed an extended regency in which to carry out the regeneration of the Empire already begun by his aunt. A certain continuity of administration was thus secured, which might not have been the case had Pulun succeeded Kwanghsu. So far Prince Chun has not disappointed the hopes which were entertained about him. Nor has the timidity of which he was suspected been much in

<sup>1</sup> See above page 103 n.

evidence. In one important matter,<sup>1</sup> to which we shall come, he reversed the policy of the Empress Dowager. Otherwise he has governed China much in the same way as she governed in the last six years of her life. To foreigners he commended himself since the days when he went on his mission of apology to Germany for the murder of Baron von Ketteler, when he was recognized as an intelligent, enlightened, and amiable young prince.<sup>2</sup>

The unhappy Kwanghsu was dead, a rebel against tradition to the end, if the palace officials' reports are to be trusted. The woman who was so largely responsible for the wretchedness of his life survived him by less than twenty-four hours. On November 12th a severe attack of paralysis, affecting the muscles of her face, had seized her. To the doctors who endeavoured to reassure her, she is said to have expressed her conviction that her end was at hand; and at the very moment of her nephew's death it was generally known that she was in a most precarious

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps we should say two; for, previous to sending Yuan Shi-kai on sick-leave, Prince Chun, almost immediately his aunt was dead, had Li Lien-ying and four other eunuchs arrested and sent to the Board of Punishments to be kept in custody as a penalty for their "undue interference with the business of government." Li must always have known that his hour was at hand as soon as his patroness died.

<sup>2</sup> I happened to travel, not long after the Prince, in the vessel which had conveyed him to Colombo on his way to Germany. The captain told me that while he was a passenger he showed considerable interest in the then fashionable game of table-tennis and in the various deck-sports on board.

condition. But the tone of an edict of instruction to the new monarch on the night of the 14th gave rise to hopes that she was still vigorous. Perhaps this was merely her final rally. Next morning a collapse overtook her. It appears from an Imperial decree that she sent a message to the new Emperor to the following effect :—

“At this moment I am desperately ill, and I feel that I cannot recover. Hereafter all public affairs of the Empire are entrusted to the Prince Regent. Should serious questions arise the Regent must personally request the advice of the new Empress Dowager.”

After despatching this message Tze-hi sank rapidly, and at three o'clock in the afternoon of the 15th she was dead, leaving behind her one document, her last farewell to the people of China, which we shall give in full :—

“I, of scanty merit, had the honour to receive appointment among the consorts of His Sainted Majesty, My husband Hienfung. The succession to the throne of My son the Emperor Tungchih occurred at a time when rebellions were still raging. The Taipings and Nienfei and the Kweichow aborigines were in turn causing disturbances and spreading disorder. The coast provinces were in sore distress and the people in serious difficulties, misery everywhere meeting the eye. Co-operating with the Empress Dowager [of the Eastern Palace], I carried on the government, ever toiling night and day. Acting in



harmony with the policy enjoined by My sainted husband, I stimulated the metropolitan and provincial authorities and the military commanders, directing their operations and striving earnestly to secure peace. I employed the virtuous in office and hearkened to admonition. I relieved the people's distress in flood and famine. By the grace of Heaven I suppressed the rebellions and out of danger I brought back peace.

“When the Emperor Tungchih departed this life and the late Emperor Kwanghsu succeeded to the throne, the times were still more grave and the people were in still greater straits. Within the Empire was calamity, from without came peril again and again; and once more it behoved Me to reform the government. The year before last I issued a decree preparing for the grant of a Constitution, and this year I have proclaimed the date when it will be granted.

“Happily my strength was always robust, and I maintained my vigour. Unexpectedly, since the Summer of this year I have been often indisposed. Amid pressing affairs of State I could get no repose. I lost my sleep and my appetite, until my strength began to fail. Yet I never rested a single day.

“On the 21st day of this moon occurred the death of the Emperor. My grief overwhelmed me. I could bear up no longer. My sickness is dangerous. All hope of recovery has vanished.

“At the present time a gradual reform in the method of government has begun. His Majesty the

new Emperor is of tender years and needs instruction. The Prince Regent and the Ministers must aid Him to strengthen the foundations of the Empire.

“His Majesty must forget his personal grief and strive diligently that hereafter He may add fresh lustre to the achievements of his ancestors. This is My earnest hope. Let the period of mourning be twenty-seven days only. Let this be proclaimed to the Empire, so that all may know !”

Tze-hi's instructions as to the brief period of mourning were not carried out. She can hardly have expected that they would be. On the day of her death little Puyi was made to publish an edict which is also worth quotation :—

“We received in Our early childhood the love and care of Tze-hi, etc. [her full title follows, as given above], the Great Empress Dowager. Our gratitude is boundless. We were commanded to succeed to the throne and We fully expected that the gentle Empress Dowager would be vigorous and reach the age of one hundred years, so that We might be cherished and made glad and might reverently receive Her instructions to the end that Our Government might be established and the State made strong. But Her toil night and day gradually weakened Her. Medicine was constantly administered to Her, in the hope that She might recover. Contrary to Our hopes She took the Dragon ride and ascended to the Far Country. We cried and mourned frantically.

We learn from Her last testament that the period of full mourning is to be limited to twenty-seven days. We cannot be satisfied with this. Full mourning must be worn for one hundred days and half-mourning for twenty-seven months, in order that Our sorrow may find partial expression. The order to restrain Our own grief, so that the affairs of the Empire may take first place, We dare not disregard, since it is Her parting command. We will strive to be moderate in grief, so as to comfort the spirit of the late Empress in Heaven."

