

## CHAPTER IX

### TAIPING DISSENSIONS AND IMPERIAL DISAPPOINTMENTS

OUTWARDLY the Taiping cause was never brighter than during the last half of 1855. Within, however, jealousies and dissensions were approaching the point of danger, and were destined soon to tear into shreds the unity of Taipingdom, robbing it of the Eastern and Northern kings and sending Shi Ta-k'ai off to become a knight errant who led his followers against many a city in useless enterprise, far away to the very borders of Tibet.

With their armies all went well. Every strategic point in the middle Yangtse was in their hands. They had met the threat of annihilation in 1855, had held Kiukiang and Hukow in an iron grasp, while they poured in waves across Anhui, up the river, and into the province of Kiangsi. The pitiably small force under Tsêng and his generals, even with the recruits added to the number, were far from being sufficient. But trouble long brewing in the Taiping ranks came to a climax during 1856 in the arrogance and assumptions of the Eastern king. He will be remembered as the man who spoke in the name of God the Father, who later applied to himself the terms Comforter and Holy Ghost. His usurpations had gone so far that he virtually made himself dictator in Nanking, using his divine pretensions to ride roughshod over the other "kings" and even to control the T'ienwang.

At last he demanded imperial rank.<sup>1</sup> "He wanted the Tienwang to make him a *Wan-sui*, and on account of his wielding the power single-handed he finally compelled the Tienwang to proceed in person to his palace and perform the ceremony there. The Peiwang and Yiwang<sup>2</sup> were moved at this and determined secretly to exterminate the Tungwang as well as his three brothers, but no more."<sup>3</sup>

Before proceeding with this story let us glance for a moment at the progress of the loyalists. The beginning of 1856 found them gathering for the attack on Wuchang and winning minor victories in the outlying districts. In this campaign Lo Tse-nan, who had been reckoned one of Tsêng's best generals next to T'a Chi-pu, received a mortal wound below the walls of Wuchang, April 6, and died on the twelfth. He was granted the posthumous rank of governor in recognition of his great services.<sup>4</sup> It was not until the very end of the year, however, that the city of Wuchang fell to the imperial armies after having been in rebel hands for more than eighteen months,<sup>5</sup> and practically under siege nearly a year. It was only when all the roads over which grain could reach the rebels were blocked that they issued forth from the gates and escaped. As a capture the achievement was valuable but it was not spectacular.

In June came the most severe blow the regular army had experienced since the first days of the rebellion. From the "great camp" outside Nanking had gone a relief expedition to Chinkiang, where the imperialists were in difficulties. The Eastern king chose that moment to order

<sup>1</sup> The quotation and general account of this paragraph are from the *Autobiography* of the Chungwang, pp. 7 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Wan-sui*, literally 'Ten thousand years,' is the designation of the emperor. The Pei-wang and Yi-wang were respectively the Northern and Assistant kings. The Tung-wang was the Eastern king.

<sup>3</sup> Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, V, 3b.    <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 20, 21.

an attack on the camp outside Nanking, led by Li Siu-ch'ing (later the Chungwang) and others. This was delivered by a combination of all the insurgents available; they struck a smashing blow, divided the imperialists, and compelled a general retirement to Tanyang.<sup>6</sup> General Hsiang Yung committed suicide in atonement for his failure, and left his successor, Ho Chun, to gather together the scattered army and reestablish it at the new base. He tried to restore the morale of his army and revive its organisation after the unexpected disaster by moving out to capture the cities of Anhui and Kiangsi instead of sitting still. Chang Kuo-liang coöperated with him in the command of the forces.

In Anhui the Taipings had their headquarters at San Ho, the government holding Lüchow as their base. General Ho Chun decided to strike a decisive blow and led an attack in person (September 17). This effort was a complete success, the enemy being routed. More than five thousand were slain and numbers were drowned in the river.<sup>7</sup> Another of their bases, Ch'ao-hsien, a strongly defended source of supplies for Nanking, succumbed to the imperialists on the twenty-seventh of September. Large quantities of military supplies fell into government hands. But Anhui as a whole was still far from conquered; the Taipings remained in Anking and only small detachments of loyal troops were available for necessary attacks on a few specific localities. These few victories were important, however, in revealing improvement in the fighting ability of the imperial armies, whose ranks now included men accustomed to actual warfare.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 8. A very brief account. The official account with details was published in the *Peking Gazette* of July 2, 1856.

