

CHAPTER XVI

TSËNG'S PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

THE story of the Taiping uprising and of the attempt to organise the imperial forces to suppress it has carried us from the modern world of the West into a mediaeval environment. It is hard to realise that the Crimean War synchronised with the earlier stages of the great rebellion and the American Civil War and the rebirth of Japan with the last years, yet it was so. But if we step from the thought-world of Europe and America of that period to the inner life of the Chinese of Tsêng's day, we are transported into the dim days of antiquity when the Nile River, Crete, and the Mesopotamian Valley were the centers of civilisation. To realise how extended a mental journey he made from his boyhood till he and Li Hung-chang memorialised the emperor to send capable young men abroad, we must imagine a person born in the age of Confucius or Plato and living to the mid-Victorian period. It would be an interesting study to compile a biography of Tsêng's inner life and development from the abundant materials preserved in his essays, letters, reports, and diaries. A single chapter is all too brief to include the interesting material that is available, but it will at least show what were the animating principles that guided his personal and family life, and that determined his attitude towards some of the institutions of his native land.

The genealogical tables of the Tsêng family go back to the beginning of Chinese history, and are fairly certain from the days of Confucius. Tsêng Kuo-fan is in the seventieth generation from the famous philosopher Tsêng-tzu, who was one of the foremost disciples of the great sage. The branch from which the Hunan members sprung settled in Hengyang under the Mongol Dynasty, and in Siangsiang during the seventeenth century, where they pursued the occupation of farming.¹ None of the members stand out remarkably until we reach the grandfather Tsêng Yü-p'ing, generally referred to in Kuo-fan's writings by his other name, Sing-kong. He exerted a notable influence over the grandson, an influence that grew stronger as the youth grew older. This grandfather in his young days tended to be gay and idle. But upon learning that outsiders were predicting the ruin of the family through him, he settled down and became an exemplary and enthusiastic farmer and gardener. With profound respect for the progenitors of the family he took the lead in building a suitable ancestral temple, feeling that among the spirits none were more to be revered than the forbears whose interest and influence in the family, both for good or evil, far outweighed that of the more distant gods and demons.²

In contact with such a powerful personality, Tsêng grew up with a strong sense of family unity. At the very center of all his thinking was the family, and he devoted much energy to secure a well-ordered family life among his brothers and his sons. Some of his most famous letters are those which have to do with domestic matters. One of these, written when Tsêng had attained high rank in Peking and had learned of the serious illness of his grandfather, laments the fact that he himself lives in luxury

¹ *Record of Chief Events*, I, 1.

² *Record of Chief Events*, I, 1b.

in the capital while his parents labor hard at home; but he rejoices in the filial conduct of his brothers.³ He says:

The most fortunate thing about our family is that all of you younger brothers display the utmost filial conduct in the treatment of your father and uncles, and are able to exert all your strength in serving your elders. Eating rich food and wearing gold embroideries, I am utterly unable to carry out the least portion of a grandson's duties; while my wife, sitting without a care and enjoying the service of others, cannot share my mother's toil—the thought of it brings forth perspiration in streams.

I have carefully observed that in all the official families of China the individuals can be used to advantage only for one generation. Their sons and grandsons become proud and luxurious, then fall into profligate ways and at last come to the gutter. Those that can, happily, endure for one or two generations are rare. Merchant families who are industrious and economical may continue for three or four generations. Agricultural and scholar families which are industrious and unpretentious are able to keep up for six or seven generations. Where filial and fraternal conduct is followed, the families may be prolonged to ten or eight generations. I live in very great fear lest, through dependence on our ancestors' accomplishments and my own rapid promotion, they will be in danger of failing to be employed even to the end of their own lives, and therefore I instruct my brothers and sons in the fervent hope that they make ours like the farmer and scholar families, or like the families of the filial and fraternal, but I would not have it like those of the official class. In their reading my brothers must cover much ground and in their work be diligent, not constantly thinking of the official position they are to attain. Unless they understand this they will not measure up to the virtue of their grandfather, though they reach high position and distinguished office. . . . My brother Teng [Kuo-hwang] whenever I am promoted or granted an office, speaks of me as being a virtuous son and grandson, not realising that this is not virtue at all.

In accordance with the thought that a family life

³ *Home Letters*, May 8, 1849.

founded in filial respect and brotherly harmony is of prime importance, and that such family unity and purity is in danger when its simplicity is lost through official promotion, Tsêng makes constant appeals to his brothers never to abandon the agricultural interests on which the family must depend. This, he says,

is the old family occupation and must remain our chief source of support, and simplicity must be preserved. If I am lucky enough to get out of officialdom I wish to go back to the home life and give myself to it in a whole-souled manner. Every one, poor and lowly or rich and honourable, is to be treated in the same manner. In days of prosperity we must prepare for evil days.⁴

In other letters the same note of warning is struck against yielding to the temptation to escape hard work and simplicity of life.

It is most important for Chia-san and Chia-wu to do hard work. Born in the present chaotic days, the principle to be followed by those living at home is not to possess too much wealth. Abundant wealth is, in the end, a matter of care and danger. Moreover, you must not enjoy too much retired leisure, slackness and indolence. If you go between the old and the new dwelling you should always walk, not travel by sedan chair or on horseback. You should climb the hills and exercise your muscles. Families of the official and gentry class should not lay up fortunes. This will cause their descendants to understand naturally that they have nothing to rely on, that if they do not work every day they will face the danger of future starvation. In this way the younger generation will gradually learn to work, knowing that each one must be self-supporting.⁵

To Tsêng's mind one of the best correctives to pride

⁴ Letter of July 16, 1866, when Tsêng was viceroy and imperial commissioner.

⁵ *Home Letters*, October 7, 1855.

was constantly to remember the hard circumstances out of which they had emerged. In 1867 he wrote:⁶

Although we are now prosperous, our family must not forget the customs of simple gentle-folk. The junior members must sternly overcome pride and laziness. To overcome pride the first step is to refrain from loudly upbraiding servants and dependents. For my part, I never forget the circumstances in which I peddled vegetable baskets in Chiang Shi Chieh, and you brothers must not forget that Chou-shan pulled carts laden with stone—that our former days were very bitter.