We have related the story of the deaths of the Emperor Kwanghsu and the Empress Dowager, as far as it is possible to deduce it from the edicts issued by themselves and in the name of the child whom they left upon the throne. But it must be noted that in spite of the very explicit wording of the edicts, and especially of Tze-hi's valedictory proclamation, in which she speaks of her overwhelming grief at her nephew's death, some believed, possibly through a misunderstanding of the hours of the deaths as officially stated, that she was the first to succumb. Nor were there wanting rumours of foul play in both cases. With regard to Kwanghsu the tale was circumstantial. It was said that a Chinese doctor who attended the Emperor in his last illness received a present of \$33,000 from Viceroy Yuan Shi-kai. Professor Headland<sup>1</sup> seems inclined to believe this, and that Kwanghsu died from the effects of poison

<sup>1</sup> *Court Life in China*, p. 323

after the decease of the Empress Dowager, the edicts being edited in order to avert suspicion as to the facts of the case. But to make the story probable it is necessary to imagine a huge palace conspiracy, in which not only Yuan Shi-kai was implicated, but also Prince Chun himself and a crowd of lesser people, who must have had very good reason for remaining silent. But Prince Chun, always reputed devoted to his brother, took a very early opportunity to invalid Yuan Shi-kai from all his posts on the plea of "rheumatism of the leg," and has kept him out of office ever since. The Viceroy accepted his disgrace calmly and left at once for his native province of Honan. What the future has in store for him, who will venture to prophesy? <sup>1</sup>

Yuan was punished for his treachery in 1898. There is no need to smirch the name of the great

<sup>1</sup> A remarkable telegram was sent by Reuter's Peking correspondent on September 5th of the present year. Herein it was stated that daily conferences were proceeding between three of the Viceroys and the members of the Government, at which the chief subject of discussion was the proposed recall of Yuan Shi-kai. The telegram continued: "Palace intrigues are apparently exercising a powerful influence and Yuan Shi-kai's prospects are declining owing to the obstruction of the Empress Dowager's party, which, realising the opportunity offered by the present state of affairs, is striving for mastery. The scheme now in the forefront provides, it would appear, for the Empress Dowager supplanting the Regent as nominal head while a 'Council of Three,' consisting of two Princes and a Manchu ex-Minister, would direct affairs." According to the correspondent, the scheme was regarded at Peking as "a futile and probably final effort to restore a reactionary government under female control." It would indeed be an extraordinary thing were Yunglu's daughter to be allowed to follow in the footsteps of Yunglu's aunt.

Chinese official with the accusation of murdering his Emperor ten years after he had betrayed him. Yuan, as has already been suggested, was not always scrupulous as to the means by which he attained an end which seemed to him good, but he was never base, even in the sense in which the epithet has been applied to some actions of his patron Li Hung-chang. We may be content to attribute the deaths of both Kwanghsu and Tze-hi to natural causes, allowing it to be a curious and melancholy coincidence which separated by less than twenty-four hours the departure from life of two people who while they lived had been so closely connected and so much at variance.

A more suspicious occurrence was the death of Prince Ching only a few days after his two Imperial relatives. As soon as the announcement of the new heir and regent was made it was whispered that there might be trouble through the opposition of the old Prince, who, though his connection with the reigning family went back three generations, was very influential owing to the high favour which Tze-hi had bestowed upon him, his long tenure of exalted public offices, and his pliability of disposition, which enabled him to collect about him a great number of friends. It has even been suggested that he had come to an understanding with Yuan Shi-kai, whereby the latter was to support the candidature to the throne of Ching's son Tsaichen—an improbable tale, seeing that this prince was in the wrong category for reigning as well as rather remote from the direct dynastic line.

However, it was a well-known fact that Prince Ching had not been liked by Kwanghsu, and no one had any doubts that Prince Chun shared his brother's feelings about his kinsman. Therefore, if Ching had protested against a second case of a father's regency during his son's minority, it would have occasioned no surprise. But his sudden death put an end to all chance of a protest. It was given out that he had succumbed to overwhelming grief at the decease of the Emperor and Empress Dowager; and unofficially an additional cause was mentioned, mortification at being refused permission to take part in the ceremony of inauguration of the new Emperor's reign, which was fixed for December 2nd. As he was over seventy-two years of age, it is conceivable that his end was actually brought about by shock. In the midst of the general upset in the Palace, Prince Ching's death did not attract so much attention as it would otherwise have done. But the foreign residents in China expressed, and no doubt felt, much sorrow. The old Prince had been popular with them for many years, especially since his share in the negotiations of 1901 had brought him in regular contact with Western diplomatists.

The Emperor Kwanghsu's body, after lying in state in the Hall of Imperial Longevity in the Forbidden City during the hundred days of full mourning, was moved in the following spring to a temporary resting-place in the Imperial Cemetery on the Eastern Hills, eighty miles from Peking. Kwanghsu had

always declined to choose a site for his own tomb, and it was therefore necessary to erect his mausoleum after his death. Tze-hi, on the other hand, had for many years taken a great interest in her place of burial. This "Myriad Ages" mausoleum ("Myriad Ages" or "Ten Thousand Years," as we may translate it, was one of the many complimentary names by which the Dowager was known at Peking) had originally been erected for his aunt by Yunglu on the Eastern Hills, close to Hienfung's tomb, at a cost well over £1,000,000, and she had repeatedly visited it to see that it was kept in good condition and to direct additions to its decorations. It was nearly a year after her death when her body was taken thither from the Forbidden City, the Astronomical Board, on whom she had relied so much during her lifetime, selecting 5 a.m. on November 9th, 1909, as the fortunate hour on which the funeral procession should start out on its four days' journey to the Eastern Hills.

Previous to the actual funeral, however, a ceremony took place in the Imperial City which was watched with interest by many foreigners. The Empress's remains were still lying in the Hall of Imperial Longevity when on August 30th—again a day chosen by the astronomers as lucky—a huge imitation boat, one hundred and eighty feet long, was burnt on a piece of open ground close to the wall of the Forbidden City and opposite the hall where Tze-hi's coffin lay. This boat was completely fitted up with

furniture, manned by life-sized figures standing at the oars, men and women servants, etc., all clad in silken robes, and surrounded by imitation water overgrown with lotus, and cost over £7000, the object being to provide the Empress Dowager in the next world with the means of gratifying that passion for boating which she had indulged so freely in this life on the beautiful waters of the Summer Palace and Lotus Lakes. Subsequently a whole army of three thousand life-sized paper effigies, representing cavalry and infantrymen, musicians, officials, horses and carriages, footmen, chair-bearers, etc., was similarly burnt to provide her with a retinue on land as well as by water.

