

CHAPTER TEN

THE MANCHUS AND THE REVOLUTION

THE imperial succession which last held sway over the dragon throne belonged to an East-Mongolian people, the Manchus, who in 1644 by right of sword forced their way to the capital of the Ming emperors, Peking.

The Chinese have never ceased to think of the Manchus as an usurping people, and when the Revolution of 1911 overthrew the Ching dynasty, there took place in the ancient imperial capital of Sianfu, now capital of the province of Shensi, a complete house-cleaning of the Manchu inhabitants in a thorough-going massacre of men, women and children.

During the last few years the Sinological¹ Institute at the State University of Peking has been laboring to arrange and compile the mass of archives of the Ching dynasty, which the university historians have succeeded in acquiring in the form of a disordered mass of manuscripts. These manuscripts had previously lain neglected in the Forbidden City.

Among the relics from this documentary treasure house, which now lie exposed in the exhibition room of the Institute, there are shown a number of petitions from various Chinese corporations, in which they express their grateful submission to the new Manchu dynasty. The learned professor who showed

¹ The word sinology is defined in the Oxford dictionary as "knowledge of the Chinese language, history, customs, etc." It is derived from the Greek *Sinai*—the Chinese.

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me these official documents declared that there was clear and conclusive proof that they were forged, as were also various details in the historical records, which were intended to show posterity that the new dynasty had been from the beginning supported by the popular sentiment of China.

It is probable that the continued critical inspection of the archives of the last dynasty will bring to light further surprises and will lead to a revaluation of the official history. However this may be, certain principal features in the development of the Ching dynasty have long ago been definitely made manifest.

We may note first that, as previously in Chinese history, the usurping people, strong in a military sense but inferior in culture, soon made themselves familiar with Chinese civilization. Some of the great Manchu emperors, such as Kang Hsi and Chien Lung, were greatly interested in literature and art and gave their support to one of the great blossoming periods of the higher Chinese culture. Both of these great rulers were most successful in warfare, and their periods indicate times of unusual strength for the Chinese empire on the material side, which is evidenced among other things by the fact that the population was doubled in the sixty-years' reign of Chien Lung.

But with this *roi soleil* of China the glory of the Manchu power expired, and his successor, Chia Ching, represented the beginning of the decline. That the later Manchu rulers brought in a period of

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weakness and decay was caused to a large degree by the exhausted energy of the dynasty itself, in that race degeneracy and palace government replaced the strong vitality of the early rulers.

It must, however, be made clear that not only the decadence of the ruling family but the appearance of great, often quite overwhelming, problems contributed to the decline.

The first of these internal perplexities was the excessive population, which increased under the foregoing state of affairs. For a realm such as China, which cannot relieve its excess population by emigration on a large scale to lands across the sea, famine and revolution have been the drastic remedies by which the balance has been preserved.

Both these methods were here employed. In the great famine years at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century over fifty million persons perished. Then came the great Taiping Rebellion, which as to the extent of its devastation was comparatively restricted. It harried the Yangtze provinces during the period of 1852-1864 and, according to a possibly exaggerated estimate, reduced the figures of the Chinese population from four hundred twenty-five to two hundred sixty millions.

For us Westerners the Taiping Rebellion is best known through the achievements of Charles Gordon, "Chinese Gordon", in putting an end to the bloodshed. The historical point of view of the well-informed Chinaman on this subject is somewhat different from ours. Gordon's military operations,

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which were confined to the country in front of the great foreign center, Shanghai, contributed to quell an, according to the Chinese idea, legitimate rising against a decadent usurping dynasty; but on the other hand the Chinese critic does not attribute to Gordon's intervention the decisive importance which his Western admirers would fain see in it.

The greatest stumbling block for the Manchu Government and its Chinese subjects was, however, the new factor, ever changing in form but ever tightening its grip on the national life, which in a succeeding chapter I have called the white peril. This appeared when the foreign, especially the European, powers began to exercise an increasing influence upon questions of vital importance to the imperial Chinese Government.

