really means; if asked regarding the immoderate use of opium every witness absolutely without exception will denounce such use. But if he be questioned regarding the moderate use then a different complexion may often arise.

The Royal Commission evidently do not regard the evidence as approaching unanimity either way. Indeed they say that it is often of a mixed or even a conflicting character. Still they were appointed by the Crown to be the judges, and certainly their view of the evidence is not that of Mr. Wilson. There are two points to be considered by that large public opinion to which the appeal must ultimately lie. The first is whether, taking them all in all, the Chinese people should be described as temperate, according to the European use of the term; and the answer is that they certainly should. The second is from a moral standpoint what, in a case of this kind, is a national evil. Many members of the anti-opium party would conscientiously hold that "drink," in its technical sense, is a national evil throughout the British Isles and in any northern or English-speaking region. Yet the mass of the British people could not maintain such an opinion. It follows that if "drink" is not "a gigantic national evil" in the British Isles, neither is opium so in China. But those who will undertake to affirm that "drink" is a "gigantic national evil" in Britain are quite consistent in saying the same of opium in China.

For the sake of China, Mr. Wilson recommends

that the production of opium in India be stopped by the action of the Government. That has been already alluded to in the last Chapter but one of Part I. As regards China, the British reply is summarily this, that there can be no cause for their interference in this respect, as that would have no impression whatever on the Chinese consumption. The Indian variety was never at its highest more than a superior sort, as for instance like champagne among the wines of France. It was never more than a small portion as compared to the Chinese mass. And now it is being gradually superseded by the Chinese varieties, whether that be from improvements in Chinese production or from the Chinese manufacture. The only business of the British Government is to tax the article effectually, and that is done. If all this be still condemned by some, then it must be remarked that the object of this Chapter is to discuss the conduct of the Chinese and not that of the Government of India.

In order to do justice still further to the anti-opium party advertence may be had to the first and greatest of their advocates, Lord Ashley, afterwards the Earl of Shaftesbury. He made a motion on the subject in the House of Commons in 1842, which, however, was not pressed lest there should be any embarrassment in the negotiations then pending. His biographer, Mr. Hodder, writing in 1886, says that "there can be little doubt that future generations of Englishmen will unhesitatingly condemn

the policy which has long been pursued in regard to this iniquitous traffic." He goes on to aver that "English Ministers did not scruple to secure by fire and sword the maintenance of the unholy traffic." Now authors who permit themselves to write thus of their own countrymen are not likely to be moved, much less convinced, by any enquiry which may be made nowadays. It may suffice here to remark that in 1895, after the publication of the Report of the Royal Commission, the House of Commons formally declined to condemn the policy above mentioned. Mr. Hodder, after giving a brief history, which would not be accepted by historians of to-day, writes: "Such was the state of things when Lord Ashley, Mr. Gurney and Mr. Fry began the long crusade against the opium trade—a crusade that has not yet achieved its crowning victory." That is true indeed, for the crusade has been defeated by the enquiries made in a judicial manner. But the object of the crusade will be finally achieved in a manner little foreseen by the crusaders. For the Indian opium is being, and will yet be, driven out of the Chinese markets by the growing production in China itself and by the improving manufacture of the Chinese-grown drug. We have Mr. Hodder's authority for Lord Ashley speaking, in his speech before the House of Commons, in regard to Chinese consumers of opium, of "their hideous disfigurement and premature decay, resulting in misery almost beyond belief, destroying myriads of individuals annually." There

may be always a doubt regarding spoken words; but if Lord Ashley meant the smokers in excess, then strong language was well deserved by them, just as it would be by inebriates or the sufferers from delirium tremens in Britain. But if he meant the Chinese opium consumers in the mass, then the information of 1842 must have been very defective and misleading in order to draw so great and good a man as His Lordship into such exaggeration as this. He said that the Bible (doubtless meaning the Protestant Missions) and opium could not enter China together. But in fact opium to a large extent had been grown in China for some generations before Protestant Christianity had been heard of in that country. Sir Robert Peel, then Prime Minister, did not seem to be moved, and was understood to say that as we could not put down gin at home we could not concern ourselves about the importation of opium into China. The justice of the Minister's argument was perhaps not appreciated at the time, because it was not then, in 1842, known that the Chinese themselves were the great producers, and that the Indian importation formed only a portion of the supply. Still the anti-opium party are entitled to the benefit of the fact that Lord Shaftesbury was their first leader, and that he probably did not materially change his opinion up to the end of his valued life.

Henceforth, although there will be some questions regarding the regulation of the opium trade by the

Chinese Government, yet the matter need not reappear in this narrative. The object has been to present the whole case according to the latest authorities; so that hereafter the narrative of grave events may not again be interrupted by a controversial subject.

Although the bad relations which, in contravention of the Treaty, the Cantonese officials insisted on keeping up with the British, were enough of themselves to endanger the Empire, other and still worse dangers were springing up. The people, as already stated, were not rising against the foreigners. Yet many of them were minded to rise against the Government and against the Manchu dynasty. The country round Canton was perhaps more inclined to disturbances than most parts of China, and the news of all the degrading disasters suffered during the hostilities with the British had by this time spread abroad, and the effect was a general dislocation of authority. Thereon several sects of a treasonable character, one of them bearing the name of the White Lily, which had for some time existed secretly, now began to rear their heads. So the years rolled on heavily and stormily for the Emperor Taokwang, whose health, too, was declining fast.

Very early in 1850, the precise date being uncertain, Taokwang died, sunk in superstition and mentally depressed. This depression may have been caused partly by a retrospect of his thirty years' reign, which even the sympathetic historian Boulger

pronounces to have been "one of unredeemed failure." But he must have been profoundly anxious regarding movements, nothing short of treasonable, which were affecting some of the inmost parts of Chinese society in the southern districts of the Empire, which were rising even at the very time of his death and which rose immediately afterwards. He was standing, whether he knew it or not, though he probably did know, on the brink of the events which soon grew into the notorious Taiping rebellion, and which will be prominently mentioned in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

REIGN OF EMPEROR HSIENFENG, 1850–1861.

In the spring of 1850 the fourth son of the late Emperor Taokwang ascended the Imperial throne with the style of Hsienfeng. As already stated, a dying Emperor chooses his successor irrespective of primogeniture. If Taokwang had, for any reason, domestic or other, to pass over the three elder sons, he had a choice between the fourth and the fifth, namely, Prince Kung. The fourth was unworthy and the fifth was well worthy, as will be seen hereafter. Unhappily for his country, he chose the unworthy one, who is now to be styled Hsienfeng.

The new Emperor was a headstrong youth nineteen years old, of dissipated habits, consequently not likely to have health or strength for the management of affairs, or nerve for facing danger. Though never showing the courage to be expected from his race, yet he had some of the short-sighted arrogance and all the worst prejudices which had injured the careers of his father and grandfather. He hated the foreigners even worse than they did, and this hatred of his induced him to incur fresh risks of the very sort which had ruined his father's reign, and now were to bring on his own the most

disgraceful disasters which had, as yet, ever befallen the Chinese Empire. After a short and inglorious reign he died weakened by debauchery in the flower of his age, away from the Imperial Capital, whence he had fled on the approach of the foreign enemy.