On the morning of November 9th, at five o'clock precisely, the Empress's coffin, covered with a pall of dragon-embroidered yellow silk, left the Palace under a huge catafalque carried by eighty-four bearers, and moved solemnly toward the North-eastern gate of the Tartar City. The streets had all been strewn with yellow sand, and were lined with soldiers and police, who kept perfect order. The procession was led by Prince Chun, the Imperial Princes, and all the members of the Grand Council and Grand Secretariat. For a short distance the foreign diplomatic corps, in order of seniority, walked in front of the coffin in token of respect for the departed. After the catafalque came modern-drilled cavalry, and then, in curious contrast, Mongol attendants with camels, carrying the materials for the erection of the matshed



resting-places of the coffin on the four nights of its journey. Next came a string of men bearing the various "umbrellas of honour" presented to Her Majesty on her return to Peking in 1900. Then followed high Lamaist dignitaries burning incense, a contingent from the Imperial Equipage Department bearing Manchu sacrificial vessels, Buddhist symbols, and embroidered banners, three chariots with trappings and curtains of Imperial yellow silk emblazoned with dragons and phoenixes, and two palanquins similar to those used by the Empress Dowager on her journeys in state.<sup>1</sup>

Outside the walls of the city the coffin was transferred to a bier carried by one hundred and twenty bearers. The Prince Regent had parted with the foreign diplomatists at the gate, leaving them to take their places in a pavilion specially erected for them. He himself led the procession for a short distance beyond the walls, and then returned to the Palace, while the coffin pursued its way eastward.

It is said that the actual procession was neither so long nor so imposing as that on the occasion of Kwanghsu's funeral. On the other hand, whereas the Emperor's funeral cost less than half a million Taels, that of the Empress cost between a million and a million and a half. The *Times* correspondent remarks: "As the cost of a funeral in China closely reflects the dignity of the deceased and the 'face' of

<sup>1</sup> This account is mainly taken from the *Times* correspondent's description of the scene.

his or her immediate relations, these figures become particularly interesting when compared." But can it be said that China did wrong in estimating the Empress Dowager Tze-hi as a considerably more important personage than her nephew the Emperor Kwanghsu ?

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE EMPRESS DOWAGER OF CHINA

**I**T may be doubted whether any of the commanding figures of history, ancient or modern, has ever had so heavy a load of prejudice to bear, while also receiving (not only during life, but after death) so much eulogy, as Tze-hi, Empress Dowager of China. The outstanding men and women of all times naturally have aroused a wide diversity of opinion among their critics, caused by moral, political, or national bias for or against them. But who except Tze-hi has had the fortune to be compared with Jezebel, Messalina, Theodora, the "arch-fiends" of her own country's annals,<sup>1</sup> Catherine de Medicis, and, less severely, Catherine II of Russia, and at the same time has been called the greatest woman of her century, "a strong character such as history has seldom recorded,"<sup>2</sup> and one whom "history will rank among the greatest rulers of mankind"<sup>3</sup>? Were the general records of

<sup>1</sup> The Empresses Lü and Wu, with whom Mrs. Archibald Little, calling them thus in her *Life of Li Hung-chang*, compares the late Empress Dowager. Professor Douglas, it may be noted, speaks of the Empress Wu by her "wisdom and energy" securing a brief space of peace with honour for China.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Conger, *Letters from China* (Foreword).

<sup>3</sup> Colonel Denby, former United States Minister at Peking.

China's history in the period between 1875 and 1908 lost and nothing left beyond the writings of those who have dealt with the personality of the Empress Dowager, the bewildered reader would be driven to believe that there were two women, not one, concerned in the administration of the Celestial Empire—one a monster of iniquity, the other a lovable genius, at once patriotic and enlightened.

In cases of very wide disagreement of the critics' views about any person's character, it immediately occurs to us, attempting to arrive at the truth, to suspect both friends and enemies of much exaggeration, and to strike a balance between the extreme statements for the prosecution and the defence. Thus we get in the end a character neither black nor white ; and, piebald characters being the rule in history, we perhaps rest content. But this need not prevent us from examining the black and the white patches with a view to discovering, if possible, which predominate.

Tze-hi's bad points, in the mouths of her enemies, make up a formidable catalogue. Cruelty, vindictive temper, unscrupulous selfishness never hesitating at murder, overweening ambition, scandalous morals, financial dishonesty, reckless extravagance, gross superstition, unblushing hypocrisy, are all laid to her charge. If every accusation could be proved, there would scarcely be further need to enquire whether she was to be reckoned as a woman great in any ordinary sense of the word.

She can hardly be cleared of the imputation of cruelty and vindictiveness. Her treatment of her nephew Kwanghsu cannot be justified by her warmest admirers, even if it be denied that she ever had an intention of putting him to death. Her behaviour towards him from 1898 onward was scarcely less unkind than the actual infliction of the death-penalty would have been, and nothing can ever obliterate in her story the memory of the long years of mental torture to which she condemned her sister's son. Although Kwanghsu may not have been all that his Chinese and foreign friends made him out to be, at least he was a generous young prince, deserving of a better fate than twenty years' imprisonment, during fourteen of which he was compelled to see his name used to sanction measures which he detested, and the men whom he admired and befriended hunted down as criminals, and when caught doomed to shameful ends. The humiliation of his subservient position at Court, when he was no longer an absolute prisoner on an island, may be passed over as not a matter entirely of Tze-hi's choice. Apart from that, there is enough to prove against her the charge of long-enduring harshness toward him, tempered only by an occasional capricious flash of kindness which was succeeded by greater rigour.