Nevertheless, there is also a strong sense of family pride, coupled with a desire that its members will always conduct themselves according to the dignity of their standing. This implied both that they keep away from the lower officials, lest their intercourse injure the highly placed brother in Peking, and also lest they seem to abuse their power. When Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan received his degree in the examinations, Tsêng, according to etiquette, should have written the literary chancellor a note of thanks, but he wrote home that he was unwilling to do so because the official in question bore an unsavory reputation, and he added: "Our family, since they belong to the country gentry, must under no circumstances enter *yamens* and speak of public matters, running a risk of being shabbily treated by the officials. Even where our family has a matter of business we should rather be willing to suffer loss, but must in no case enter on lawsuits and lead the officials to suspect that we rely on our power to put others to shame."⁷ And in addition to compromising the dignity of the family by such conduct their relation with the officials would cause the higher officeholders in Peking to give Tsêng black marks because of the activity of relatives at home.⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*, February 8, 1867. Chou-shan was Tsêng Kuo-fan's father.

⁷ *Home Letters*, July 3, 1845.

⁸ *Ibid.*, January 29, 1846.

Family pride of that sort, however, did not in any way imply that they were to be unneighborly to the humbler families through the countryside. Tsêng was always eager for news of local happenings, the births, weddings, and deaths among the acquaintances. He always desired that the members at home should fulfill carefully all the obligations of good neighbors. A letter to his eldest son in 1867 says:⁹

Li Shen-fu's mother always quoted a couplet which ran,
 "When you have money or wine you lavish it on distant relatives,

When fire burns or thieves break in you call your nearest neighbours,"

warning the rich or highly-placed families not to be generous to distant relatives while they treat their neighbours shabbily. Our family, recently changed to a position of prosperity, cannot slight the near neighbours; in wine and food we should be free, in ceremonial we should be respectful. You might even employ a man specially to entertain our guests. Except for interfering in their private affairs and taking part in their lawsuits, wherever it is possible conveniently to act we should not be sparing.

Within the family, Tsêng took very seriously the responsibility that fell to him as elder brother. His letters are filled with advice to his juniors, and he made it clear that they were not to undertake duties that devolved on him. On one occasion he wrote in reproof:¹⁰ "Younger brothers should not manage the affairs of the home. When the heavens are rent it is the weirds that bring it about; when there are great floods king Yü is there to control them; home affairs are for the elders of the family to govern while outside affairs are in my control. My younger brothers are simply to carry on their routine tasks with quiet minds." Somewhat later, possibly in

⁹ *Chia Hsun* (Letters to his sons), January 3, 1867.

¹⁰ *Home Letters*, January 25, 1845.

the hope of having better coöperation among the members at home, he placed the direction of household affairs under Kuo-hwang, telling him that the elders had established good family customs which he must perpetuate for later generations.¹¹ Such literal assumption of the elder brother's right to control was not at all acceptable to the junior members. On a number of occasions Tsêng and his brothers were involved in misunderstandings and even quarrels, due in some measure to his plain speaking. In the case of Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan these strained relations were so frequent that one suspects that they never could understand each other.

While the younger man was a student in his brother's house at Peking in 1841, a quarrel arose which was finally settled only when the father wrote to Kuo-ch'üan calling him back to his duty.¹² The following year Kuo-ch'üan insisted on returning to Hunan, and after reaching home he addressed a letter to his brother complaining of his severity, to which Tsêng replied, pointing out at length the duties of an elder brother and showing why he was severe towards his juniors.¹³ In 1844 Kuo-fan complains that while his instructions and advice are followed by people all around him, the brothers alone refuse to profit by them.¹⁴ When Tsêng was in Changsha in 1854, he had a violent disagreement with Kuo-hwang, who had arrived at the camp and added greatly to the difficulties of that humiliating period. Tsêng wrote home that hereafter none of the brothers were to come to the camp but must remain at home and attend to their duties there.¹⁵ It was probably this letter that caused Kuo-ch'üan to feel that his elder brother had blocked his way to advancement. In

¹¹ *Ibid.*, August 28, 1847.

¹² *Ibid.*, October 29 and December 1, 1841.

¹³ *Ibid.*, September 1, 1842.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, February 15, 1843.

¹⁵ *Home Letters*, May 12, May 16, 1854.

1856, when the cause of the imperialists was most gloomy, Tsêng being confined to a small area in Kiangsi, Kuo-ch'üan was in Changsha assisting in the recruiting of men. There he was "discovered" by Hwang Mien, who had just received appointment as prefect of Kian, then in the hands of rebels against whom he was to move. In conferences with Kuo-ch'üan, Hwang Mien found him uncommonly shrewd. Kuo-ch'üan said to Hwang: "Whereas my brother has had success in warfare, nothing comes to me to do. Because I never went to camp and interviewed him I now sit helpless in a small corner. It is but right that I should go to the front, but I am poor and lack the financial ability to raise forces. If you are only able to command the necessary funds I will personally raise an army and go to the aid of my imperilled country."¹⁶ Through this prefect, therefore, not through Tsêng himself, the captor of Nanking embarked on his military career.

Throughout his life this same truculence towards Kuo-fan seemed to poison the mind of the younger brother. Although from an outside point of view it sometimes appeared as though Tsêng were doing all that a brother could, even to risking the charge of nepotism, he continued to nurse a feeling of resentment. Yet Tsêng gave the command at Anking to him, and permitted him to remain in sole control at Nanking even when it imperilled the whole cause. When the imperial mandate suggested his being sent to Hangehow or Shanghai and he preferred to remain at the post of greater glory, Tsêng yielded to his brother's preference, sending Li Hung-chang to Kiangsu and Tso Tsung-tang to Chekiang.¹⁷ During the period of extreme danger, when Kuo-ch'üan was being terribly punished by the Chungwang, in spite of Tsêng's great desire to call for aid from Li Hung-

¹⁶ *Record of Chief Events*, I, 12a.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, II, 7b, 8a.

chang, he finally yielded to his brother's desires and smoothed things over for him. In 1864, just before the capture of Nanking, when an imperial mandate ordered Li Hung-chang to go to Nanking, it was necessary for Tsêng to argue with his brother to accept the situation with good grace, and it was only Li's comprehension of the situation that really settled the question.¹⁸ Though Tsêng constantly upheld his younger brother, the latter always felt that there was partiality against him, whereas in reality Tsêng was concerned for the country and for the honor of the family. On one occasion, when the younger brother had written suggesting that the brothers ought not to speak harshly to each other, Kuo-fan writes: "This sentence is most splendid—worth ten thousand ounces of silver. At home or abroad in transacting affairs I am never altogether truculent or perverse, but I do speak somewhat severely and am now sorry for these things."¹⁹