<sup>7</sup> *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, V, 13b, 14a.

<sup>8</sup> Between the middle of February and the middle of March, the northern expedition, which, ever since it was first checked near Tientsin, two years before, had been slowly beaten back from point to point by Sen-

Inside the city of Nanking the jealousies among the chiefs culminated, after the rebel successes earlier in the year, and especially after the great defeat of the besieging army in June, in the murder of the Eastern king and all his relatives by the others combined against him. But matters were not remedied by his death, because the Northern king, Wei Ch'ang-hui, followed in the footsteps of Yang, and, with insane jealousy of Shi Ta-k'ai, forced that able man to flee from Nanking. After he was gone to Ningkuo, Wei set upon his family and butchered them in cold blood. Then this maniac commenced a series of cruel and indiscriminate butcheries of men, women, and children which at last caused the people of Nanking to rise against him. His head was sent as a bloody trophy to the Assistant king in Ningkuo, and the latter returned to Nanking prepared to take his place in the government of the rebels.<sup>9</sup> He secured high place in the government, but it became apparent to him that the T'ienwang preferred to rule through his own brothers. These brothers had no gifts either in military strategy or in the management of state affairs, and inasmuch as their divine brother was obsessed with the belief that God would always intervene on their side, they insisted on overriding whatever prudent policies were initiated by Shi Ta-k'ai, who was a skillful and talented general. Hence he left the capital and preferred henceforth to carry on operations where he would not constantly be under their jealous eyes.<sup>10</sup>

kolintsin, was finally conquered. Its brave leader, Lin Hung-ch'iang, was sent to Peking, where he was put to death. Shanghai also, which had been in Triad hands since 1853, was delivered by Chiurhanga, governor of Kiangsu.

The Chungwang in his *Autobiography* (p. 19), speaking of a period a little later, says that the bravery of the imperialists was on the increase.

<sup>9</sup> Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 9.

There remained two men of ability to help direct Taiping affairs, Ch'eng Yu-ch'en, who was then a minister of state and later the Yingwang, and Li Siu-ch'ing, later the Chungwang and sole prop of the state in its last days. The latter had joined the cause as a private in Kwangsi, had served with Shi Ta-k'ai in his Anhui campaign in 1854, and later was among those who led in the attack on the forces of Hsiang Yung which sent them reeling to Tanyang in 1856. After this he was put in control of important operations in Anhui, and some time later was promoted to be a *wang*. It was against his forces that General Gordon later fought. He was a man of clear insight and was faithful to the bitter end. Nor was he backward about expressing his opinion—generally a sane one—to the T'ienwang himself. He was inclined to attribute the final collapse of the movement primarily to the mistake of Hung Jen-kan (Hung Jen), who, in 1859, came from Hong Kong to join the movement, and so dominated the T'ienwang that other advisers could secure no consideration; and in a lesser degree to the disposition of the monarch to rely too much on divine interposition.

These internal rivalries and readjustments in 1856 so weakened the Taiping cause that if the loyalists had only taken advantage of them the war would have been speedily ended. They came to their climax, however, at the very time when imperial arms and morale had suffered a severe blow in the defeat outside Nanking, and Tsêng was too far away and too beset by enemies to move from Nanchang. No wonder that even the Chungwang was able to look back on this moment of peril and see the hand of an inscrutable providence so ordering affairs as to cause the defeat of the imperialists and the death of their general first, and the dissension of the chiefs and the uproar in Nanking afterwards, instead of having the disturbances first, with their almost certain

outcome of victory for the imperialists and the destruction of the Kwangsi cause.

It happened just at this time that the Eastern King was assassinated, an event that was surely ordained by heaven. Had General Heang-yung not been defeated, but still held on to Hsiao-ling-wei, he might have availed himself of the disturbances in the capital and captured it, as it could not possibly have held out at that time. But it so happened that Heang-yung was defeated before the trouble at home, a conclusive evidence of the inscrutable ways of providence which man is not permitted to fathom. The insurrection in the city commenced in the sixth year. The Tungwang was first murdered, then the Peiwang and after that the Yiwang forced by the Ngan and Foo Princes to flee from the city.<sup>11</sup>

The Chungwang also indicates that another method was open to the imperialists in these days of crisis, namely, the offering of liberal terms to the leaders who might easily have been brought over. For at the moment there was no commanding personage in the city, no one could agree with anyone else, and the T'ienwang was suspicious of all but the members of his immediate family.