Against the whole Reform Party of 1898 she undoubtedly showed a most vindictive spirit. Her partisans said that she had an impulsive temper, though denying that she let it get beyond her control in an

unseemly way.<sup>1</sup> On occasions she certainly yielded to the promptings of anger and behaved with distinct injustice. For instance, in 1907 she summarily dismissed one of the Grand Councillors after reading a denunciation of him by two of his enemies, without giving him the chance of saying a word in his defence. Her temper in the case of the Reformers of 1898, however, was not impulsive. She nourished it for six years—indeed, until her death as far as Kang Yu-wei was concerned. In extenuation it may be pleaded that she thought Kang Yu-wei had meant to kill her, and that therefore against him and his party she was acting in self-defence.

The time of the reactionary revolution of 1898 saw the Empress Dowager at her worst. Her hand fell violently not only on the Reformers and their supporters in the native Press, but also on the inmates of the Palace, of whom a very great number were put to death, according to the common talk of Peking. But the mortality among the Palace eunuchs must have been heavy at more than one period in her reign. As the rights and wrongs of the case cannot be known, it is impossible to say more than that the eunuchs found her a terrible mistress to offend.

A charge of absolute murder to further her in-

<sup>1</sup> She did not become "unladylike," says Miss Carl, and did not raise her tones in anger, but her voice "lost its silvery sweetness." Native observers said that what was most to be dreaded in her was a grim silence, which always portended evil to come.

terests is brought against Tze-hi in four notable cases. She is accused of killing her husband Hienfung, her son Tungchih, her daughter-in-law Ahluta, and her fellow regent Tze-an. Some add to the list her sister, mother of the Emperor Kwanghsu, who, it is said, called upon her at the Palace one day in 1896 to remonstrate with her on the way in which the Emperor was kept in attendance upon her instead of devoting himself to government business, and next day was dead! This has all the marks of a Peking native rumour. And, as we have seen in earlier chapters, the four other charges have no real evidence to support them; though the death of Ahluta is suspicious, owing to the undoubted benefit to the two Dowager Empresses through her removal if she was with child by Tungchih. But not even in this affair is there sufficient testimony to fix upon Tze-hi the guilt of cold-blooded murder for the sake of her ambitions. The imputation will continue to be made, no doubt, because it is impossible to rebut.

Of all her vices, excessive ambition certainly was most prominent in Tze-hi's character. That, having such capacity for rule as she possessed, she should love to exercise it was natural. But, if she stopped short of murder of relations to retain her power, she stopped short of little else. It is true that the weakness or indecision of the two young Emperors, Tungchih and Kwanghsu, furnished her with an excuse for thinking she could guide the Empire better than they. Kwanghsu, however, never had

a fair chance of developing his gifts, seeing that even in her retirement she took care to retain the important official appointments in her hands, and prevented him from having about him, except in subordinate posts, men of views sympathetic with his own.

In the sphere of personal morals the Empress was painted by her foes in the blackest of all possible hues. The scandal-loving Pekingese credited her with indulgence in all forms of debauchery. Many Westerners have believed them implicitly, it would seem. To take but one example, the Rev. A. H. Smith, writing of her conduct in 1899-1900,<sup>1</sup> says: "Little by little she became fascinated with the thought of adding the supernatural to the infra-natural (and the unnatural) until she was herself the Head Patroness of the Boxers." This is surely a light-hearted acceptance of the worst that could be said against her. Another Western writer, however, who knew Peking intimately, says: "There is no need to attach importance to Chinese tales of personal libertinism. They may be wholly false, and are indeed almost disproved by her long years of health and vitality and her absorption in higher ambitions than those of mere personal enjoyment."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *China in Convulsion*, p. 149.

<sup>2</sup> *Times* obituary notice on the Empress Dowager. It is open, of course, with regard to the "long years of health and vitality," to quote the example of Catherine of Russia, as Professor Parker in effect does when he calls her "Chinese Catherine No. III," her predecessors being the above-mentioned Empresses Lü and Wu.



Had Tze-hi been more careful of the power which she allowed to the head eunuch of the Palace, Li Lien-ying, we should doubtless have heard less of the fierce charges which were brought against her morals. But that infamous person, whether he was or was not what he was claimed to be (and Miss Carl's description of him<sup>1</sup> rather tends to support the gossip of Peking about him), made himself so obnoxious to the Empress's subjects that they seized eagerly upon the chance of revenging themselves on her with scurrility coupling his name with hers. Seeing that near the end of her life, when she had once overcome her reluctance to face the camera at all, she allowed herself to be photographed frequently in his company, both in everyday attire and in a tableau representing Kwan-yin, Goddess of Mercy, attended by Buddhist monks—she being the goddess and Li Lien-ying and another senior eunuch the monks—she was certainly negligent of her reputation.

By a confusion due to the identity of surnames between "Cobbler's-wax Li" and Li Hung-chang, some Western writers have attributed to the Empress a lover in the ancient statesman—a story which would be more interesting if it had any foundation. The same remark may be made on a statement in a recent French work<sup>2</sup> which assigns to her as "one of her old lovers" Prince Chun the elder, brother of Hienfung.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *La Chine Nouvelle*, by MM. Rodes and Defrance.

But it is useless to pursue the subject further. Tze-hi's moral character must remain a matter of opinion, since it is not a matter of direct evidence. No ordinarily constituted woman could have lived so strenuous a political life as the Chinese Empress Dowager and yet have found time for many love-affairs. But it is open to her accusers to argue that she was a woman of no ordinary constitution.

In her choice of favourites, apart from such people as Li Lien-ying, the Empress was often unwise. Even her friends admitted that if anyone could gain her confidence once he could easily victimize her in future. So it seems to have been the case when the advocates of the Boxer fraternity got a hearing from her.