In his excellent book already cited, "East Asia in the Nineteenth Century," Professor Karlgren has given a fascinating and extraordinarily lucid treatment of these events. It is sufficient in this connection to present some of the principal features as to the relations of China to foreign powers in the last century.

The great difficulties in the first stage of diplomatic communication between China and the Western powers arose from their utterly different conceptions of international relations.

According to the Chinese idea the Middle Kingdom was the universal realm, the sole country of culture, surrounded by barbarians who were tributary

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to the Son of Heaven, and whose rulers and emissaries must at an audience before the emperor pay the deepest sign of reverence, the kowtow, the act of kneeling with the forehead to the earth.

The demand that European ministers should exhibit the same token of subjection seemed an absurdity and an affront to the stiff English lords representing a monarch who already ruled over a world power. It is possible that these first envoys from a great European power ended their days without ever getting an insight into the strictly logical principle at the bottom of the Chinese demand.

Lord Macartney's embassy in 1792 and still more Lord Amherst's in 1816 were miserable failures in all their negotiations and contributed only to an increase of misunderstanding.

The first definite conflict was that with the English East India Company regarding the opium traffic. That the local Chinese officials in Canton lent their support for a liberal compensation to an importation which was against the will of the government can hardly afford an excuse for the action of the foreigners, and furthermore great quantities of opium were sent in by an uncontrolled smuggler traffic which sometimes took on the aspects of simple piracy.

The efforts of the Chinese to exclude opium and the persistence of the foreigners in this illegal but most remunerative trade led at last to the so-called Opium War, which resulted in a series of defeats for the Chinese and led to the Peace of Nanking in 1842.

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By this treaty the English obtained an agreement on the part of China that diplomatic relations should be conducted on a basis of equality. They also won the permission that a number of ports, Canton, Amoy, Foochow, Ningpo, and Shanghai, should be opened for the trade. The forced cession of the island of Hongkong to England led to a number of territorial losses to various powers which, especially in the last decade of the century, wrought up the public opinion of China to the point of desperate rage.

This being the case, the conflict was soon in full swing again, although in the heat of the strife neither party saw clearly that it involved a far-reaching opposition of principle between the Chinese idea of the universal State, which would tolerate no equal beside it, and the European system of national States which exist on a basis of equality and are bound to respect every treaty till its provisions are destroyed by an appeal to arms.

The European principle has obviously a quite different authority from that of the old Chinese conception of the single State, which could have developed only within the boundaries of China's oasis of culture and was doomed to fall to the ground as soon as China came under the inevitable requirements of modern world politics. Although the European diplomatists were thus in principle striving for a just cause, it is much to be deplored that this conflict of principles was soiled by such dubious ingredients as the opium trade, the *Arrow* affair, and the

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barbarous conduct of the European soldiers around Peking.

After the Peace of Nanking the opium trade took on a still more uncontrolled form, and in its wake followed smuggling and piracy.

In 1856 the Chinese authorities at Canton received information that certain much-sought-for pirates had taken refuge in the Chinese vessel *Arrow*, which with the consent of the English authorities carried the English flag. The Chinese made a search of the vessel, caught the pirates, carried off the crew and took down the English flag. There can be no doubt that, according to Western international law, the Chinese authorities were guilty of an aggression on, and a severe insult to, the English flag. But the Chinese were in desperation because of a traffic which they sought to bar with all their power, and under these circumstances it was deplorable that England made the refusal of satisfaction for the *Arrow* affair into a *casus belli*. In the war which followed England obtained an ally in France, which wanted redress for the murder of a French missionary. This war again became a succession of easy military successes on the part of the European allies and ended, so far as England was concerned, with the peace concluded at Tientsin in June, 1858. The negotiations were conducted between Chief Secretary Kuciliang and another Chinese representative on one side, and Lord Elgin, assisted by Secretary Bruce and the interpreters, Lay and Wade, on the other. Mr. Lay, the elder of the interpreters, was a man of strong

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temperament and gave free vent to his feelings before the Chinese envoys. Lord Elgin himself wrote that he was forced "to act most brutally."