His position was indeed very hard from the outset. His father had left him a distracted inheritance. Disturbances, not quite amounting to rebellions, were rising in his southern provinces. Physical distress from famine had afflicted some of his fairest provinces; abuses and corruptions had grown, like rank vegetation, so fast under the prevailing troubles that even he or his council were obliged to issue a mandate against them. Moreover the relations of his Government with the foreigners were again becoming dangerously strained.

The very first trouble, early in 1850, which the new Government had to meet was a marked accession to the movements in the southern Provinces which have been already mentioned in a prefatory manner at the end of the last preceding Chapter.

Above the seething surface of these events there arose a personage who must be noticed, and his name was Hung. He is described by Professor Douglas as being "born of a Hakka or emigrant family," as "having studied the way-worn classics of his country, and presented himself at Canton as a candidate for examination. But the fates were against him, and his failure is accounted for by some who at-

tribute it to the fact of his parentage—the Hakkas being looked upon as a pariah class—and by others to his want of scholarship." Later on he fell ill and "as he tossed in his bed in delirium he saw strange and weird visions . . . he saw the Almighty who entered his room and placed a sword in his hand. . . . It is more than probable that he really believed his divine mission . . . he was able to impress those about him with a belief in his views, first of all his own household and afterwards in the neighbourhood. Followers gathered to him, and they endeavoured to spread the doctrines of the 'Association of the Almighty' which he established." For this nomenclature, he adopted the word "Hu," which, being distinctly imperial, became unpopular and was prudently dropped. But he at once "associated himself with a far more treasonable corporation," namely, "the Triad Society." Then he raised "troops who, full of iconoclastic zeal, destroyed the Buddhist temples in the country and threw down the idols." Thus his great rebellion was overtly begun.

First he captured several towns near the city of Canton, the capital of Kwantung province, without any resistance from the Chinese; but, finding that the defences of that city were being strengthened, he sheered off, and turning northwards, entered the province of Hunan. Near the capital of that province he was threatened with resistance for the first time from a Chinese commander. Again, however, he moved on, leaving the place untaken in his rear,

and being pursued, though quite ineffectually, by the Chinese troops. He, however, received submission and supplies from every town on his way. Multitudes flocked to his banner, in the sole belief that he was a man of success. He had neither organisation nor commissariat. His so-called army was a foraging horde who stayed in each locality till they had eaten up its supplies, and then went on to fresh fields and pastures. So he entered victoriously the middle basin of the Yang-tsze, the finest part of the Chinese interior, after having overrun with armed success two large provinces of the Empire within three years from the inception of his "divine mission," that is, between 1850 and 1853.

It was from this position, thus mastered, one of the most characteristic parts of historic China, the scene of some among the most heroic deeds of the Chinese nationality in the Middle Ages, the region of the great canals and the river-highways, the seat of the most beautiful of the Chinese industries, that early in 1853 he issued his so-called "celestial decrees," couched in terms of outrageous profanity and assigning to himself celestial powers direct from the Almighty. He then attacked and took Nanking, the capital of the lower Yang-tsze basin, the old Imperial capital, and still the second city of the Empire, with a ruthless and wholesale slaughter of the Manchu defenders and inhabitants. Thus he occupied the provinces of Ganhwy and Hoope in addition to the other two provinces already mentioned. He

then "proclaimed himself Emperor of China, announcing that his dynasty was to be known in future as the Taiping Dynasty. In support of this new dignity he severally appointed four of his principal supporters as kings of the north, the south, the west, the east. . . . He was never subsequently seen beyond the gates of his palace." The above quotations are from Professor Douglas. But in order to accentuate the low, bestial nature of the man, who had been permitted to do so much under celestial pretensions, the following passage from the historian Boulger may be cited: "He (Hung) retired into the interior of his palace and was never seen again. It was given out that he was constantly engaged in writing books, but the truth was that he had abandoned himself to the indulgences of the harem. He had chosen thirty of the women who had accompanied him from Kwangsi, and of those who had fallen to his spoil as a conqueror, to be his wives; but not content with this arrangement he allowed only females to attend on his august person." The consequence of this was that the eastern of the four kings, really the lieutenants, already mentioned, was acquiring potent influence. He laid claim, like his degraded chief, to celestial powers, and carried on the rebellion with more activity than ever.

The deltaic region of the Yang-tsze was now swept by the Taiping rebels close up to the British commercial settlement of Shanghai. This approach excited strange and conflicting emotions among the European

community at Shanghai. Boulger writes: "The missionaries, who possessed the almost complete control of the literature relating to China, were disposed to hail the Taipings as the regenerators of China and as the champions of Christianity. . . . Confident declarations were made that the last hour of the Manchu dynasty had arrived, and that the knell of its fate had sounded. The murmurs on the other hand were not less emphatic that the Taipings had ruined trade." There seems to have been doubt among the British whether they ought not to recognise the Taiping leader as the *de facto* ruler. They, however, decided to maintain their relations with the Emperor at Peking, to preserve an attitude of neutrality, to do nothing for the rebels and nothing against them so long as they observed the treaties between the Chinese Government and the Europeans. General Butler, who wrote the short life of "Chinese Gordon," and who must have had access to many records, affirms that as private traders the Europeans helped the Taipings by selling to them arms and ammunition. He writes: "The possession of the delta of the Yang-tsze-Kiang had given the Taipings access to the foreign trade, and thus put them in possession of whatever money could purchase in the way of guns, small arms, and munitions of war. . . . What this trade was may be judged from the seizure of a single English ship which was found to contain three hundred pieces of ordnance, several thousand rifles and revolvers and fifty tons of ammunition."

Meanwhile the position of the rebel leaders, that is, the four kings appointed by Hung, who was now retired from "celestial" business, really commanded the lower and middle Yang-tsze valley, the very finest part of China. It was being "watched," in the historian's phrase, by two Imperial forces. Apparently the Imperialists could at first only watch those whom they ought to have crushed. However, those watchmen were themselves attacked; they made counter attacks; there was some real fighting on both sides; some brave and faithful Imperialists were slain; still, no impression was made upon the great rebellion.