But superstition had much to do with her surrender to the Boxers. She witnessed their miracles and was converted. For a strong-minded woman she was, indeed, intensely superstitious. The Board of "Astronomers" was consulted by her at every turn. Her nervous dread at the thought of missing the lucky hour for her return to Peking was pitiable. Her belief in the efficacy of charms was profound.

The financial dishonesty which was brought up against her consisted in the malversation of public funds to gratify her insatiable desire for money and in her employment of corrupt officials, apparently because they shared their gains with her. She was capable of making enormous gifts for patriotic purposes, as we have seen, and of directing a campaign against cor-

made no allowance for the great provocation which China had received from foreign nations and the strong patriotism of the Empress Dowager. Tze-hi had a grievance, many grievances, against the people of the West. She had not any against Western womankind. Let us grant, however, that in her effusive politeness to the latter there was more tact than real friendliness, and that tact is a higher kind of hypocrisy.

Tze-hi cannot therefore be acquitted of a considerable amount of cruelty, of excessive ambition, of proneness to absurd superstition, of extravagance careless of the source whence it satisfied its needs, and of a pliancy of behaviour perilously close to insincerity. On the other hand, few of her enemies could deny her political ability, her application to the service of her country, and her faithfulness to her friends. They were bound to confess that she had a discerning eye for men of talent and knew how to work in harmony with them, without allowing them to grow too strong in the positions which she helped them to attain, making excellent use of the plan of setting one man to be a check against the undue supremacy of another. They confessed, too, that no amount of public approval could induce her to abandon to disgrace her assistants in the administration of the country. It was not necessary to go further than the history of Li Hung-chang's career to see that this was so. The imputation of willingness to sacrifice her friends was never brought against

her. The fate of Prince Chuang, Yu-hien, and others in 1901 cannot be quoted as evidence to the contrary, as the punishment of the Boxer chiefs was wrung from her by brute force.

A Roman hero was once publicly thanked for "not despairing of the Republic." Similarly Tze-hi must be admired for never despairing of her Empire. Some have grudged to call her a patriot, arguing that it was not China, but her own position in China which she fought so hard to preserve. But to her the two causes were one. Her experiments in allowing the chief power to pass into the hands of others than herself only inspired her with a greater belief in her own indispensability. And it cannot be said that government to her meant unmixed pleasure. She never spared herself. It was no exaggeration when she spoke in her dying proclamation of "ever toiling night and day." A reigning Emperor of China has a life of arduous routine, commencing, daily throughout the year, in the very early hours of the morning;<sup>1</sup> and the Empress Dowager, in usurping the place of an Emperor, underwent all the hardships also. Miss Carl, the only Westerner who lived for a time as a guest under her roof, testifies to her extremely early rising at the Summer Palace. At Peking it was always in the dark of night that she left her bed to proceed to the hall where she listened to the reports of her officials. To the end of her life she gave personal attention to every State docu-

<sup>1</sup> See Douglas, *History of China*, pp. 415, 420.

ment, and she carried with her everywhere tablets on which she jotted down notes, even during the course of ordinary conversation. Winter made no difference in her habits, except that it was darker and colder than in the ill-lighted and inadequately warmed Palace. No European sovereign has ever been compelled to live such laborious days as the Empress Dowager of China during her long period of rule.

Unanimity of opinion as to her statesmanship is not to be expected. But even the most unfriendly historians are obliged to allow that her policy met with an astonishing amount of success, in spite of her temporary mad alliance with the Boxers. Its leading note was, if one likes, a crafty opportunism, aided by what chess-players call "a quick sight of the board"; but it saved China. Kwanghsu's more honest, less provident policy had all but reduced his Empire to the condition of dismemberment for which the Western diplomatists were hoping. At Tze-hi's death there was no more talk of the "break-up of China." The Empress was lucky, no doubt, in finding the greed of the Powers largely counteracted by their mutual jealousies. But it required great adroitness, nevertheless, to take advantage of these jealousies; and whom can we credit with the necessary skill save Tze-hi herself? No one, unless it be the subordinates whom she herself selected to help her in her task. And these subordinates, it must be remembered, were not men of any particular school of thought or friends one of another. Progressives,

moderates, and reactionaries alike, they were linked together only by devotion to China and by the favour of their Imperial mistress.

Enough has been said earlier of Tze-hi's attitude toward the internal reform of China to render it unnecessary to say much more on the subject here. In view of her hatred of the Reformers of 1898, the foreign reluctance to look upon her as a genuine reformer herself is easy to understand. While she was still fulminating against Kang Yu-wei and suppressing free speech as manifested in the Press, it was plausible to consider as mere posing her protestations of being held back by her people's slowness to move, while she was at heart a true progressive. But, putting together the facts of her quarrel with Kang Yu-wei and the startling changes which she introduced in all departments of Chinese life after 1902, we cannot resist the conviction that she stated the case truthfully when she said that she was waiting for proofs of a general demand on the part of her people. There was no such general demand in 1898, as was shown by the opposition which Kwanghsu met. The Boxers' fiasco in 1900-1 brought about the desirable change in public sentiment, and put it in the power of the Empress Dowager to lead a really progressive movement. Had it been possible for a more skilful advocate of reform than Kang Yu-wei to obtain her ear earlier in the day, history might have been very different. But there would assuredly have been no wild outpouring of edicts such as that with which the

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Emperor endeavoured in the course of three months to alter the most conservative people in the world into a modern progressive nation. The type of reformer needed by China was that which Tze-li claimed herself to be. "A *gradual* reform in the method of government has begun," she said in her last edict. It was a gradual reform which alone could do any good.<sup>1</sup> Seeing how successful the Empress was in establishing her reforms upon a solid basis, shall we deny her the credit of sincerity when she professed to be guiding her people on the upward path which she desired to see them taking?

An excellent short summary of the Empress's characteristics, written during her lifetime, is given by the late Mr. Alexander Michie in his *Englishman in China*. They are, he says, "clearness of purpose, strength of will, a ready accommodation of means to end, and frank acceptance of the inevitable. . . . Mundane in her objects, she is practical in seeking them; and, if to hold an entirely anomalous position of authority opposed to legitimacy and the traditions of the dynasty and the Empire be evidence of success, then the Empress Dowager must be admitted to be a successful woman."