One gets a wonderfully vivid picture of this meeting between East and West. On one side the noble lord, resting on his victorious English weapons and seconded by the vigorous Mr. Lay, on the other the pitiable Chinese emissaries, whose utterance was repressed by two thousand years of tradition in tact and refinement and who quietly, with despair in their hearts, gave way little by little, caught between the harsh words of the foreigners and the imperial disfavor awaiting them at Peking.

The treaty established a principle of the very greatest importance, in that it set the foundation on which foreigners since then have lived and acted in China. England received the right to have a permanent embassy in Peking (with a corresponding right for China in London), traffic on the Yangtze was granted, a number of new trading ports were opened, British subjects had the right to travel with passports into the interior of China, Christian missionaries were assured of freedom and protection for their calling, and extra-territorial rights were recognized. These extra-territorial rights consisted in the placing of foreigners outside the Chinese law and under the consular tribunals of their respective countries.

The English had thus created a type of treaty on which those of other countries with China were framed. The day after the signing of the English

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pact the French envoy, Baron Gros, arranged a similar treaty with China on behalf of his nation.

When the question came of ratifying these treaties, the imperial court at Peking made the utmost efforts to keep away the detested foreign emissaries. The treaties prescribed that the ratification should take place in Peking, but the court desired that the procedure should be transferred to Pehlang, a coast town near Tientsin. An attempt with armed boats to force entrance into the Peiho River failed because of the opposition offered by the newly built forts of Taku, and nothing remained for the English and French envoys but to give up the attempt of penetrating to Peking.

But in 1860 Lord Elgin and Baron Gros returned as ambassadors, supported by an army of eleven thousand English and seven thousand French soldiers. The Chinese troops were again defeated in a number of engagements, and on October 3, 1860, Peking was for the first time in history in the hands of European troops. The Emperor Hsien Feng fled to Jehol up on the Mongolian border. In my opinion the military action was so far necessary and fully justified in order to convince the obstinate Manchu court that it must keep the conditions of its treaties and give up the old idea of the Son of Heaven as exalted above — and so not responsible for his promises to — other princes.

But when all resistance was broken and there was no military object in further violence, the imperial summer palace of Yuan Ming Yuan outside

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Peking was burned by Lord Elgin's order after it had been plundered by the foreign soldiers !

The last two decades of the century record some black pages in the history of the foreign powers in their relations to China. To use the picturesque and laconic English phrase, the great powers rivaled one another in "the game of land-grabbing."

Disputes between China and France down on the southwestern border in 1882-1884 led to the decision of France to assume political influence over Tonkin.

It was, however, the war between Japan and China, 1894-1895, which first brought foreign aggression to a head. Japan, who, without in any way modifying her Eastern spiritual culture, had quickly and skilfully adopted the military and, in general, materialistic methods of the West, had an easy and crushing triumph over ill-prepared China. The Peace of Shimonseki assured to Japan the control of nominally independent Korea, recognized Japan as conqueror of the peninsula of Liaotung in south Manchuria, as well as of Formosa, and furthermore assigned her an indemnity of two hundred million taels.

Russia, who for her own part was interested in the Liaotung Peninsula, where an ice-free Pacific port beckoned to her, succeeded in getting the support of Germany and France for an action which forced Japan for a small increase in her war indemnity to give up this very important territorial gain.

As a reward for her services in this affair Russia obtained a concession to extend the trans-Siberian Rail-

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road through Manchuria to Mukden and Port Arthur, and this led somewhat later to her extorting the right to fortify Port Arthur and change it into a strong Russian war port.

In November, 1897, two German missionaries in Shantung had been murdered. The German Government took this affair as a pretext for the realization of an idea which the great German traveler for research, F. von Richthofen, had long before developed: viz., the exploitation of the province of Shantung with the splendid harbor of Tsingtao as base. The gulf of Chiao Chow, on which Tsingtao lies, was therefore "leased" by Germany, and German enterprise began here a colonization, the high quality of which could not conceal the fact that without any reasonable cause a seizure of Chinese territory had been made.