Turning to the practical duties of the home, the grandfather's influence was very strong on Tsêng, and many letters from 1859 to 1861 are largely taken up with the emphasis upon one or the other of these matters. Eight characters summarised the eight fundamental home tasks as the grandfather had taught them, namely, "books, vegetables, fish, pigs, early, sweeping, jewels, ancestors." "By books he meant their reading, and studies which were not to be neglected; vegetables, fish and pigs stood for the carrying on of their agricultural pursuits; 'early' means early rising; 'sweeping,' the cleaning of the house; 'ancestors,' the ancestral sacrifices, respectfully offered to the deceased father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, and the sacrifice to the deceased mother. 'Jewels' is the entertaining and greeting of relatives and neighbors, extending congratulations in their joys and condol-

¹⁸ *Home Letters*, May 21, 1864.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, January 16, 1859.

ing with them when they mourn, inquiring after them in illness and relieving their needs. The honorable Sing-kong always said: 'to treat men as men is a priceless jewel.'²⁰

In another place²¹ he amplified this reflection, holding it to be important that his brothers and sons should remember "our grandfather's eight characters and should also carefully remember his three disbeliefs, namely, disbelief in geomancy, disbelief in doctors and medicine, disbelief in priests and magic. In my diary [he says] I also have eight fundamental maxims, namely,

In reading books consider the explanation as the fundamental thing.

In writing poems and essays regard the sound and meter as the fundamental thing.

In serving relatives regard their pleasure as the fundamental thing.

In developing one's body regard the correction of anger as the fundamental thing.

In behaviour regard not engaging in unmannerly converse as the fundamental thing.

In living at home regard not to rise late the fundamental thing.

In holding office regard not seeking money as the fundamental thing.²²

In leading soldiers regard not disturbing the populace as the fundamental thing.

These I ponder on, and surely they are hopeful counsels and my brothers should instruct our sons and nephews to remember them without fail. Whether the world is

²⁰ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1860. In regard to the manner of referring to his grandfather the Chinese is hard to translate, being a term of great respect and yet entirely different from our Western form.

²¹ *Home Letters*, April 4, 1861.

²² In the letter of April 14 he uses the word "love" instead of "seek," making the fundamental thing in office-holding not to love money.

well-ordered or in chaos, the home poor or rich, if only we can hold to the honorable Sing-kong's eight characters and my eight fundamentals we shall never fail to be a family of the higher class." To these were to be added three secrets of good fortune, filial conduct, industry, and reciprocity, of which the last named was defined by Confucius in his form of the golden rule as meaning, "What you do not desire do not inflict on others."²³

An interesting repetition of the above ideas on wealth and the practice of the homely virtues occurs in a letter written as late as 1867,²⁴ on the occasion of his writing to tell his family that he could not send a large sum of money home. "Since I became viceroy of the Two Kiang I have never had to treat you so shabbily as now. Yet in a time when disorder reigns, the more abundant the money the greater is the anxiety. My family and that of my brothers need not gather together much silver or brass money. To have at command sufficient for the year's needs is to be reckoned as very wealthy in the land and fortunate among your fellow men. If the family wishes to rise it must depend entirely on rearing superior sons and younger brothers. If these are not superior in virtue and ability, no matter how much silver and brass money, rice, estates, clothing, or books may be amassed, it is all to no avail. Whether the younger generation in a family is superior in virtue or not is six parts due to birth and four parts to the home training. Our family has, from generation to generation, been blessed with perpetual virtue and clear teaching. Surely the honorable Sing-kong's instructions ought to be carefully received and clearly cherished. I have recently put the honorable Sing-kong's home practices into eight lines of verse,

²³ *Ibid.*, April 13, 1861.

²⁴ *Home Letters*, January 11, 1867.

Your books and vegetables; fish and swine,
 Ancestral rites, early rising, housecleaning, neighborliness—
 At all times to mention and practice these
 Form eight good matters.

The teachings of geomancers, fortune-tellers, physicians,
 The incantations of [Buddhist] priests and magicians
 And the long entertainment of guests—
 Constitute six vexatious things.

For the honorable Sing-kong was easily angered if geomancers, fortune-tellers, physicians, priests or magicians entered the house, and he was also angered if relatives, friends or guests from a distance stayed long. If his eight good practices and six vexatious things are accepted in our family generation after generation as one of the perpetual lessons, even though our descendants be ever so stupid they will at any rate have a slight restraining law." Those who regard Tsêng merely as an exponent of the views of bygone days are mistaken. They will find that he breaks from traditionalism, at any rate in regard to the place that women have in the family life. To be sure he shares the orthodox view that women must engage in the household duties of spinning, sewing, and cooking. While he was in Peking he wrote home on one occasion to his grandfather lamenting the fact that his own wife was too far away to take her place in serving the elders of the household. In another letter he administered reproof to his married sisters because they did not rise early and wait on their mothers-in-law, but on the contrary lay abed and were served.²⁵ Writing to his eldest son on the occasion of his marriage, he tells him that when his bride comes into her new home she must be instructed to show diligence in weaving and sewing, to go into the kitchen and prepare food with her own hands,

²⁵ *Home Letters*, January 20, 1843.

since these are the chief duties of married women,²⁶ adding in another letter that his son must not think that his wife is to be excused from practising these duties simply because she comes from a well-to-do family.²⁷

These conservative sentiments scarcely prepare us for his utter condemnation of the Chinese practice of permitting intermarriage between close relatives of different surnames, while strictly forbidding marriage with those of the same name however distant or doubtful the actual relationship. In opposition to a marriage of the sort between actual relatives he observes that children of sisters are quite as near of kin as those of brothers, and that China, in adhering to the rule that those of the same surname might not marry and disregarding true kinship otherwise, had lost touch with reality.²⁸

Among the primary duties laid down in Sing-kong's list, the ancestral sacrifices hold a high place. In this fact we see the key to the religious faith of both the grandfather and the grandson, and one of the chief articles in the creed of orthodox China. This was one of the central tenets in the religion handed down from remotest antiquity, not only in China but in other ancient countries as well. Among the shades where spirits dwell, none were of more interest, none to be revered with greater devotion, or, when necessary, placated with more fear, than those spirits of the departed ancestors who possessed so much power for good or ill. The sacrifice to these spirits was of prime importance in the family life. To Sing-kong they were practically all of religion.²⁹ In a letter to his eldest son Tsêng discusses this sacrifice in connection with his grandfather's views. "Formerly," he says, "my grandfather, the honorable Sing-kong, was most insistent on the right methods of ordering the home

²⁶ *Ibid.*, March 14, 1856.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, April 11, 1845.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, November 11, 1856.