Then the rebel leaders held a council of war at Nanking and resolved to attempt a march on Peking itself. For this striking enterprise two forces were employed, one of which was to undertake the forward and foremost part, the other to co-operate or perhaps to form a reserve. Both forces at once began their respective movements and traversed without any difficulty the country that lies between the rivers Yang-tsze-Kiang and Hoang Ho, the two great rivers of China, and thus became masters of both these valleys. Thus, too, they overran triumphantly two more great provinces, namely, Shantung and Shansi, making up a total, with those previously captured, of seven provinces. For the most part their march was unopposed, for it was necessarily energetic and rapid, because in the absence of commissariat they had to spur and press on, when supplies failed them

in one place, to the next place. At one point only did they find that a real stand could be made by the Imperialists. Seeing that obstacle, they moved off and passed on, apparently without any attempt being made by the Imperialist commander to pursue them or to harass their rear. Thus they reached the valley of the river which runs by Pekin through Tientsin to the Pechiblee Gulf. Here they stopped for a short while at Tsinghai, distant about two marches from Tientsin itself. Hereon Professor Douglas writes: "The march had been daringly executed, and it reflects infinite discredit on the Imperial forces that so much had been accomplished at so small a cost. In a six months' raid the rebels had captured twenty-six cities and established themselves within a hundred miles of Peking. But the movement had been made in defiance of the true principles of warfare. . . . After a short rest at Tsinghai they marched to the attack of the neighbouring city of Tientsin. Here they found General Sankolinsin . . . and failed to make any impression on the fortifications garrisoned by the troops of this veteran. This check was fatal to the expedition. To have marched on Peking, with Tientsin untaken in their rear, would have been an act of full-moon madness, and the general in command wisely determined rather to force his way back to Nanking than to advance to certain ruin. With some difficulty and considerable loss he managed to cut his way through the intervening Imperial host and eventually succeeded in bring-

ing a remnant of his forces to the capital of his chief" (Nanking).

The other column, which had started with the idea of supporting the first expedition, on hearing of the retreat from Tsinghai retired with alacrity and retraced its steps to Nanking. The Imperialists' Commander took heart when he saw the rebels retreating, and recaptured many towns with the same ease with which they had been captured; clearing the Taipings out of the Hoang Ho basin by the beginning of 1855. Still, however, the rebels kept the whole valley of the Yang-tsze from its mouth up to Tchang near the foot of the first mountain range, a distance in a straight line of 800 miles, the richest part of China, with their capital at Nanking. Thus they were closely confined, but the area of their confinement was magnificent indeed. Within that area dreadful deeds were done by the rebels among themselves. As Boulger writes: "Prince murdered prince; the streets of Nanking were flooded with the blood of thousands of their followers." The town of Shanghai was occupied by them and was recaptured by the Imperialists with European aid. The European settlement there was for a time in imminent danger and was saved only by the protection of European warships. In short, had it not been for the presence of Europeans and their active aid, the Imperialist cause would have been rooted out from the mouth and estuary of the Yang-tsze as completely as it had been from the delta and this valley. Thus

the great rebellion stood in 1855 and 1856, too large indeed, yet without further enlargement, and so it remained for several years. Having beleaguered it, the Imperial commanders might have attacked it in its last strongholds; but they and their troops were diverted towards Peking by grave complications with England and France which will presently be mentioned.

Before quitting these events it is needful to add that in 1854 and 1855 the "Triad" rebels (in their origin and conduct something like the Taipings) had been stirring in the south near Amoy and Canton. Their successes in the towns were similar to those which have been recounted in the career of the other rebels; but they were checked by the fortifications of Canton. In both Amoy and Canton barbarity most shocking followed the reassertion of Imperial authority, and checked the European sympathy which was beginning to rise in favour of the Emperor as against the rebels.

The first landmark in the rebellion has now been reached. Sir William Butler * graphically sums up the result thus: "The Taiping rebels, moving from the southern province of China, had overrun the wide delta of the Yang-tsze-Kiang, the centre of the richest industries and gardens of the Empire. City after city had fallen before them. Nanking, the ancient capital of the Southern Empire; Soochow,

* In his memoir of General Gordon, Macmillan's "Series of English Men of Action."

the fresh-water Venice of the East; Hangchow, the gate of the imperial canal, had all been carried." In order that there may be no idea that the events are exaggerated, the latest available authorities have been cited as regards the principal points, though there are countless details which might make the complexion even worse, for the inferences to be drawn from this great case are truly terrible.

The Taiping rebellion, then, though still great, remained from this time, 1856 till 1861, without further aggrandisement, mainly through its own viciousness rather than through any Imperialist efforts. In that sense it may be described as quiescent and stagnant for a while. This, then, is the moment for pausing a brief while to regard the lurid light which such an affair casts on several categories of national development, that is, on the Imperial constitution, the polity, the body politic, the social framework, the temper and disposition of the Chinese.

Without pressing the case against an ancient, an interesting, in many respects a great, though in the end an unfortunate, people, it must in truth be declared that this vast rebellion was thoroughly disgraceful to the Chinese in each and all of these categories. No doubt the case did not touch the whole Empire, but it did affect at least seven out of the eighteen provinces, or nearly half the Empire, and that the richest, the most populous and civilised half. It has been understood from their admirers that the

Chinese are a religious people with reverent awe for antiquity, for ancient culture, for the authority of philosophy and literature. But here they suffered a mean wretch of outcast family and almost illiterate, capable of turning his own house into a moral pig-sty, to usurp of his own authority a so-called celestial status. They suffered him and his to desecrate the temples and to carry off the attendants to serve in his forces. Forgetting their own dynasties of old renown, memorable so long as Asiatic records shall survive, they endured that he of his own will should proclaim himself Emperor of China in the old national capital. They have been described by some as intensely patriotic, but here they let him and his motley host set at nought in the twinkling of an eye all their laws, institutions, systems elaborated with amazing patience and perseverance through many centuries. They had an antique class of learned men, heretofore wielding all over the country the influence wielded in other countries by the priesthood; but now this class nowhere appears as exerting itself for order. They have been reported as brave, and their annals teem with instances of heroism; but here nothing but cowardice is shown from one end of the country to the other, hardly a hand or a voice is raised over the broad sea of folly; and the national failure is but slightly redeemed by a very few brave and loyal men who have not been, and probably never will be, wanting where Chinamen are gathered together. They are represented as much attached to

local and provincial systems for militia and regular troops, even insisting that their armies shall be provincial; yet here the militia did nothing, perhaps even fraternised with the rebels; not one of the provincial armies made a stand for its province. Heretofore they had been actuated by municipal sentiment, but now long-established cities, literally by scores and scores, opened their gates to the marauding host who stayed like a flight of locusts till all the edible stores were depleted. Of the Imperial Generals one only made a real stand, and he was a Mongolian; had it not been for him the rebels might have reached Peking. The wealthy and well-to-do classes must have seen that the movement had no purpose, no policy, no object except boundless pillage. The plunder must have been immense, and the fact that the wealth of the country was not exhausted only shows the wondrous power of secreting which Orientals possess. Yet with all this, no combination among those who had means, knowledge and experience was made anywhere to stem the wide-spreading torrents of disorder. Other revolutions have arisen in other countries, but always by reason of grievances, of oppressions, of something to be redressed, to be demanded, to be won. In this short-lived revolution, there was no grievance put forward, no principle, not even the wildest allegation, no demand made. There was nothing but aimless excitement and wicked cupidity on the one hand and the grossest national inefficiency on the other.

If the Chinese were proud, as by some they are supposed to be, then their pride suffered in this case a blow well-nigh irrecoverable.