Alarmed by Russia's occupation of Port Arthur, England sought a compensation at China's expense in the port of Wei-hai-wei, together with a portion of the mainland opposite Hongkong; and France occupied Kuang-chow-wan, opposite the island of Hainan.

This sort of thing was carried on still further in a way which showed the final intentions of the foreign powers toward helpless China. Each of the great powers assumed a sphere of influence: France taking Yunnan and Kuangsi, England the Yangtze valley, Japan, Fukien, and Russia, Manchuria. Maps which showed China in various colors as divided into spheres of influence were printed and circulated in Europe.

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It is surely natural that a people who from the earliest time had regarded themselves as holding a distinguished and exceptional position high above other races should be stirred to their innermost depths at such treatment by strangers whom only a half century before they had regarded as vassal barbarians.

The reaction came in a way characteristically Chinese through the formation of a society hostile to the foreigners, especially in the province of Shantung, the native region of Confucius, which now felt severely the humiliation of the foreign invasion. These fanatics, who were called in Chinese *I Ho Chuan* or by the foreigners "Boxers", drilled eagerly with ancient weapons such as knives and spears and believed they could not be wounded. The imperial court and many officials cherished sympathy for the Boxers, and in the early summer of 1900 the government soldiers began openly to fraternize with them.

Toward the end of May some hundreds of foreign troops were sent from Tientsin to Peking as a guard for the legations, but a larger relief force under the English Admiral Seymour was forced by the Boxers and Chinese regulars to retire to the coast.

From June 20th to August 14th the Legation Quarter of Peking was subjected to a regular siege, and it is very uncertain how the little band of foreign troops could have held out against such superior numbers, if the attack had not been carried on with a certain hesitancy, because many of those in command doubted the expediency of using violence.

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An international army of twenty thousand men forced their way to Peking and found the foreign ministers unhurt, with the exception of the German minister, who before the beginning of the siege had been killed by an assassin's bullet on the way to the Chinese Foreign Office.

Peking was now again in the hands of foreign troops and again the foreigners were guilty of violent measures, while the Forbidden City and even the homes of the rich Manchus were plundered in the most barbaric fashion.

When the foreign troops were about to press into the capital, the dowager empress and the emperor with part of their court found a refuge in Sianfu, the capital of the province of Shensi.

In the provinces of Chihli and Shansi a large number of missionaries as well as native Christians had been killed during the months when the Boxer rising had free play, but thanks to the foresight and moral courage shown by the vice regents in middle and southern China, who in opposition to definite orders from Peking protected the foreigners in their provinces, the massacres were confined to the two provinces just named.

The end of the convulsive outbreak of national spirit on the part of the desperate Chinese people was the conclusion of a peace which guaranteed large indemnities to the foreign powers out of revenue duties to be administered by a joint foreign and Chinese control.

Long before the Boxer disturbances there had been

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efforts toward reform in a modern spirit. One may cite the fact that General Tso Tsung Tang, a prominent militarist and statesman, on his deathbed in 1885 proposed in a memorial to the emperor an extensive reform program. In this he emphasized the building of railways, the strengthening of the navy and coast fortifications, mining according to imported methods, the improvement of manufacturing, the establishment of a firm financial policy, and the encouragement of study abroad.

The unhappy result of the war with Japan showed the Chinese their inferiority in comparison to the little island realm which had resolutely and successfully adopted the superior Western means of power. The consequence was a turning toward Japan in an effort to learn the new ways, and crowds of Chinese students streamed into the Japanese high schools.

The little group of reformers who in 1898 induced the Emperor Kuang Hsu to start an extensive reform movement was strongly influenced by Japanese models. Unfortunately the attempt was short-lived. The energetic and power-loving dowager empress Tzu Hsi, who had long been the leading force in directing the realm, once more took the reins. By a *coup d'etat* on September 22, 1898, just a hundred days after the publication of Kuang Hsu's edict of reform, she put the emperor out of office, shut him up in an island palace in the western part of the Forbidden City, and had executed all the reformers who could not save themselves in flight.