²⁹ *Record of Chief Events*, I, 1.

life. The first principle was early rising, the second sweeping everything clean, the third sincerity to offer the sacrifices, and the fourth treating relatives and neighbors well. Of all the relatives and neighbors who came to the home not one was received without great respect—those in distress he must help; with those who had a dispute the matter must be arranged; if there was an occasion of joy congratulations were to be offered, if there was sickness inquiries must be made, and if there was bereavement condolences must be offered. . . . In the matter of sincerely carrying on the sacrifices it is necessary for your mother to give them her careful attention at the proper seasons. All the very best vessels must be set apart for the sacrifices, and the very best food and drink are also to be set aside for the selfsame requirement. Those families which do not properly perform the sacrifices, though they may chance to rise, cannot do so for very long. This is most important, most important.”³⁰

If the sacrifices were of such great importance in Tsêng’s eyes, the proper location of graves was scarcely less so. We have seen in the quotations from Sing-kong that he professed to have no faith in geomancy, a disbelief shared by Tsêng and commended to his brothers. Yet his letters show much concern about the proper burial of his own ancestors. Thus on the death and burial of his grandmother he wrote to his grandfather congratulating him on the good news of a burial well accomplished, but venturing to question whether the location had been properly chosen to allow for a memorial arch and religious inscription, also whether it were not too close to the river. He proposed that the grave should be moved, not to the end of securing riches, honor, and good fortune, but to avoid ants, dampness, and dangers and secure a

³⁰ *Household Instruction* (Letters to his sons). Letters of fourth of intercalary third moon, 1660.

spacious approach.³¹ Thus he gave his approval of the theory that good or poor locations for the family graves might have great influence on the family fortunes, though he professed not to act by any mercenary motives in such matters.

There was, however, a higher law than that of geomancy, which was merely the science of the earth. In their hearts was written the law of Heaven which bade them render filial loyalty to the desires of the parents and grandparents. When Tsêng learned that his grandfather was opposed to the removal of the grave to a better site he told his brothers to make no further attempt to secure a better location lest they vex their grandfather and cause his illness to grow worse; which would be a serious revolt against the law of Heaven, and could not for that reason bring good fortune, however lucky should be the new location.³² Obedience to Heaven's law proved to be a wise decision in this case, for he was able in July to write, "since the burial of my grandmother all the household matters have prospered. My grandfather's illness is already cured, my ailment is healed, and I have gone up to the second rank; whence can be seen the good in our *fêngshui*. Under no circumstances must the burial place be changed. If we again change without carefully inquiring into the matter we shall be guilty of a great lack of filial piety."³³ But even yet the good fortune accruing from the location of this grave was not exhausted. In 1849 he was able to record the birth of three sons in the family group, his own elevation to the cabinet, and Kuo-ch'üan's success in the examinations, all of which led him, despite his general attitude, to the assurance that happiness may derive from fortunate burial places.

³¹ *Home Letters*, March 3, 1847.

³² *Ibid.*, March 28, 1847.

³³ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1847.

Many years later, when his brother had been killed in the battle of San Ho, he wrote to urge care in the selection of a proper grave, citing the good fortune that had befallen a certain family named Loh when they had discovered a good burial ground.³⁴ Similarly on the birth of a grandson to his uncle he wrote: "Our ancestors must rejoice in the world below. During the last few years my uncle erected a structure at the Chi Kung ancestral temple and offered sacrifices most carefully and reverently. Then this year again he built two rooms—and it has resulted in this great joy. This sufficiently reveals the fact that our remotest ancestors watch over their descendants, that their influences can penetrate in every respect as though they were present."³⁵ Thus Tsêng fully identified himself with the ideas of his people regarding the right location of graves, the proper attention to ancestral temples, and the offering of the ancestral sacrifices in their due season.

In the years 1844 and 1845 several members of the family had been ill. Whereupon Tsêng wrote to his brothers asking them to set the family graves in order because the series of illnesses seemed to arise from lack of attention to them. At the same time he warned them not to disturb the earth for fear of stirring up the spirits.³⁶ Towards the close of 1858, after a series of events in which good and evil had apparently befallen the family in regular alternation from 1851, a series culminating in the tragedy of San Ho, Tsêng and his brothers considered it necessary to relocate the graves of their father and mother in order to secure better fortune for the family.³⁷ One might accumulate many more proofs of Tsêng's faith in this ancient belief of China

³⁴ *Home Letters*, March 17, 1859.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, January 8, 1856.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, December 18, 1845.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, sixteenth of twelfth moon, 1858, and first of first moon, 1859.

in the power of the ancestors and in the vital need of a happy choice for the ancestral graves, but the foregoing extracts will show what a powerful effect these moves had on the conduct even of a man so cautious about many superstitious practices in connection with Chinese life. To live without making provision for the happiness of the departed was beyond the power of man.

There were other types of superstitious belief in which Tsêng also shared, though in theory his attitude towards them was one of scepticism. In the year 1838 he was travelling on a small stream known as Fanchen Ho, when a sudden storm placed him in considerable peril. In his danger he vowed a play to the goddess of mercy, Kwang-yin, if he should be rescued. As late as 1851 the terror of that wild day so affected him that he wrote home telling his family that none of them must henceforth travel on that river, and should warn their descendants to keep away from it.³⁸ Omens and signs revealing the will of Heaven are also mentioned in letters as true. Early in 1864 he speaks of peculiarly dark, ashy-looking clouds hanging over the city of Nanking, and wonders if it does not indicate that Heaven is about to bring the Taiping rebellion to an end.³⁹ In 1858, when he was in control of military operations in Chekiang as well as elsewhere and a mandate came appointing his brother to a post in Chekiang, he wrote home saying that when their late father had been on a pilgrimage to Nanyueh he had made a prophecy saying: "Two pearls are together in your hand, their brilliance shall illumine Hangchow," and he had told Kuo-fan that among his sons two would be officials in Chekiang. Their going would fulfill what was revealed half a century before.⁴⁰

On another occasion, lamenting the death of his brother

³⁸ *Home Letters*, August 4, 1851.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, January 9, 1864.

⁴⁰ But the brothers did not actually go there at that time.

at San Ho, he wrote: "In the fourth moon of this year Liu Chang-ch'u was consulting a planchette at my house. To the first question the planchette replied, 'Take [the character] *fu* and replace the military with the civil, and get a certain character.' The character was *pai* [disaster]. I was astonished at the character 'disaster,' not knowing what it referred to. The planchette replied, 'It is spoken of Kiukiang which cannot be rejoiced over.' Again I was astonished because Kiukiang had just been captured; we were all elated over it and I did not know for what reason the opposite should be spoken. The planchette again made answer, 'It is spoken for the whole country as well as for the Tsêng family.' Only now can I see that the disaster at San Ho and the death of our sixth brother are the things which could not be rejoiced over. These four characters being so exactly verified, who could fail to reckon that this had all been determined beforehand? For calamity and happiness are ordered by Heaven, good and evil by men. What is ordered by Heaven we can do nothing but obey; what is determined by men—achieve one portion and reckon it a portion gained, grasp a day and reckon it a day gained."