For all that there must have been some thoughts working in the Chinese mind at this time, which may be hard for a European to discern, but which may have brought about some indifference to passing events. There may have been a latent disloyalty towards the Manchu Emperor as being of a Tartar dynasty. As regards him even there may have been the thought of China for the Chinese. Still more was the thought operating as regards the Europeans who as traders were already strong on the seaboard and were likely to extend into the interior. The *literati* were perhaps falling into despair because of the new knowledge flowing into the country, not only from foreign intercourse, but also from the operations of the Christian Missions.

It was at this juncture, 1856, that the Chinese chose to provoke fresh hostilities with the British at Canton, which have become known to history under the name of the Second Chinese War. If it was the Chinese Emperor and Ministers that courted this fresh foreign danger, with the Taiping rebellion checked but not suppressed, and very far from extinction, their conduct would seem insane. But very possibly they had no real control over affairs so far down south as Canton. Their ordinary communications were indeed intercepted by the rebels, and an Imperial despatch, if addressed to Canton, could have

reached there only by some circuitous route on land or by sea, running the gauntlet of the British ships at or about Hong Kong, now grown into a political centre and a naval base. Doubtless the conduct of affairs must have been left mainly to the Viceroy at Canton, the Yeh already mentioned, a man of corpulent habit but truculent in temper, blinded by fury, hot-headed with fanaticism. Doubtless he waited not for orders from Peking, knowing that the new Emperor hated foreigners even more, if possible, than his predecessors had done. He determined that the Europeans should not have the position assigned to them by the Treaty, but should remain on sufferance, and subject to any humiliation he might choose to inflict. Insulting proclamations against them were posted up in Canton, memorials were erected in honour of an Official who had been instrumental in expelling them. Several outrages happened, and then an event of a crucial character occurred. A lorcha, a small Chinese craft with a crew of twelve sailors, named the Arrow, and lawfully flying the British flag, was lying near the mouth of the Canton River. She was boarded by the Chinese, her flag was hauled down and trampled on deck, and her crew were made prisoners. This was the beginning of the Second Chinese War. The British Representative, then Sir John Bowring, demanded reparation, not from the Chinese Government at Peking, but from Yeh at Canton. This not being obtained, he proceeded to make war upon Yeh at

once. Such a procedure was doubtless necessary, but it did not accord with international usage among civilised nations, and it illustrates the pass to which things had been brought by the practice of the Chinese, who in war and politics were really uncivilised. Accordingly the British Admiral, appearing off Canton, shelled the Yamen, or palace of Yeh, breached the city wall, and landed a party to enter the city. But not having enough land force to occupy the city he withdrew, having thus left his mark on it. Various operations followed in the Canton waters, a few British ships engaging victoriously large numbers of Chinese war-vessels. The Chinese evinced much determination in fighting, and the English did just what might have been expected from them in positions of much difficulty.

The British Government in London now felt, in 1856, that although matters were flourishing at Shanghai and were going on well enough at the other Treaty Ports, yet were reaching at Canton a pitch which demanded direct relations between the Sovereigns of the British and Chinese Empires. Here was active warfare going on between the British at Hong Kong and the Chinese at Canton, which was, however, not acknowledged as war, and was not recognised as such between Britain and China. The British Government held that this irregular state of things, however necessary it may have been, must not be allowed to last. So the Earl of Elgin was despatched as Plenipotentiary with a force of European

troops to deal with the whole case on the spot. His arrival was delayed because on his way he patriotically complied with a request from the Governor-General of India to lend his troops to help in surmounting the crisis of the Indian Mutinies which began in May, 1857. At last he arrived at Hong Kong and opened communications with Yeh at Canton, demanding the fulfilment of the Treaty and reparation for the breaches of it. No answer worth having was received, and by the end of 1857 Lord Elgin proceeded to Canton and required Yeh to surrender the city. This being refused, the ships with their guns breached the walls, which were then occupied by British troops; the provincial treasury was seized; Yeh himself was captured and sent off in a British ship to Calcutta, there to end his days; and the city was placed provisionally under a Board of European Officers, greatly to the comfort and satisfaction of the townspeople. So strange were the relations between the Governments of Britain and China that even this step, of the very strangest character, was taken without any communication with the Emperor at Peking.

Lord Elgin, however, forthwith reported to the Chief Secretary of the Emperor the events which had happened at Canton, and asked for a meeting at Shanghai. The Chief Secretary was not authorised to give His Lordship any direct answer, but sent his reply to the Viceroy of the Shanghai region, requesting him to communicate with the British Min-

ister, who was then at the head of a naval squadron and a military force. The communication was to the effect that the British should communicate with the new Viceroy, who would be appointed to succeed Yeh. But the captivity of Yeh did not seem at all to move his Imperial master. All this supplies a justification for the direct and irregular procedure which the British had been obliged to adopt. Even after the severest lessons the Emperor, doubtless with the advice of his Ministers, would neither abate his pride nor communicate with the foreigners. His language was that of reproof to the British for their offence in taking Canton, and of imperial magnanimity towards the offenders.

Lord Elgin, however, most properly desired to have nothing more to do with any authorities in the Canton province, but to enter into relations with the Emperor at Peking. So he proceeded in force up the Pechihlee Gulf to the mouth of the Peiho River, near the famous Taku forts. He was there received by the Emperor's Government with such discourtesy that he caused the forts to be captured at once and proceeded up the river to Tientsin, an important town about eighty miles from Peking. Then at last the Emperor began to come to his senses. First he appointed two Commissioners of competent rank to negotiate a treaty with Lord Elgin, but he also sent an imperial agent named Keying, the best man then in China, to induce Lord Elgin to withdraw from Tientsin. This being refused, as might have

been foreseen, Keying returned to Peking, where he was brought to trial for his failure and immediately executed. This again illustrates the hapless temper of a Chinese Emperor. When an inevitable failure occurs it is attributed, not to the nature of things Chinese, but to the alleged misconduct of an individual who is not only innocent but praiseworthy, and who is wrongly sentenced to exile or to death. This of itself suffices to prevent the Emperor ever being well served. Just as Kishên was sacrificed because he made regarding Hong Kong the very treaty which was afterwards sanctioned, so now Keying was sacrificed even more completely because he could not do the impossible, namely, induce Lord Elgin and his forces to retreat. Then the Treaty of Tientsin was concluded in 1858 by which the China trade is still regulated. The old Treaty was confirmed, and in addition to the five Treaty Ports previously mentioned, five more were declared open to European trade, namely, Newchwang in Manchuria, Tenchow, Formosa, Swatow, and Kingchow in the island of Hainan, making ten Treaty Ports. To this was added the important agreement that the British Queen should appoint a Resident Minister at Peking. For the moment it seemed as if the warfare was over, but this agreement was so treated by the Chinese that the warfare was renewed in the form of a regular war which brought the Chinese Empire to the verge of destruction. No sooner had the Emperor signed the agreement to receive a British Resi-

dent Minister than he entreated that none might actually be sent. When told that such a Representative must be sent he begged that this might not be till the following year, and this respite was granted. It was understood that the Minister would come to exchange the ratification of the Treaties. The reason given for the delay was the alleged turbulence of the Peking townsfolk. This was, as usual, unjust to the people, for they were quiet and friendly enough, unless hounded on to outrage by their own governors.