Coming now to those of Tze-hi's good points,

<sup>1</sup> The present Regency on June 27th of the current year endorsed this policy when, in reply to a memorial presented by delegates representing the provinces and Chinese communities oversea asking for a Constitution at once, a peremptory rescript stated that it is impossible to shorten the period of nine years, the people not yet being ripe for Constitutional rights.

which may be called graces rather than virtues, we see friends and enemies alike agreed as to her tactfulness, though the enemies were inclined to call it by a harder name. Readers of the works of her American partisans will find abundant examples of the tact with which she handled her visitors from the West. We will add a story to show how toward her own subjects she could display the same admirable quality. In the early part of 1882 Li Hung-chang's aged mother was seriously ill, and Li, whose constant employment in his country's business had prevented him from paying her a visit since 1870, petitioned for leave of absence from Chihli. The Empress granted his request, and presented him with eight ounces of that Chinese panacea, "ginseng," to take to his mother.<sup>1</sup> Unhappily the old lady died before Li reached home. He wrote asking permission to retire into the usual twenty-seven months' mourning for a parent, resigning his offices as Grand Secretary and Viceroy. The Empress, however, answered with an edict, telling him to mourn one hundred days and to retain his posts. "This is the conduct which will bring to a mother's mind the comforting conviction that her son, follow-

<sup>1</sup> She made a similar gift of ginseng pills to Yuan Shi-kai in the month before her own death, having heard that he was indisposed. And, indeed, at all times she was fond of distributing Chinese medicines, it would appear. When one of her generals in 1888, reporting his suppression of the Hainan aborigines' revolt, spoke of the unhealthy climate with which his troops had contended, she sent a present of ten boxes of "Pills of Peace and Prosperity"! Were these for the whole army or for the general's personal consumption, we may wonder.



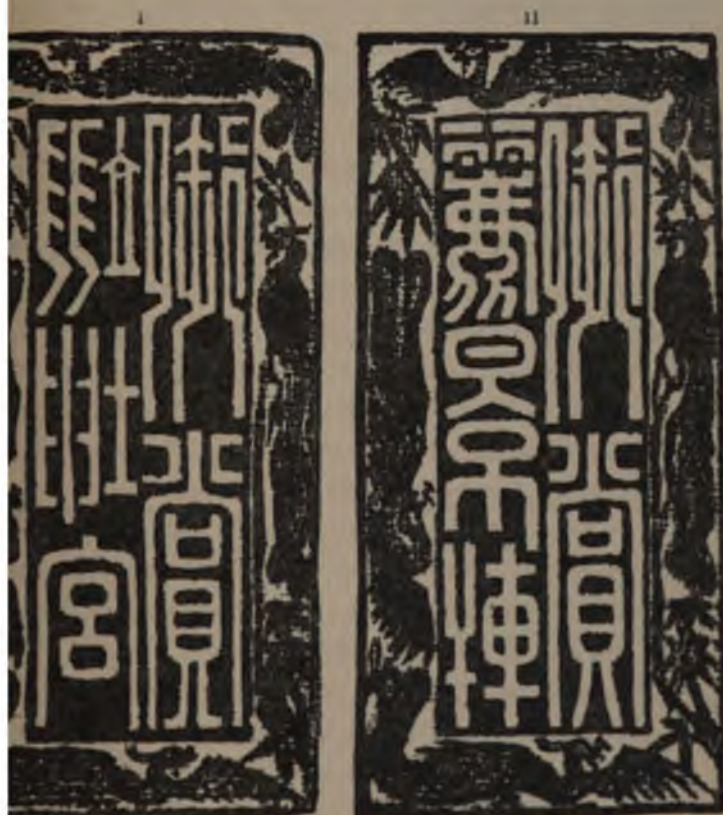
ing the precepts early instilled into him, is devoting himself to the service of his country." And when Yuan Shi-kai's mother died in 1900, the Empress met his request for twenty-seven months' leave with an almost identical answer.

Had it not been for her conduct toward Kwanghsu, she might have gone down to posterity as an affectionate kinswoman, on the testimony of the foreign ladies who had the best opportunities of judging her in private life. Her own family had no cause for complaining that she neglected them, particularly her nieces, whom she delighted to have about her at the Palace, and for whom she made excellent marriages. Also she seems to have been kind to all the princesses of the Imperial family, including the many daughters of Prince Ching, whom she always held in high esteem; and Prince Kung's daughter she adopted as her own, we have seen, giving her the rank of Princess Imperial, before whom even the highest princes must bow. In her suite she kept numerous widowed ladies of rank, condemned by Chinese and Manchu custom to perpetual mourning, but, thanks to her care, given lives of ease and comfort. Reading the few first-hand descriptions of Palace life by foreign observers, we find it more than difficult to credit the infamous gossip of Peking about the mistress of the Palace.

It is clear that one of Tze-hi's chief charms was the magnetism of her personality, which affected almost every Westerner who met her face to face.

IMPRESSIONS OF TWO PRIVATE SEALS OF THE EMPRESS DOWAGER,  
NOW THE PROPERTY OF LADY RAINES

[The seals are of light-coloured jade, each being  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches long,  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches broad, and 4 inches high, and weighing 3 lb. 6 oz.]



- I. Used by Her Majesty on her visiting-cards
- II. Used by Her Majesty for sealing paintings executed by her own hand

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In her there appeared a combination of force and grace which was wonderfully attractive. No one could doubt her enormous will-power, yet there was about her a surprising softness and gentleness of exterior which seldom allowed her temper to show through.<sup>1</sup> Her manners were celebrated for their perfection, and the cultivation of her mind was always manifest. We have seen how she devoted herself to the study of the Chinese Classics, and made for herself a name as a scholar. She spoke the language with remarkable purity, and handled the brush in a way which excited admiration in a nation which thinks exceedingly highly of the Oriental equivalent for penmanship. As a painter she prided herself not a little, and Professor Headland asserts that if she had given her whole time to painting she would have been one of the great artists of the present dynasty. Her most valued gifts to her favourites, native or foreign, were specimens of her skill, chiefly beautiful examples of the characters (so well known to all who visit China), signifying "Happiness," "Long Life," "Fortune," or "Peace," and paintings of flower-subjects, stamped with an impress of the jade seal, which she kept for the purpose.