It will not have escaped the reader that for organised religion, aside from the family sacrifices and the occasional invocation of the local gods Tsêng had no enthusiasm whatever. He came into contact with Christianity through the questionable doctrines of Taipingdom, and later as an official settling claims for damages caused by riots. One passage⁴¹ affords a glimpse of the philosophy of religion he followed and his attitude towards Buddhism and Christianity.

In the beginning the Catholic faith was only a means of gaining riches and profit to support men. Today the most of the for-

⁴¹ Kawasaki, *To-ho no I-jin* (An Eminent Man of the East), p. 126.

eign priests are very poor. Though they say that the church is rich and does not give to them, their words are not to be believed. Since the Chin and Han dynasties the teachings of Duke Chou and Confucius have somewhat declined and the Buddhist religion has advanced.

Now the Buddhist faith arose in India, but modern India chiefly professes Mohammedanism and has rejected Buddhism. The Catholic faith arose in western lands, but the modern nations of the west have set up another religion, the Protestant, and have forcibly opposed the Catholic faith. Hence we see that false doctrines sometimes perish and sometimes rise, but the teachings of Chou and Confucius remain everlastingly unchanged, causing the Chinese to establish their government, regulate their customs, and make their ceremonies and instruction most illustrious. Though a hundred plans be used to cause them to abandon these teachings, they are not in the least to be credited.

Thus did Tsêng reveal the positive faith that held his allegiance, and range himself squarely on the side of Confucius and those from whom Confucius drew his ideas. This carried with it an agnostic attitude towards the beliefs of the common man in spirits and demons—except those of the household, the departed ancestors. But there was no such agnosticism regarding Heaven and its decrees. Moreover at times we have noticed that he departs from the agnostic attitude regarding some of the popular divinities—as when he vowed a play to the goddess of mercy. He was not blind to the fact that there were mysteries which his philosophy could not fathom except on the basis of a providence that determined human fate. Thus, in recording the death of an acquaintance who should to all appearance have enjoyed a long and happy life, he observes that life and death and the reward of good men are inexplicable matters.⁴² When his

⁴² *Home Letters*, ninth moon, fifth, 1851.

brother was laying siege to Anking, and later to Nanking, Tsêng warned him against impatience, urging him to do all that human skill could and trust the result to fate. He writes:⁴³

I have observed for many years that whether affairs succeed or not, whether people gain fame or not, are settled by fate, not altogether by human will.

In another letter he elaborates the same thought thus:

Those who conduct great enterprises regard wisdom as first in importance and ability as secondary. The accomplishment of a great task rests half on human planning and half on Heaven's will. Some years ago when you were attacking Anking I told you that you need not try to act for Heaven. The strength of walls or trenches, the valour of the army's spirit, the energetic suppression of communications, resolute struggling against relieving enemy forces—these are matters where human planning can take the lead. The early or late capture of a city, the number of the enemy slain, the health or illness of our troops, whether good generals are wounded or not, the accession of relieving forces to the besieging armies or their reduction by having some sent off to relieve other places, whether the walls are completely razed or victory is reported without great effort—these are matters accomplished by Heaven's will.

For instance, if you are in the examination hall being examined, human thought determines whether the essays are written according to rule and the poetry is without mistakes in the even and slanting tones. But whether the officer selects them or you secure the degree early or late are matters governed by the will of Heaven. If you fear that Heaven's will cannot be relied on and try to go beyond the desire of the gods; or that human wisdom is not safe, and try various expedients, these arise from a lack of wisdom. In your impatience to capture the city you show a desire to usurp Heaven's management. I hope that you will always cherish thoughts of fear for Heaven and seri-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, February 10, 1861.

ously and calmly let things take their natural course and they will turn out for the best.⁴⁴

In spite of Tsêng's disbelief in the ordinary religious institutions of the common people he was compelled as an official to take part in the sacrifices required by custom in times of difficulty. Thus, when there was a drought in May and June, 1867, he went several times to the temple of the god of moisture to pray for rain, and on an expedition of this kind to another temple he sprinkled holy water on the ground; on the following day there was a copious downpour of rain, and Tsêng granted 4,000 *taels* of silver to the temple in token of his gratitude.⁴⁵ In April of the following year it was necessary in similar manner to pray for dry weather.⁴⁶ Just how far these and other unrecorded expeditions are mere accommodations to the popular beliefs we cannot be certain, but one gains the impression on the whole that Tsêng felt at times a little shaky in his scepticism concerning the popular articles of faith, and preferred to err on the side of following the custom in case there might be some truth in the popular beliefs. Apparently he was consistent in his opposition to following the foreign faiths.

One of the classical superstitions that Tsêng shared with his countrymen of that day was the belief that the "eight characters" exerted a profound influence on the fate of the individual. These eight characters are those designating the year, month, day, and hour of one's birth. It was generally thought that the nature of an individual

⁴⁴ *Home Letters*, September 3, 1863. The character 'Heaven' appears in this place to carry with it the idea of a personal God, not a mere blind impersonal thing. The fact that the Jesuits were willing to accept it as the term for God shows that they thought the term implied personality and intelligence.

⁴⁵ *Nicnp'u*, XI, 18b.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22b.

depended on the proportion of the different elements⁴⁷ occurring in the eight characters. In marriage it was necessary to consult a skilled student of this lore to determine whether the eight characters of the proposed bride and groom revealed temperamental affinity or the opposite. As a rule Tsêng was inclined to scoff at this lore, but in some letters in 1871 regarding the birth of a son to his eldest son he remarks: "Chi-tze has a son. He is thirty-three and it is a great event. But in the eight characters fire and water are lacking among the elements and I do not know whether he can live long or not."⁴⁸ The doubt proved true, for in September of the same year the child sickened and died, and Tsêng wrote saying: "When this child was first born I observed that in the eight characters fire and water were both lacking, just as in the case of Chia-i, water and wood, and so I feared he would scarcely grow to manhood, but did not dream that it would be so sudden. Since Chi-tze and his wife are both over thirty they cannot but grieve. But these are things entirely in Heaven's control which cannot be governed by human strength, and the only thing to be done is to receive the decree calmly and obey it quietly."⁴⁹

To those of the West, one of the weaknesses in Chinese official life seems to be the corruption prevailing there—the universal "squeeze" and the reliance on favor or bribery for advancement. It is interesting to discover in Tsêng Kuo-fan a wholesome independence. He was one of the few who had risen purely by merit. He took great pains to warn his brothers and other members of the family against trusting in their connection with him for personal gain. Equally did he take the greatest pains not to lay himself under serious obligations to others.