THE GREAT QUEEN DOWAGER, TZU HSI

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The bitter experiences which followed the suppression of the Boxer rising and the occupation of Peking by international troops finally taught the empress the necessity of transforming China into the likeness of the Western powers and Japan. From January 7, 1902, when, after making her first trip in a railroad train, she returned to Peking from her flight to the interior, she put herself at the head of the reform movement. In the same year, too, the vice regents of the Yangtze valley developed in a memorial to the throne a thorough reform program.

A remarkable labor of transformation was carried out in the years 1902-1908 under the external stimulus which Japan's victory over Russia, 1904-1905, gave to pan-Asiatic thought. The most remarkable feature in this transformation was the abolition of the old literary examinations in 1905 and the institution of a program of instruction which laid its chief emphasis on natural science in the Western spirit.

On November 15, 1908, the day after the death of the unfortunate Emperor Kuang Hsu, the great dowager empress closed her days, and with her died the last forceful personality in the otherwise decadent and corrupt Manchu dynasty.

The two great Chinese statesmen, Chang Chi Tung and Yuan Shih Kai, who had supported the elderly dowager were now got rid of, the former by death, the latter through being dismissed in disgrace by the ruling party at court, "to recover his health" in his native province of Honan.

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The regency which now controlled the government during the minority of the little Emperor Hsuan Tung was a court government of the very worst order. State offices were auctioned off to the highest bidder, and the princes in power used every means to fill their own coffers.

The people began to awake to the necessity of freeing themselves from this outworn dynasty of usurpers, revolutionary impulses became active in many quarters, and on October 10, 1911, came the outbreak which led to the dethroning of the Manchus and the proclaiming of the republic.

In general the revolution was not at all sanguinary, and the forbearance with which the overthrown dynasty was treated was a fine example of Chinese moderation. The deposed emperor was assured a yearly allowance of four million dollars (Chinese), and was permitted to reside in the Forbidden City and to make offering at the temples and mausoleums of his ancestors.

The Revolution of 1911 had its essential significance in that it marked the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty. Beyond that it was only a step in a great and complex process of transformation. It did not represent the beginning of a great era of reform or the liberation of mighty, hitherto-repressed popular forces, as was the case with the French and Russian revolutions. A good deal of the work of reconstruction which one can now point out must be accredited to the last period of the empire. Most of the railroads now existing were finished as early as 1911,

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the administration had then essentially its present form, and the old system of examinations had been abolished, as already noted, in 1905.

In many respects the republic has been a time of dissolution, because of the constant civil wars, and the last two years (1924-1925) in particular have been extremely hard for living conditions, because the contending generals have vied with each other in confiscating and holding the rolling stock of the railroads to the immeasurable damage of communication and business. At the same time the authority of the government at Peking has declined far below the worst stage of the imperial times.

The old political organization is cut to pieces and the new governmental edifice is of a defective and provisional nature. On the whole the new developments within the administration are inconsiderable. On the other hand, industry and commerce, without government support, even despite the civil wars and the irregular administration, have made many notable advances.

As to the future the most hopeful sign is that the higher education, despite the lack of money, has made great progress. A new generation of men taught by modern methods has grown up, and their influence on the destiny of the realm is increasing every year in power and certitude.

The revolution was on one side a slight step forward on the toilsome way of reconstruction, but it meant at the same time the destruction of much that had aesthetic value. Everything which symbolized

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the imperial power was swept away without reference to its artistic superiority. The wonderful dragon flag had to make way for the five-barred bunting of the "five peoples." The officials, who in the imperial days wore magnificent costumes of a strictly national type, now go about in frock coats and high hats. Most uncanny of all is the architecture; it is called semi-foreign and produces monstrosities for which no one should dare to be responsible.

The decline of taste, the disappearance of the old sure feeling for style in favor of the trumpery stuff that now fills the shops and house façades, seems to me almost worse than civil war and lack of government.

But in art, architecture and handicrafts there will no doubt come a renaissance with the watchword: Return to the great national traditions.