Her passion for flowers was notorious, even in China, where flowers give such universal delight. Her gardens at both the Winter and the Summer Palaces were exceedingly beautiful, and at the former,

<sup>1</sup> We could wish, however, for some more evidence as to her behaviour at the time of her Boxer enthusiasm. See p. 236.

in the South-western corner of the Forbidden City, there was a miniature rock-garden which had no rival in the world, unless it were in Japan. She was also very fond of animals—except cats.<sup>1</sup> She had her own breed of dogs, since 1901 introduced into the West, but up to then jealously kept within the Forbidden City. Birds also she loved, and Miss Carl tells a pretty tale of her enticing back to her one which had escaped from its cage into the Palace grounds.

Foreigners who penetrated into the "Six Palaces" and helped to loot and ravage them after the flight of the Court to Sianfu were not altogether favourably impressed by the taste shown in the decoration of the rooms. Nor, as has been remarked before, did the Empress's restorations at the Summer Palace give satisfaction to the critics. But it is not to palaces that we must go for the gratification of the artistic sense in any part of the world. This was probably true of Sennacherib's "Palace that has no rival" at Nineveh, and is certainly the case nowadays in Europe. The Forbidden City was even more of a museum than most abodes of royalty, and contained treasures and gifts coming together from everywhere, to harmonize as best they could. Tze-hi's personal residence, the Ying Tai Palace, was finest of the imperial buildings, and its ornamentation was also in the best taste, with a less display of European and American objects than

<sup>1</sup> The cat which Pierre Loti met in the Imperial Palace, therefore, must have been one of those which some of the Palace inmates were said to keep on the sly.

in the Emperor's abode. The Chinese contribution to the decorations of the rooms was beyond *cavi*, with its magnificent blackwood carvings, its tapestries and silk hangings, its porcelain of the best period of the Manchu dynasty, and its priceless paintings by the Old Masters of the Empire. In Tze-hi's own bedroom, too, there was a fine austerity—and only one clock.<sup>1</sup> A bed with a yellow satin mattress, a silk cover, and long curtains reaching from the ceiling to the floor, a small table, a few simple wall-decorations, and a brick *kang* (the ordinary Chinese bed) for the maid in attendance on Her Majesty, were, according to Professor Headland, all that was to be seen. Attached to it was an oratory with an altar crowded with Chinese Buddhist divinities, chief of which was the old wooden image of the Buddha himself, which M. Pierre Loti saw there in 1900.

In her person the Empress Dowager was scrupulously particular, having her own soaps and perfumes manufactured in the Palace. She was very fond of scent, but used no cosmetics, which are not allowed to widows in China.

In her youth Tze-hi was esteemed a great beauty. Indeed, to her looks she owed her first chance of rising to fame through her attraction of the notice of the Emperor Hienfung. Westerners had no opportunity of judging her appearance until she was a long way past the prime of life, especially for an Asiatic woman.

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor's rooms were full of clocks, and there were no less than eighty-five in the throne-room at the Summer Palace!

There is, therefore, a reasonable divergence of views among them on the subject.

Miss Carl, who painted her portrait and thus necessarily observed the Empress more closely, describes her as follows :—

“A perfectly proportioned figure, with head well set upon her shoulders and a fine presence ; really beautiful hands, daintily small and high-bred in shape ; a symmetrical, well-formed head, with a good development above the rather large ears ; jet-black hair, smoothly parted over a fine, broad brow ; delicate, well-arched eyebrows ; brilliant black eyes, set perfectly straight in the head ; a high nose of the type the Chinese call ‘ noble,’ broad between the eyes and on a line with the forehead ; an upper lip of great firmness ; a rather large but beautiful mouth, with mobile red lips, which, when parted over her firm white teeth, gave her smile a rare charm ; a strong chin, but not of exaggerated firmness, and with no marks of obstinacy. Had I not known she was nearing her sixty-ninth year, I should have thought her a well-preserved woman of forty.”

Mrs. Conger’s opinion we have already seen. Like most American witnesses, she is very enthusiastic. English ladies are far less favourable to Tze-hi’s looks. Mrs. Archibald Little, describing her one day about the same period as Miss Carl, says<sup>1</sup> :—“On this occasion she certainly looked her age, sixty-eight, with very broad face and many double chins. Her eyes,

<sup>1</sup> *Round About my Peking Garden*, pp. 50-1.

the longest probably ever seen, remained cast down, and though there was a great appearance of graciousness, the smile, whose coldness is said to chill even foreign ministers, was absent. Yet, as she stood still and silent, one felt the magnetic power of the woman." But she goes on to speak of "the Empress Dowager's pleasantly flattering face, with falsity written large over every line of the apparently good-humoured surface."

Again, Lady Susan Townley, also writing about the same time, says<sup>1</sup>: "Her age is sixty-eight, as she told us herself, but her hair being dyed jet-black and most of it artificial, her appearance is that of a much younger woman."

After these feminine criticisms we may give one from a male observer, Dr. W. A. P. Martin, the veteran missionary, who writes:—

"A trifle under the average height of European ladies, so perfect are her proportions and so graceful her carriage that she seems to need nothing to add to her majesty. Her features are vivacious and pleasing rather than beautiful; her complexion not yellow but sub-olive, and her face illuminated by orbs of jet half hidden by dark lashes, behind which lurk the smiles of favour or the lightning of anger. No one would take her to be over forty."