⁴⁷ The five elements were fire, water, wood, metal, and earth, and one or another of them occurs in many of the ideograms used for denoting time.

⁴⁸ *Home Letters*, March 15, 1871. ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, September 10, 1871.

He would not lightly accept favors nor was he willing to ingratiate himself with important men, even as he was careful not to put them under obligations to himself or encourage their attempts to win his favor. Such grace when granted seemed simply bait to ensnare the applicant, and if promotion should come it would leave the man with a burden that could not be discharged even by repaying tenfold the help he had received.⁵⁰

Furthermore, he set his face against the universal practice of using official position as a means for private enrichment. In 1849 he wrote home: "Ever since I was thirty I have held that it is a disgraceful thing to use official position to gain wealth; a shameful, abominable thing to make the official purse a source of profit to leave to one's descendants. I have therefore in my mind sworn an oath never to use public office as a means of securing a fortune. . . ."⁵¹ A few years later when he held a position where he might easily have secured large amounts by well-recognized means of corruption, and his brother Kuo-hwang had drawn on him for 200 *taels*, he wrote a letter remonstrating with him. "When I was in Peking," he wrote, "I used to send money home, sometimes two hundred *taels* a year. Since I have led soldiers it was with great difficulty that I sent one hundred and fifty *taels* in the winter of 1854. In the third moon of this year Kuo-hwang drew for use two hundred *taels* at Li's home in Changsha. This amount I really cannot send again. Those who lead soldiers cannot escape making some gains. I am unable to prevent people from taking something, but I try not to take any [profit] myself and thus encourage the growth of the practice."⁵² So earnest was he on this point that he included it among his eight fundamentals of life: "In holding office regard not loving

⁵⁰ *Home Letters*, August 7, 1847.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, April 13, 1849.

⁵² *Ibid.*, December 26, 1856.

money as the fundamental thing."⁵³ Nor were these empty platitudes. Tsêng bears a reputation in the land as having been singularly upright in financial matters. He was also careful not to permit petty graft on the part of his family. On one occasion when his second son was going from Changsha to his father's yamen in Anking (1863), Tsêng wrote warning him not to fly the commander-in-chief's flag and not to burden the officials along the way, who might otherwise feel constrained to spend time and money in his entertainment. Tsêng had no desire to place himself under obligations for courtesies rendered to a member of his family who was not traveling on public business, nor permit the use of his high rank for personal gain.⁵⁴

This feeling of independence and honesty is shown in another way in letters home and to other officials, which in a land of circumlocation are at times almost blunt in their plain speaking, though always punctilious in courteous language. His memorials and letters to superior officials in the capital are perhaps more elegantly worded, but are seldom the wielding of an "empty pen." In the instances where his opinion and those of Li Hung-chang and Tso Tsung-tang were sought regarding the use of foreign soldiery, there is great contrast in the replies. While his associates produce the impression of trying not to commit themselves too much in either direction Tsêng writes plainly and frankly.⁵⁵ He had great contempt for the habit many officials had of falsification in their reports of victories or defeats, as shown in the affair where Wang Hsin and Tso Tsung-tang inserted a false report of victory into a dispatch to Peking in 1854.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Ibid.*, April 4, 1861.

⁵⁴ *Household Instructions*, September 24, 1863.

⁵⁵ See memorial in chapter XII above.

⁵⁶ *Home Letters*, May 16, 1854.

Tsêng Kuo-fan's ideals of character are those of the *Classics*. He sets before his brothers and sons the virtues of filial piety, brotherly submission, benevolence, and right. In the development of character eight virtues were to be sought after, industry, frugality, stability (or firmness of will), clear perception, faithfulness, reciprocity (doing to others nothing which you dislike to have done to you), modesty, and integrity.⁵⁷ In the letter of farewell instruction to his sons, drawn up on the eve of his departure for T'ientsin to settle the massacre claims, he elaborated four chief theses:

Act sincerely and carefully when you are alone and your heart will be at peace.

Order yourself in reverence and your conduct will be firm.

Seek benevolence and men will delight in you.

Labour industriously and the gods will respect you.⁵⁸

True to his convictions about the great value of books, Tsêng constantly took pains to fire his brothers with the same devotion to learning that characterised his own life. A day seldom passed, even amid the turmoil of the battlefield or the multifarious duties of civil office, when he did not read from works of classics, history, or poetry, and turn his hand to writing essays or other compositions. He was a constant diarist, though unfortunately for our purposes the records of some of the most valuable years were lost in the capture of his papers before Kiukiang. He tried to stir up the same spirit of industry in his juniors, placing their studies first on the list of household virtues, calling for their compositions from time to time, giving careful heed to the selection of suitable teachers for them, and exhorting them in season and out of season. If they

⁵⁷ *Home Instructions*, April 23, 1866. In one of his poems he says there is no greater excellency than reciprocity, *Home Letters*, fifth moon, fifth.

⁵⁸ *Home Instructions*, July 6, 1870.

were going forward suitably he praised them, and, if not, he reproved them or tried to shame them into rivalling the sons of those who, with fewer advantages, were forging far ahead.

In a letter written early in 1843 he mentions the three indispensable conditions of progress, the 'will to learn,' understanding, and constant application. "If you have the 'will to learn' it will not be pleasant to drift along; with understanding you know that learning is inexhaustible and will not consider that you have enough—like the river spirit gazing on the sea, or the frog from the well viewing the skies, both without understanding; if you are possessed of constancy there is nothing that you cannot accomplish. Of these three you cannot spare a single one."