There was a unanimous desire at that time to separate, but fears were entertained that they would only be decapitated, as they had learnt that the Imperialists spared no Kwangsi men that fell into their hands; so instead of dispersing they united more closely together. Had the Imperialist dynasty been willing to spare Kwangsi men a breakup would have taken place long ago.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, partly through weakness at a critical moment and partly because of a failure to be conciliatory at the proper moment—possibly through ignorance of the opportunity offered, or lack of a far-sighted statesman at Pe-

<sup>11</sup> Chungwang, *Autobiography*, p. 17.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

king—they lost the chance of the hour and permitted the Taipings to be reorganised under the two surpassingly able leaders who now came forward. It is possible that the imperialists were incapable of taking any but a contemptuous view of the rebels and might not have been able to see the advantage of a policy of conciliation in any case. Their proclamations always refer to the insurgents in terms of the utmost disrespect, and attribute their successes mainly to the incompetence of the imperialist generals.

A proclamation of March 25, 1856, is very characteristic. After contrasting the inefficiency of the forces in central China with those Mongol armies that had checked and driven back the northern expedition, and after threatening to bring on additional tribesmen to quell the rebels along the Yangtse, the emperor indulges in the confident boast: "We conceive that it would not be difficult with one roll of the drum to take those wretched vagabonds and sweep them from the face of the earth."<sup>13</sup> So long as the imperial proclamations thus bombastically underrated the movement (however tremblingly the brush in exalted hands framed the bold words) there was little hope of any compromise. The Taipings who might otherwise have made indirect overtures could not under these circumstances look for much mercy after submission.

Meanwhile what of Tsêng Kuo-fan and affairs in Kiangsi? At the end of 1855 he was in isolation at Nanchang, his soldiers were several months in arrears of pay, and communications were cut with the outside world. Shi Ta-k'ai, aided by men from Kwangtung, had overrun all the southern and southeastern portions of the province, while the rebels were in possession of the lake districts and the tea regions to the east. During the year 1856 a

<sup>13</sup> From the *Peking Gazette* of that date, translated by W. H. Medhurst.

throng of local malcontents who had banded themselves together under the designation *Piench'ien Hui* (Half-penny Association), eventually numbering about 50,000, joined the Taipings, secretly. They added to Tsêng's perplexities through the capture of many cities and the ravaging of many districts.<sup>14</sup>

In contemplating this situation Tsêng memorialised the emperor, proposing a defensive programme: concentration of his own forces at Nanchang; the occupation of T'ungch'ên by Lo Tse-nan, to insure communications with Hunan and Hupeh and guard Nanchang; and the reinforcement of his forces by Cheketenpu, who was to secure the four northeastern prefectures which alone furnished revenues to the imperialists.<sup>15</sup> The emperor was utterly dissatisfied with so meager a programme and in two edicts suggested that mere reverses and numbers of the adversary were not fatal, and that Tsêng should devise measures whereby Kiangsi was not merely to be defended but delivered from the enemy. No appropriations accompanied these mandates. But provincial finances had been strengthened in Chekiang, Hupeh, and Hunan by the adoption of the *likin* tax during 1855-1856, and it was being put into effect in Ssuch'uan, Kwangtung, and Kwangsi.

One day Tsêng was surprised and delighted when P'eng Yu-ling walked into Nanchang, after having travelled in disguise and on foot all the way from Hengchow, a distance of about two hundred and fifty miles.<sup>16</sup> His accession was timely, for Tsêng, himself no gifted tactician, was particularly helpless in the face of such mandates as those from Peking, some of his best generals and naval commanders having been lost through death or separation.

<sup>14</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, *passim*.

<sup>15</sup> *Dispatches*, VI, 56-63, two dated December 29, 1855; *Nienp'u*, IV, 18.

<sup>16</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 19.

Some offensive movements were undertaken about the lake, but when Kian was besieged by rebels it was impossible to find men to send to its relief.