About this time the French Government proposed to send a Minister Resident to Peking, and this was refused. The French had acquired a certain position, though not a large one, in the commercial affairs; and one of their Officers was on the Board of Administration at Canton. So the refusal at Peking predisposed them to offer support to the British in any coercive measures which might become necessary. Moreover the Emperor Napoleon was then anxious to make a display in the East, though he had no considerable interest in Peking, and he wished that display to be in conjunction with the British.

According to previous announcement, a British Minister, Mr. Bruce, arrived at the mouth of the Peiho in the following year, 1859, with a squadron of ships, as befitted his rank and the occasion, and proposed to proceed up the river as far as Tientsin. As they were passing through the mouth of the river, the passage was found to be blockaded in a

formidable manner, and a heavy fire was opened upon them from masked batteries in the forts. They replied by landing men to attack the forts, but after gallant efforts were unable to pass through the deep and quagmiry mud. Thus the British had to retire with heavy loss, after an attack treacherously made on them in time of peace and shortly after the conclusion of a Treaty.

Forthwith the British prepared for war to be formally declared. The French Government wished to join them, so an allied force of thirteen thousand English under General Hope-Grant, and seven thousand French under General Montauban, in all twenty thousand men, was appointed to attack Peking. The fact that so small a force as this was deemed sufficient for attacking the capital of the then most poplous Empire on earth, shows to what a depth the Chinese military repute had sunk. Yet the British were minded to give the Emperor one more chance. So in 1860 Mr. Bruce presented an ultimatum requesting him to make reparation for the treacherous attack at Taku and to fulfil the Treaty. Although this proceeded from a British Minister appointed under Treaty, the Emperor would not treat with him or even reply to him, but sent a reply to the Governor of the Nanking province, with whom Mr. Bruce might, if so minded, communicate. Thus the Emperor ignored the recent Treaty, and from his tone and language was evidently resolved not to receive a British Minister at the capital as

provided by Treaty, although this was manifestly the only measure by which a recrudescence of the troubles in the Canton country could be averted. Thus nothing remained save coercion by armed force.

So the European Allies advanced, took the Taku forts by land attack, and after resistance here and there from Chinese forces, including cavalry, Tartar and Mongolian, went on to Tientsin. There some attempt was made by the Emperor to negotiate, but the Commissioners were found to be without power to conclude anything, and this futile effort proved abortive. So the Allies went on to a point half-way between Tientsin and Peking. There a Prince arrived to beg Lord Elgin to retire back on Tientsin. Then it was agreed that some British Officers were to be sent onwards to arrange a convention which under the circumstances would be of the simplest kind. These were Wade, Parkes and Loch, all names which have since become historic. It were tedious to recount the story of Chinese evasions, smiling pretences, treachery and destructive schemes while peace negotiations were nominally going on. The British force narrowly escaped being entrapped by these negotiations into an encampment where they might be surrounded by overpowering numbers. Loch and Parkes in their diplomatic capacity fell among thieves, in that they were detained by Chinese Officials, then imprisoned together with other members of the British force, insulted, maltreated and brought before "the Board of Punishment" in the

most noisome dungeon of Peking. Meanwhile the allied troops were advancing on Peking after defeating the Chinese in two considerable actions. Thereon the Emperor fled his capital in the most dastardly manner, and betook himself to his hunting lodge at Jehol in the Mongolian mountains, leaving Prince Kung, his brother, in charge of affairs at Peking. Thither he was followed by Ministers who, feeling themselves physically safe up there, breathed fire against the foreigners and urged the Emperor to refuse any terms with them, facing the consequences at any cost. At a council held there the death of Loch and Parkes was decreed, and their death-warrant was signed. Happily intimation was sent to Prince Kung at Peking, just one quarter of an hour before the arrival of the Imperial Messenger with the warrant. He instantly released the distinguished prisoners, and it was only by this narrow margin of time that their fate was averted. Meanwhile the British had virtually got command of Peking, and Prince Kung accepted on behalf of his brother a Convention of Peace, which generally confirmed the Treaty of Tientsin already mentioned, and which regulates the relations between Britain and China to this day. The two documents were to be read together, and all this being ratified, the wretched Emperor was compelled to issue an edict notifying the Treaty throughout the Empire, so that all the Chinese should know what had actually been done. The British were so indignant at the astounding

treachery with which their countrymen had been made prisoners, and the brutality with which all had been treated and under which some of them had succumbed, that Lord Elgin felt himself obliged to leave a signal mark, not on the city of Peking where the people had not offended, but on the residence of the guilty Emperor. So the famous Summer Palace was formally and deliberately destroyed. Then the Allies, Ministers, troops and ships left northern China as the autumn was advancing.

Among the subsidiary arrangements in the Convention were the opening of Tientsin to foreign trade as a Treaty Port in addition to the several Ports already mentioned, and the cession to the British of the town and lands of Kowloon on the mainland opposite the island of Hong Kong.

Thus ended the year 1860, most miserable and disgraceful for the Emperor Hsienfeng, indeed the worst year known for China ever since the invasion by the Mongols of Genghiz Khan in the eleventh century. Hsienfeng had with simple infatuation caused a war to be waged with European Powers in order to evade the ratification of a Treaty in which he himself had been a party and to avoid the fulfilment of its principal provision. His brother, Prince Kung, who was regent for him at Peking, urged him to return to his capital, but he would not. At Jehol he remained with his Council, who were full of anti-foreign or reactionary ideas, and quite capable of again plunging the State into the troublous

waves from which it had just been rescued. Seeing the danger, Kung proceeded to Jehol, and finding the Councillors to be impracticable men, formed a secret alliance with the two Empresses, one of whom was the senior wife, while the other was the mother of the eldest son, then four years old. The Emperor himself was still only thirty years old, but his health was fatally broken. His humiliations were enough of themselves to bow him down, but there was also a deadly enfeeblement from debauchery. So he sickened and died in August, 1861, at Jehol, after a most discreditable reign of ten years. His infant son was proclaimed Emperor at Jehol with the Council for a regency. Kung, however, would have none of this; he induced the two Empresses to bring the infant Emperor to Peking, and then to dismiss the Councillors. He caused the leading men among them to be brought to trial for offences against the State, and to be put to death. He then established a regency with himself and the two Empresses, and the boy Emperor was proclaimed with a new title (see page 389).