We are not left without many indications of the amount of work he himself did. In the last four months of 1844, for instance, he carefully read and annotated the complete works of Wang Ching (one hundred Chinese volumes), the literary works of Kwei Chen-ch'üan (forty volumes), the book of Odes (twenty volumes), and the historical books of the later Han Dynasty (one hundred volumes).⁵⁹ During the busy years after he entered on his military career, he could not perform such heavy tasks, but he made it a rule not to let a day pass without a prescribed amount of study, and, in order that he might not fall into the temptation to neglect it, he laid out definite programmes for this work. In a homely illustration he compares study to cooking. If one prepares meals over a good, steady fire the task is easily accomplished, but if the fire is alternately kindled and permitted to die out the meal is never cooked.⁶⁰ In another place he tells

⁵⁹ *Home Letters*, December 30, 1844.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, December 2, and December 26, 1856.

us that the philosopher Chu Hsi⁶¹ likened study to the cooking of meat. "First, meat is boiled over a hot fire, then allowed to simmer over a slow fire. Likewise to your studies you must bring the hot fire of youth. Without the preliminary boiling over the hot fire the juices are not brought forth and there is no flavor in the dish; mere seething never produces savoury viands."⁶²

The place where one happened to be was a good enough place to study. The question was not one of place at all, but of the purpose within. Does one truly have the compelling impulse to study? "If you can apply yourself and are independent," he wrote to his brother, Kuo-hwang, who thought of becoming a teacher in order to secure the necessary leisure and incentive to study, "you can study at your own fireside, or in wildernesses, or in busy market places, or whether you are raising vegetables or swine. But if you cannot apply yourself and are not independent, you can never study, whether at home, or in a quiet country place, or in the haunts of the gods and fairies. Why must you choose a good time or a suitable place for study, when you simply need to ask yourself whether your determination is firm or not?"⁶³

Shortly before his death he wrote out four rules for the guidance of his heirs because he desired that the rising generations of the Tsêng family should become self-reliant and zealous in their studies. "1. When you read new books aim at speed. If you do not read much you will be too ignorant. 2. In reviewing old books you should aim at thoroughness. Unless you recite them from memory you easily forget them. 3. There must be no cessation in the practice of writing. Poor writing is like

⁶¹ A philosopher and the orthodox commentator on the Confucian classics in the Sung Dynasty.

⁶² *Home Letters*, October 21, 1842.

⁶³ *Home Letters*, 1842, tenth moon, 26.

a body without clothing or a mountain without trees. 4. In composing essays you should think profoundly. Not to compose well is like a man who is dumb and cannot talk, or a horse that is lame and unable to walk."⁶⁴

Never very robust—he tells his brothers that they have all inherited weak constitutions from their mother—Tsêng had to give much attention to his health. During the years he spent in Peking he was never entirely well, and in 1842 one of the men whom he consulted told him that his complaint would yield more to periods of quiet resting than to medicine.⁶⁵ Experience with many doctors led him, about 1857, to give them up altogether, with their remedies, since most of them were unskilled and did seven parts of damage to three parts of good.⁶⁶ At the age of thirty-two he gave up the practice of smoking and advised his brothers to do likewise when they should reach the same age, but he did not think that one should necessarily abandon wine in moderate quantities.⁶⁷ Early rising he considered of great importance, not only for progress in one's career but for health.⁶⁸

Among the discussions of hygiene found in Tsêng's letters the most comprehensive rules are perhaps those in a letter dated July 16, 1866:

Since old age approaches I can at best hope to remain in high office only a year and a half or so, not longer. When I reflect that we brothers are not blessed with robust health and our descendants will be even weaker, we ought constantly to seek ways of building up our strength, and not depend on the taking of medicine from time to time. There are five general rules: 1, regularity in eating and sleeping, 2, the restraint of anger, 3, regulation of sexual intercourse, 4, washing the feet before re-

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, December 5, 1871.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, ninth moon, eighteenth, 1842.

⁶⁶ *Home Instructions*, eleventh moon, fourth, 1860.

⁶⁷ *Home Letters*, February 28, 1852.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1860.

tiring, and, 5, after each of the two daily meals a walk of three thousand paces. The restraint of anger I have thus explained in a letter, "In physical care the fundamental thing is not to get angry." The two principles of regularity in meals and sleep the honourable Sing-kong practised forty years, and I have been doing it seven. I recently tried taking three thousand paces after meals and shall never again give it up through carelessness.

With a modern point of view he also insists on the value of sunshine and fresh air. "If the house is too damp people will be affected and it will injure the digestion. Where a house is high and the inner court small, the air does not enter easily, and the same is true regarding the sunshine. You must find some way to drive out the dampness and you will not get sick."⁶⁹

In the same letter where he instructed his sons about their studies he proposed six rules of hygiene in order that they might not fail by reason of poor health: (1) one thousand paces after meals, (2) a foot-bath before retiring,⁷⁰ (3) the avoidance of anger, (4) regular periods of quiet resting, (5) the regular practice of archery (which he considered an excellent way to develop the muscles), and (6) a simple breakfast at dawn of a single bowl of rice without other dishes.

During the last two years of his life his old eye trouble returned; he had already lost the use of one eye at the time of the T'ientsin massacre. Attacks of dizziness troubled him, too, from time to time. Only a few days before his death an especially severe attack, which caused his friends no little alarm, occurred suddenly while he was being borne in his sedan chair to greet a guest at the riverside. This ill health made him all the more eager to conserve what strength remained to him and to insist

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, February 29, 1860.

⁷⁰ *I.e.*, to insure free circulation of the blood.

that his descendants should be taught the rules of hygiene and the development of their physique.

The callousness of the Chinese to suffering was amply displayed in the Taiping rebellion, recalling to us the fact that they retained the mediaeval frame of mind. The Crimean and American Civil wars saw the beginnings of modern nursing on the battlefields, and were conducted with some regard to human suffering, but the Taiping rebellion was cruel on both sides. Tsêng had no scruples whatever about beheading the rebels he captured. In 1861 his two brothers, being concerned about the great toll of human life, wrote their sentiments to their brother. In reply Tsêng assured them that the more rebels slain the better, for then the poison could be driven out; the religion of the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Brother should be destroyed together with the officials T'ien Yen (Celestial Rest) and T'ien Yu (Celestial Pleasure).⁷¹ "Even if we could cause [Duke] Chou and Confucius to be born now they would by no means think of anything but destroying rebels. And if one intends to destroy them one should not repine over slaying many of them and driving their turbans back to the farms." In the capture of Anking twenty thousand of the rebels were slain by the captors.⁷² In the operations about Nanking we have one instance recorded where after a bloody battle at San Ho K'ou, a like number were decapitated.⁷³ Following the escalade at Nanking the gates were shut and the rebels hunted down in the streets with a slaughter of approximately a hundred thousand.⁷⁴ Not long after that event, at Fuchow, General Pao Ch'ao executed forty thousand in cold blood.⁷⁴ None of these massacres appears to have troubled the minds of the people of that time. Nor did the

⁷¹ *Home Letters*, July 19, 1861.

⁷² *Record of Chief Events*, II, 6b.