It is interesting to compare with these Western criticisms the eulogy of a Chinese Court poet, written when Tze-hi was about twenty-five years of age. An

<sup>1</sup> *My Chinese Notebook.*

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English prose version<sup>1</sup> of the poem has been given in entirety by several writers about the Empress Dowager, but nevertheless we may perhaps be permitted to quote here five of the seven stanzas :—

In the firmament of the Son of Heaven  
A brilliant new star has risen !  
Supple as the neck of the swan,  
Is the charm of her graceful form.

From the firm contour of charming chin  
Springs the faultless oval of her fair face,  
Crowned by the harmonious arch  
Of a broad and noble brow.

The stately profile, chiselled clear,  
Is dominated by the pure line of noble nose,  
Straight and slender and singularly mobile,  
Sensitive to all the impressions of the soul.

• • • •

When stern circumstance demands,  
Her graceful form an attitude of firmness takes,  
The soft glow of her brilliant eyes  
Grows penetrating and holds one with proud authority.

O beauty Supreme ! O brilliant Star  
Shining but for the Son of Heaven !  
From thy glowing soul radiate  
Love, daring, hope, intellect, ambition, power !

Tze-hi, in her old age at least, appears to have considered her own best points to have been her hands and feet. We have seen how she wore her nails very long, with protectors of jade or of gold set

Unfortunately I do not know the translator's name, so am unable to make the proper acknowledgment to him.



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with jewels over them. Her feet, not bound like those of so many of her Chinese women-subjects, were naturally very small, and the Manchu slipper with its six-inch "heel" on the centre of the sole, was calculated to set them off to advantage, while adding considerably to her stature, which was only five feet. Her hair, as is usually the case with Manchu women, had been very abundant, however correct Lady Susan Townley may have been in her suspicions about it later. Her smile, which Mrs. Little found so cold, was generally considered attractive. Her voice was very juvenile and silvery in tone, suggesting the age of seventeen even when she was nearly seventy.

On the whole, the impression given is that of a marvellously well-preserved woman, with the remains of looks which must in earlier life have been very good, judged even by Western standards. Such few photographs as she permitted to be taken of her toward the end of her reign are rather cruel; for the camera is not wont to flatter old age. On the other hand, Miss Carl's portrait of her for the St. Louis exposition is undoubtedly kind—and, of necessity no doubt, conventional. In it we fail to see the little old woman, five feet high and seventy years old, who sat so long upon an usurped throne, not loved but exceedingly revered by four hundred and twenty millions of her own subjects, and not liked but undoubtedly at least respected by the rest of the world.

Perhaps it was an impossible task to produce a

tisfactory picture of this astonishing woman with the brush. That he has also failed to do so with the pen, the author of the present work is only too well aware ; for which reason, in summing up, he refrains from attempting to indicate definitely which way the verdict on her character ought to go. It may be that, when the events of China's history between 1861 and 1908 have receded further from us, and the outcome of the now progressing "regeneration" of the country has become manifest, it will be less difficult to appraise at its true value the remarkable personality of Tze-hi, the Empress Dowager—or, to give her the full title which was bestowed upon her gradually during her lifetime, Tz'ü-Hsi Tuan-Yu K'ang-I hao-Yü Chuang-Ch'êng Shou-Kung Ch'in-Hsien h'ung-Hsi—the Loving-hearted and Fortunate, Upright and Aiding (the State), Happy and Careful of her remaining years), Bright and Pleasant, Earnest and True, Long-lived and Serious, Reverent and Good, Exalted and Brilliant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to the kindness of Sir James Stewart Lockhart, High Commissioner of Weihaiwei, for the transliteration and transcription of this title. The spelling used in this instance is Sir Thomas Wade's.

## APPENDIX

### THE EMPRESS DOWAGER'S ORIGIN

**I**N his extremely interesting book on *Court Life in China*, Mr. Isaac Taylor Headland, Professor in the Peking University, advances a new theory of the parentage of the late Empress Dowager. His curiosity being aroused by the fact that his wife, who was medical attendant for many years to a number of the princesses of the Imperial and allied families, including Tze-hi's own mother, found these ladies very unwilling to discuss the Dowager's origin, Professor Headland was prompted to make researches into the subject, as the result of which he came to the conclusion that she was the daughter of a man called Chao, a small military official who was afterwards beheaded for some neglect of duty; and he suggests that the Empress Dowager, in her desire to efface all memory of her childhood, refused to allow it to be talked about.

In a sympathetic notice of *Court Life in China* in the *Asiatic Quarterly Review* for April, 1910, Professor E. H. Parker writes :—

“ It is perfectly well known that she (the Empress Dowager) was the daughter of a comparatively petty Manchu official, named Hweichêng, of the Nala clan, and therefore it is a little difficult to understand why, according to Mr. Headland, she, or her minions, should have made so much mystery with Mrs. Headland about her birth, and why she should have been half-furtively described as the daughter of one Chao. Of course, it is physically, if not legally, possible that she was only adoptive daughter of Hweichêng, and, if Chao be the Chinese surname of that ilk, that Hweichêng may have adopted a Chinese girl as one of his daughters; or, still more

probably, she might have been the daughter of a Chinese Bannerman. For instance, the present (Chinese) Viceroy of Sz Ch'wan Chao Erh-sün, as also his brother, the Generalissimo on the Tibetan frontier, Chao Erh-fêng, are both Bannermen—that is to say, organised under one of the eight military banners after the fashion of the genuine Manchus, and thus presumably marriage-*fähig* and adoption-*fähig* with true Manchus. But there is no evidence that such is the case as yet known to the public, and in view of the other cock-and-bull stories so often repeated to the effect that the old Dowager was merely a Cantonese slave, this matter ought to be authoritatively cleared up.”

Unhappily there seems even less prospect now, after the death of the Empress Dowager, than there was during her lifetime of arriving at the undisputable truth.

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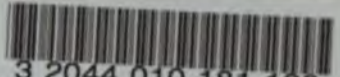
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