Of Prince Kung more will be heard hereafter, and perhaps he will hardly maintain the high position which would at this juncture be assigned to him. He was certainly the foremost man in China during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Had he been chosen Emperor in 1850 instead of Hsienfeng, his country might have been saved from many of the misfortunes she had to suffer. His vigorous, wise

and patriotic conduct in the autumn of 1860 at Peking certainly saved the Manchu dynasty from extinction, and perhaps averted the dismemberment of the Chinese Empire. His management in 1861 was perhaps disfigured by cruelty in the execution of the Ministers. Otherwise it prevented the sorely wounded Empire from relapsing into the dangers from which it had only just emerged. Henceforward he is conjoined with the two Empresses, and it will be difficult to discriminate his individuality with any certainty, though his influence doubtless will pervade the Imperial counsels. If so, he must be held partly responsible for the disasters which are yet to be narrated.

CHAPTER XXVII.

REIGN OF THE EMPEROR TUNGCHIH, 1861–1875.

WHEN the late Emperor Hsienfeng died ingloriously in his mountain-retreat at Jehol, he appointed his eldest son as his successor, who was then four years old and was proclaimed Emperor under the style of Chihsiang. This style of his was shortly afterwards changed to Tungchih, under which title he is known to history. Being a child, he was under the control of two Dowager Empresses, both of whom were the widows of his father, the late Emperor Hsienfeng, and one of whom was his mother. The two Imperial ladies were in the first instance assisted by a Council of regency. These Councillors were superseded through the energetic action of Prince Kung, the late Emperor's brother, who then with the two Empresses virtually formed the regency.

Still, from this time the Imperial authority passes virtually, though not quite nominally, into the hands of Imperial Ladies. The succession to the Imperial Crown, and the exercise of that Imperial authority, which is the sole source of all power throughout the Empire, are settled and regulated secretly within the walls of the Palace of Peking. As Professor Douglas writes, "No secrets are al-

lowed to escape beyond the pink walls of the Palace." Such a system, almost unknown in Chinese history, and quite unknown for many generations, deprived the Chinese constitution of almost its last chance of standing. By that constitution the Emperor must rule by personal government. All the Emperors had done so, some well, others more or less ill. Still, each one of them had played a personal part, and there always was some guiding will consistently acting, even though it acted in a wrong way. But now there was no personality to be recognisable in the Government. None could say from whom the policy of the day might emanate, whether from the Imperial Ladies, or if so from which of the two Empresses, or whether from Prince Kung, or whether from the Ministers. If indeed the Chinese law had admitted of a female Sovereign being chosen to succeed, then possibly either of the two Ladies might have proved to be a competent Empress, for both were understood to be able women. In that case she would have been individually responsible, and might have acted worthily. As it was the two must have been tempted to pull in different directions, yet neither of them effectually, because of the Council of Ministers. On the other hand the Council was never effective because of the Empresses. Thus in addition to a perilously critical state of affairs which would have taxed the wisdom and energy of the best government that could have been invented, unhappy China was now to have as futile and fatuous a gov-

ernment as could well be imagined. It was saved at the capital and the headquarters by the Prince Kung already mentioned. As a Prince Imperial, and the son of an Emperor, he had long been eligible to be appointed Emperor. Had he been so chosen, then the Chinese Government would have had some chance of being saved. But Providence decided otherwise as against China, though he still remained in some degree of power, and even that was something for China in her distress. Besides him there arose two brave and good Generals in the field, and two, perhaps three, able and trustworthy administrators. Thus China, though broken, was able "brokenly to live on."

One official improvement was made for the better regulation of the relations between the Chinese Government and the European Powers. All Foreign Affairs, which had heretofore filled a meagre place in the Colonial Department and had been treated with something akin to contempt, were henceforth to be dealt with by a Board resembling a Foreign Office in Europe and to be called the Tsung Li Yamen. Of this Board Prince Kung was the head.

Peace having been concluded with the two European Powers, England and France, the new Emperor and his Regency were in 1861 left free to deal conclusively with the Taiping Rebellion, already mentioned as the worst disturbance internally that had ever arisen in China. At the present moment the juncture was in this wise. The rebels were under

two leaders of heavenly, and consequently imperial, pretensions in the eyes of the Chinese. Of these one called "the Heavenly King" was resting luxuriously in his palace at Nanking; the other, called "the Faithful Prince," was actively fighting in the field. They had got possession of the entire valley of the Yang-tsze, and were burning villages actually within sight of the European residents at Shanghai. In conjunction with the local Imperial authorities, the Europeans raised a small Chinese force under European Officers. This was commanded by Mr. Ward, an American who, though a civilian, was a brave and skilful soldier. With a little band of a very few thousand men he went through seventy fights, winning them all, within two years, and in 1862 was killed in action near Ningpo, a short distance south of Shanghai. The Government at Peking were so well satisfied with this little force that they in a childish manner called it officially "the ever victorious army." On Ward's death the command was given to another American named Burgevine, who quarrelled with the Imperial officials, and was dismissed. Then some military mishaps occurred, and though warships, both British and French, were co-operating with the efforts made on land, the situation was felt to be grave. So a careful selection was made of an Officer to command "the ever victorious army," and consequently in March, 1863, Captain Gordon was appointed, who soon became famous as "Chinese Gordon." In Sir William But-

ler's words: "The task before him (Gordon) was to reduce the delta and a score of walled cities to Imperial authority. He will do it, he tells the Chinese generalissimo, by the very means which this labyrinth of canal, lake and river puts into his hand; for with all its intricacies it is only a big chessboard, its vast mazework making it all the better for the man who first learns it by heart; these creeks and cross creeks will be so many parallels and trenches for sapping up to the very heart of the revolt, for turning cities, taking positions in reverse, and above all for using the power which steam gives to transport men, stores and munitions along these navigable waterways. It is now the month of March, 1863: by August, 1864, the last city will have been taken from the Taipings and the delta cleared." In acting up to a programme thus graphically sketched, Gordon displayed a many-sided genius which entitles him to a high rank among the men who are soldiers by nature. As the Taipings were being driven by him to bay they evinced the courage of despair, and there was much real fighting. In the thick of the operations he was nearly being superseded by the folly of the Imperial Government. Burgevine had appealed in person at Peking, and had brought an Imperial order for restoring him to command. But the local authorities with English support at Shanghai retained Gordon in his position. There was yet another interruption, this time from Chinese wickedness. Before Soochow surrendered certain

Taiping chiefs had been promised their lives, and to that promise Gordon was a party. After the surrender they were perfidiously executed. Thereon Gordon gave up his command and left the force. He was requested by the Emperor to accept a medal and a large honorarium, but he refused. He was afterwards induced by the British authorities for the sake of the public interest to resume the command. After brilliant though bloody operations he broke the back of the rebellion and in June, 1864, his small disciplined force was disbanded. The Imperialists in their unwisdom were in a hurry to dispense with the foreign element, and so to finish the campaign themselves. Sir William Butler writes regarding Gordon's force: "Out of one hundred and thirty foreign officers thirty-five had been killed and seventy-three wounded; among four thousand Chinese soldiers five hundred and twenty had been killed and nine hundred and twenty wounded. Few heavier losses proportionate to strength can be found recorded in any similar war." The concluding act of this drama was the taking of Nanking, which had all along been the headquarters of the rebellion. The "Heavenly King," the prime mover and the mean creature described in the last Chapter, poisoned himself with gold leaf. "The faithful prince," who had been fighting with his usual vigour, carried off the youthful heir of the mushroom Taiping dynasty on horseback. They were, however, both captured, the boy was beheaded on the spot, and "the faithful prince"

was detained for a few days to write the story of his life; and when the last line was finished, his execution followed forthwith.