⁷³ *Record of the Chief Events*, III, 10b.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 14a.

beheading of the surrendered *wangs* at Soochow, which so aroused the wrath of Gordon that he tried to shoot Li Hung-chang, secure from Tsêng more than the passing comment already recorded above: "Li Shao-ch'üan, when he killed the eight *wangs* who surrendered at Soochow, showed that his eye was clear and his hand heavy."⁷⁵ Such callousness to suffering, such approbation of slaughter as we find recorded in the cases quoted (and many others might be mentioned) are not, I believe, due to unusual cruelty on Tsêng's part. They may more fittingly be regarded as a Chinese counterpart to the spirit of the Spaniards in the Inquisition, or the French in the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, or the burning of witches in Salem. These rebels were more than enemies; they added to their rebellion against the Throne blasphemy against the sacred writings of the ancients and disdain for the orthodox faith of the fathers; they were outside the pale of humanity, they were a poison in the body politic that must be utterly eradicated.

Of Tsêng's attitude towards foreign relations we have made mention from time to time in previous chapters. In the days of his service in Peking, before he had any contact with them or knowledge of them, he felt that if they could be kept out of China it would be a benefit to the country.⁷⁶ In 1849, when the question of foreign entry into the city of Canton was being considered, Tsêng writes home: "The English barbarians have renewed their request but viceroy Hsü has been correct in his management. If the foreign barbarians would only decide to submit and ultimately not enter the city there would never be any foreign menace and the emperor's heart would be gratified to the utmost."⁷⁷ When his day came to lead troops we have already seen how eager he was

⁷⁵ *Excerpts from Diary*, II, p. 38. ⁷⁶ *Home Letters*, *passim*.

⁷⁷ *Home Letters*, May 8, 1849.

for cannon, realising that he could do nothing without them. Later, we have noted the need he felt of steamers and launches for developing his campaigns, and with what enthusiastic support he greeted Yung Wing when the latter proposed the establishment of ironworks at Shanghai. His objection at first to rifles and his ultimate reconciliation to their use, his attitude towards the employment of foreign forces for other than defensive purposes, are all familiar to us. But we are aware also of the gradual evolution in thought that marked him at his death as one of China's most far-seeing and boldest statesmen, as regards the reconstruction of China after foreign models.

In the conduct of foreign policies his early opposition to Westerners was modified by the inevitable logic of events. He learned something of their strength and of their persistence. In reply to one of Li Hung-chang's letters in 1862, Tsêng wrote concerning a policy: "Barbarian affairs are fundamentally hard to manage, but the roots do not lie outside Confucius' four principles⁷⁸ of faithfulness, sincerity, magnanimity, and respect. Magnanimity means generosity, respect means to act carefully, and sincerity simply not to speak falsehoods—actually a most difficult thing. We ought to start from this word. What we have spoken and agreed to today, we should not change tomorrow because of some slight advantage or difficulty."⁷⁹ The same sentiment is slightly amplified in another letter a short time later, where the question of employing foreign troops is under discussion:

As to intercourse with foreigners the important principles may be summed up in four sentences, namely, "In your words be faithful and sincere; in actions be magnanimous and respectful.

⁷⁸ The word translated here "principles" is literally "characters."

⁷⁹ *Miscellaneous Dispatches*, XVIII, 17.

Join with them in defence but not in attack. First keep apart and later become friendly." Faithful means not having a heart of deceit. Sincere means not being deceitful in words. Magnanimous means generous, respectful means modest and careful. Whether they agree with us or oppose us we ought constantly to follow these two sentences and never fail in them.

Having discussed the third point in other places, he omits what would be but a repetition here, and goes on to the fourth:

As to the sentence "First keep apart and later become friendly," since certainly we strive that our military strength may suffice to stand alone, we ought first to attack alone in one or two places and if our men prove to be well set up and undaunted so as not to appear ridiculous in the eyes of foreigners, it will not be too late to become friendly with them. In acting according to these various points, though for a time there should be friction and quarrelling, in the long run it must be possible to secure mutual harmony and peace.⁸⁰

It is clear that Tsêng was not willing to act as though the foreigner were an inferior. On the contrary, it had become evident to him in the course of his dealings with them that, while there were points of difference between the two races, Chinese and foreign, only the Confucian principles of virtue and reciprocity would suffice to make their relations friendly in the long run. He set his face against the practice of seeking immediate advantage through deceit, to the eventual undoing of the Chinese cause through the natural fruits of such a short-sighted policy.

On the matter of opening the country to the unlimited exploitation of the foreign merchant he was far from willing. As in the case of the establishment of ironworks and arsenals, he realised that foreign help was needed, but did not desire the foreigner to come in and take away

⁸⁰ *Miscellaneous Correspondence*, XVIII, 29b, 30a.

employment from Chinese laborers or profits from Chinese merchants. In the development of a fleet of merchant ships he would have Chinese employed at first in inferior positions, until they could learn how to manage these things for themselves, and then take them over. He desired few of the novelties which were beginning to flood the country, preferring to go on in the good old ways with occupations and products continuing ever the same. Of foreign trade he wrote (but I cannot ascertain whether it was early or late in his career).

Generally speaking, the foreigners of the west have been devouring each other for the last few hundred years. The chief method of doing this is to take away the gain of merchants of other countries, after which their country can attain its purpose. The motive of their coming to China, establishing factories everywhere and dealing in all kinds of goods, is their desire to carry out the deceitful purpose which lies in their minds and jeopardise the means of livelihood of our people. Since the beginning of the war the Chinese people have endured extreme suffering as though in water or fire. The foreigners have opened to general trade the three and the five ports, the Yangtse commerce, and their business grows day by day; while our humbler people are in difficulty without any place for redress, just as though they were hanging upside down. If now you yield to the demands of the foreigners to deal in salt, the licensed merchants will find their means of livelihood reduced. If you accede to their demands to build warehouses, the means of livelihood of the stores and shops that collect goods will be reduced. If you permit steam launches to ply on the smaller streams you will cut into the livelihood of the crews and rowers of large and small boats. If you permit them to establish telegraphs and railways you will take away the living of the cartmen, the inns and the carriers. Of all the various things they are seeking for we should try only the one idea of using foreign instruments for mining coal to secure the permanent advantage of China.⁸¹

⁸¹ Kawasaki, *To-ho no I-jin*, p. 124.

From this it appears to be clear that he would have resisted, with whatever force he could summon, the carnival of concessions that later gave into the control of foreigners many of the chief resources of the country, or hypothecated a large share of the revenues to pay interest on loans.

Whatever his achievements as an administrator and leader of armies, Tsêng seems always to have felt that the true home of his spirit was in the literature and philosophy of his native land. His letters display a charm of style which have transformed them into models of literary composition—translations carry but a feeble reflection of the original skill of composition. He was also an essayist of no mean ability and compiled an anthology of selected poems from eighteen of the most famous poets of the Middle Kingdom. There are those who rate him as foremost among the great writers and scholars of the Manchu Dynasty, though the point is not unanimously conceded.