So the Taiping rebellion was ended in 1864, not indeed by the Imperialists with their own ability, but solely through the aid of the Europeans. Without that aid the rebellion would have remained unbroken, with consequences sooner or later fatal to the Manchu dynasty. For at length a really capable and brave leader had arisen among the Taipings in the person of "the faithful prince." He kept his men up to the mark for fighting, and was vastly superior to Li Hung Chang, the Chinese leader, notorious in Chinese history, who was then in the prime of life. Referring to this occasion, Professor Douglas comments with just severity on the opportunism of Li Hung Chang, who rid himself of the disciplined Chinese and of the European officers, knocking down the bridge which carried him over the dangerous torrent, without any regard to the future. The Professor writes: "They (the Chinese) are in this respect like children in whose eyes the present difficulty is the all-absorbing subject. . . . They feel no shame at their defeats. Their national pride covers them as with a garment."

The services of Gordon were of vital consequence to the Empire of China, and brought signal honour to his own country. In 1899 Lord Charles Beresford testifies to the gratitude with which Gordon's memory is cherished by thoughtful Chinese.

The consequences of the Taiping rebellion even now were not yet over. The scattered rebels, long used to plunder, could not bear to return to honest labour. So under the style of Nienfei they formed themselves into a force and occupied the peninsula of Shantung. Then Li Hung Chang was sent against them, and after some reverses and failures on his own side he effected their reduction.

Thus ended the great rebellion which had lasted for fourteen years, 1850 to 1864, and which but for the aid from the British people would probably have led to a completo revolution. It may be said that but for the complications with Britain between 1856 and 1860 the Chinese Emperor's Government might have put down the rebellion unaided. It is impossible to decide this speculative question. At all events, if Britain at one stage embarrassed the Chinese Emperor, then British people more than redressed the balance by the help they rendered at the final stage. The sadly unfavourable inferences to be drawn from this rebellion in respect to China have been mentioned in the last Chapter. Suffice it here to add that scarcely ever in any history has there been a rebellion so unreasonable, so unintelligible as this. As the Chinese never dreamt of setting up a republic, then disloyalty to the Emperor, who is to them the heaven-born, and the head of their national religion, is almost unaccountable, as there was no descendant of former dynasties, no princely successor in the field. That there was some disloyalty some-

where is morally certain. Perhaps one reason, among other reasons, for it may have been the growing influence of European traders and European Missionaries during the last two Imperial reigns. The unopposed prevalence of mob rule, senseless, licentious, rapacious, may have led many to doubt whether the Chinese culture, polity and civilisation, so highly vaunted by historians and so well handed down from antiquity as to be ineffaceable in human memory, had ever really existed. That it did exist to some extent is proved by the fact that even after this rebellion the Imperial constitution was maintained for a while till it had to bear the shock of more calamities, before the catastrophe arrived, as will be seen hereafter.

But the calamities of this time, 1860 to 1870, large as they were, did not end here, for all the while the two Muhammadan rebellions, as they are called in history, were raging in the western provinces of Shensi and Kansuh and in the south-western province of Yunnan. The Great Plateau beyond these provinces and beyond the mountains had for some years been wholly lost to the Empire. Thus it requires a moment's reflection in order to measure the desperate position to which the Chinese Empire had been reduced at the time of the Emperor Tungchih's accession. The Yang-tsze-Kiang valley was disturbed by the Taipings up to 1865 at least. The Cantonese region was in disorder near to anarchy. The Shantung province was threatened by rebels. The west

and south-west provinces were overrun with insurgents. It is hard to say what remained to the Emperor and to the Imperialist cause except the country around Peking, that is, the valley of the Peiho, the delta of the Hoang Ho, the districts immediately around some of the Treaty Ports and the dependency of Manchuria. The Imperial Treasury must have been in a low condition, depending mainly on the sea customs, but wanting in any revenue from the Provinces. At first sight it would be hard to imagine how the finances of the Empire were carried on at that time, but for the remembrance that the local authorities would get on without pay under the Chinese system, as they paid themselves by exactions from the people. Still, the Chinese Government, with amazing tenacity, struggled on, despite the accumulation of misfortune.

In Yunnan the Muhammadans were very numerous, and they had been more or less in insurrection all through the preceding reign, that of Hsienfeng. They were called Panthays and had grievances against the Chinese of the province, which were unredressed by the local authorities, and their cause was conducted under skilful leaders. The rebellion was marked by shocking barbarities, by massacres sometimes amounting to extermination. At one time the Imperialists had lost the whole of this large Province except its capital at Talifoo. At length the country was reduced to submission, and then Talifoo was recaptured by the year 1873. The

desolation of whole tracts of country, by the holocausts of human life, has lasted through a whole generation, and the vestiges of it are far from being obliterated even yet.

Meanwhile almost contemporaneously with the rebellion of the Panthays in Yunnan, the Tungani Muhammadans of the neighbouring provinces of Shensi and Kansuh were in revolt for much the same cause, namely, unredressed wrongs on the part of their Chinese fellow-subjects. The formidable consequence was that the movement spread to the Tunganis on the Great Plateau and this destroyed for a while the Chinese domination in those vast highlands. The rebellion in Shensi and Kansuh, which lay on the eastern or Chinese side of the mountains flanking the Great Plateau, was suppressed within the reign of Tungchih. But it continued beyond the mountains and throughout the Plateau. Thus the youthful Emperor did see his authority reasserted in all the eighteen Provinces of China, the Great Plateau alone remaining to be recaptured. This recapture proved to be a task bequeathed to the succeeding reign.

About the year 1870 the affairs relating to European commerce were proceeding fairly well, and the country was quiet internally save for one very grave affair at Tientsin. There a shocking attack was made on a religious settlement of French Roman Catholics, with some bloodshed. Herein much remissness was shewn by the local authorities.

Prince Kung, who was still at the head of affairs, behaved well; the mischief was stopped, an indemnity was paid, and a special envoy was sent to France to convey apologies.

In 1872 the Emperor Tungchih attained his sixteenth birthday and was married, the bride being a Manchu lady of suitable rank, specially selected by the two Dowager Empresses, and named Ahluta. His wedding was celebrated pompously at an enormous cost, which might have been justified in the palmy days long past, but which was out of place in an Empire only just out of the throes of several convulsions. He then assumed the Government; the two Dowager Empresses retired within their apartments. The Foreign Envoys demanded the audience of the Emperor which had been often refused and delayed; but this time it was granted with full ceremony. Prince Kung remained as Primo Minister to his young nephew. The nephew was headstrong and impetuous; the uncle gave sage but positive advice. Thereon the Emperor issued a decree dismissing Kung and his son from their offices. This was indeed a grave step; but on the following day the two Empresses issued a decree, which reinstated both father and son, and which was accepted and acted on by the Government. This illustrates the mechanism of a Constitution which had been and was yet further to be tried most sorely. Further it shows that there must have been a severe dissension between the young Emperor and his mother.

Shortly after this the Emperor was announced to be sick of the smallpox, and, whatever may have been the cause, he died in January, 1875, in his palace at the age of nineteen years. The constitutional position for Prince Kung and the two Dowager Empresses was difficult. The widowed Empress Ahluta was known to be pregnant, and until her child should be born, no arrangement for filling the Throne could lawfully be made. If the child should be a boy he would be proclaimed Emperor and his mother Ahluta would be the Empress-Regent, displacing the two Dowager Empresses who had ruled now for fifteen years. Shortly afterwards Ahluta sickened and died in the palace with her child unborn. The vacancy in the Throne was filled up by direction of Kung, and the two Dowager Empresses resumed, after a short intermission, so to speak, their regency which they had held for many years, and which they would now hold for many years more in the event of their selecting a child, which they actually did. Under these circumstances the deaths of Tungchih and his wife in the very flower of their age, one after the other with but a short interval, would excite suspicion in the mind of any one acquainted with Oriental affairs. But in reference to such troublous times as these there would be no need to dwell on the case were it not for the suspicions openly uttered by the Chinese society of the day as to poison having been employed.* The

* Boulger, III. 710.

suspicion thus entertained by the Chinese themselves was the darkest imaginable; for it amounted to this, that a mother would murder her own son, a lad of nineteen, because he refused to be kept in apron-strings. This is really a thought at which humanity should shudder; yet there seemed to be no such shuddering in public opinion at Peking. Even if Tungchih died a natural death, it is impossible to silence the worst misgivings in respect to the death of Ahluta, whose brief but romantic career is remembered with sadness by all students of Chinese history. The Dowager Empresses waited not for a moment to see whether her coming child would prove a boy. No sooner had the Emperor expired than they, at the dead of night, chose a child from another branch of the family, sent for him from his bed and did homage to him then and there.* Now these crimes, if really committed, were not only most heinous but unnatural in the eyes of humanity. Yet these suspicions, not whispered but bruited abroad, believed by many, and rarely if at all contradicted, do not appear to have weakened any prestige or popularity which these Imperial ladies enjoyed. And if—which God forbid—they were guilty, it is hard to understand how Prince Kung could have been guiltless. Yet his personal influence remained apparently unabated with the Chinese public. These circumstances cast a searchlight on the sinking ship of China.

* Boulger, III. 711.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

REIGN OF THE EMPEROR KWANGHSU, 1875–1899.

WHEN, in the beginning of 1875 the young Emperor "became a guest on high," and three months afterwards was followed to the tomb by his young Empress, it devolved on the two Dowager Empresses to chose a successor, although there were two Imperial Princes available, one being the redoubtable Prince Kung himself, already mentioned as the best, and as the only first-rate man in China, although, as has just been said, a terrific suspicion hung over a part of his conduct. He, if chosen, would have been a real Emperor, and that would not have suited the two Dowagers. He had a son, however, who was well grown up and was a candidate for the succession. But then that would have necessitated the retirement of Prince Kung from the Ministry, and the Dowagers did not wish to lose him as Minister. They did not care to have his son, however, even without the father, because, being grown up, the young man, with the indirect support of the father, might prove to be a real Emperor. So they chose a child of four years old, the son of another Prince Imperial, and proclaimed him Emperor under the title of Kwanghsu.

Heretofore, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the summary of each reign has been the record of a step downwards for the Chinese Empire, each step going further than the last towards the depth. But now the new reign begins with a yet deeper step. The preceding reign began with the choice of a little boy Emperor, to be under the governance of two Dowager Empresses checking each other, partly controlled by, and partly controlling, a Council; and this too under circumstances requiring the strongest individuality for ruling. It had worked badly enough, and was redeemed from utter failure only by the conduct of a few eminent persons. It had ended when the young Emperor came of age, but it ceased only for one year, after which he died most prematurely. Thereon the same experiment is repeated, with a new child Emperor and a long minority under the same two Dowager Empresses. The settlement of this supreme affair appears to have rested entirely with these two Imperial Ladies, notwithstanding that responsible and experienced Princes of the blood were present. The responsibility would now be divided between the two Imperial Ladies and the Council. With this poor equipment the Chinese Imperial authority was once more to start in its contest with national dangers.

The beginning of the reign was bad in the extreme, for it was darkly marked by the murder of Mr. Margary, an accomplished officer of the British Consular service, who had been sent from Shanghai to meet

a British commercial expedition despatched to Yunnan by the Government of India. The expedition had been sent under arrangements with the Chinese Imperial Government. The crime was committed on the Chinese side of the border, and was supported by a Chinese force that drove back the expedition. When the British Minister at Peking, Sir Thomas Wade, demanded reparation, after infinite delay and evasion on the part of the Chinese Government, or Tsung-li-yamen, a futile and worthless enquiry was made which produced no other result than this, that the British Minister was convinced that the director of the murder was none less than the provincial governor of Yunnan. Sir Thomas Wade was so displeased at this affair that he hauled down his flag as Minister, and proceeded to Shanghai.

This strong step, though it failed to bring to punishment the provincial governor whom the Tsung-li-yamen were resolved to shelter, did yet bring about two good things. Firstly a Convention was settled at Chefoo in 1876—in reference to the affairs of Yunnan, to transit duties on inland trade, to jurisdiction in cases between British and Chinese subjects. Thereon a Chinese Minister was despatched to the Queen's Court in London.

The Chefoo Convention is the last of the three commercial Treaties, the other two being those of Nanking and Tientsin, and the Convention of Peking having been merely a supplement to the Treaty of Tientsin. These Treaties are to this day

constantly referred to by those who are suffering wrong. This, then, is perhaps the place for remarking that the Chinese have never thought of acting up to engagements of this nature. Evasions, delays, breaches, have been always quite normal. In general the existence of the engagement has been ignored. If transit dues had been prohibited they would nevertheless be levied. If the payment of one duty was to secure exemption from other duties, they would nevertheless be imposed. It is only by strenuous action that the diplomatic representative can secure anything like observance.

Next in northern China there occurred one of the worst famines ever known even in Chinese territories where such visitations have always been frequent. It is to be noticed that the effect of the remedial measures, adopted properly enough by the Government, was much injured by the dishonesty of local officials. Peculation of this sort was regarded as normal, but in this case it was inhuman as well as disgraceful.

In this affair a British steam navigation company was of great service in the transport of grain to the distressed districts. But the local roads were as bad as ever, and this palpable defect caused a short railway to be constructed by way of a trial from Shanghai to the coast, and at once became popular with the common people. The educated classes offered much opposition by devices which it would be tedious to recount, and soon the line was broken up and the rails