The ever present censors thereupon began to attack Tsêng for his poor management of Kiangsi military affairs and the emperor addressed a reproving inquiry to Tsêng. To this he replied on February 14, stating that without Lo Tse-nan and Yang Tsai-fu he was isolated in Kiangsi. His forces had been too few in the first place, and could ill afford thus to be scattered even for the defence of Hupeh. With the coming of P'eng Yu-ling he hoped later to make progress. Meanwhile he was badly hampered for lack of funds, and he could not now secure from the usual sources of revenue the 60,000 *taels* necessary to pay his little force of eleven thousand men. Rebels, by occupying most of the prefectures, had prevented the collection of the ordinary taxes, the sale of honors lagged, and the salt revenues from Chekiang were hard to secure. Having observed that the new internal trade or transit duties on goods, known as *likin*,<sup>17</sup> had proved most profitable where it had already been established, Tsêng asked that *likin* be collected at Shanghai on goods going to places where the Shanghai trade flowed, and grant

<sup>17</sup> This *likin* tax (so named from the character *li*, meaning the thousandth part of a *tael*, this tax in theory being one per mille) had first been levied in 1853 near Yangchow by a high official, Lei I-cheng, who used the proceeds to pay the soldiers he was recruiting there. His success led to the adoption of the same tax in other places. Parker, in his *China*, 1st ed., p. 227 (2d ed., p. 245), states that it was first used unsuccessfully in Shantung in 1852. He adds that about the same time Hu Lin-yi, governor of Hupeh, applied it there, after which, 1854, the viceroy of the Two Kiang adopted it east of the canal, and it was gradually extended. If it was adopted in Hupeh under Hu Lin-yi as Parker maintains, it must have been long after 1852, in which year Hu was still obscure; if actually adopted there in 1852 another governor was responsible. My information is from *Nienp'u*, II, 17a, where the credit is given as above for its first adoption. This request of Tsêng's to extend the *likin* to Kiangsu would be superfluous if, as Parker states, it had already been in effect there two years before!

him the proceeds. In the meanwhile he asked for help from the customs revenues at Shanghai.

The last named request involved too many other questions to secure a favorable response. Yet the emperor expected bricks to be made without straw, and again sent an impatient mandate ordering Tsêng to take effective steps after consultation with the governor. Tsêng's reply, March 27, was a cry of despair. Kian had fallen in the south; Chow Hung-shan, the new commander in the lake region, was proving incompetent and had lost his base, Changshu-chen. Worse than that, his defeated soldiers had fled in terror to Nanchang and there produced a panic among the populace, resulting in a great stampede, in which numbers perished;<sup>18</sup> still worse, Ch'ing-shan and Jaochow were being abandoned and their defenders retreating to Nanchang. These events required Tsêng's presence to reorganise the army of Chow Hung-shan and calm the populace. Help was looked for from Hunan, whose governor was attempting to cut a road through Liling and P'inghsiang, and another through Liuyang and Wantsai.

A further memorial, after consultation with the governor, showed that the entire eastern and southern part of Kiangsi was in rebel hands, and bandits from Kwangtung had entered Kanchow in the south, which the viceroy of the two Kwang should be asked to relieve. Lo Tse-nan, they believed, should be brought back to Kiangsi. Financial help was of the utmost necessity, and they asked for 100,000 *taels* from the customs at Shanghai, and blank patents to official rank to be sold in

<sup>18</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 23. Such panics are not uncommon among the people of a Chinese town when sudden danger threatens. They must have been of frequent occurrence in connection with most of the operations of the war. The fact that this one deserves special mention shows that it was unusually severe.

Kiangsi.<sup>19</sup> If Tsêng is condemned by censors, the emperor, or those who read of his present plight, one must remember that he had with him only about eleven thousand unpaid soldiers, and that against such resourceful commanders as Shi Ta-k'ai and Hu I-kwang, who lived largely on plunder,—a source denied him by his official status,—he was helpless without men and money. Yet his efforts in raising funds brought little response from other officials. The question of the customs raised the issue of foreign relations. The *likin* also was still a doubtful asset, and there were other claimants for the revenues of Hunan, Hupeh, Anhui, and Kiangsi. The emperor referred the requests for funds to the Board of Revenue, but with about as much actual effect as though the request had been denied. The wonder is that Tsêng did not give up the whole thing and retire.

Reinforcements, however, began to come. At the request of Tsêng's father, Hu Lin-yi sent forward four thousand Hunan troops under Tsêng Kuo-fah. News of their dispatch was brought by a messenger who carried the letter concealed in a lump of wax.<sup>20</sup> This force was held up for some time at Shuichow, but succeeded in capturing it after additional men had been sent from Hupeh, early in September.<sup>21</sup> The Taipings were supposed to be led there by the Assistant king, Shi Ta-k'ai, and Tsêng hoped to capture him in the siege, but he was too elusive.<sup>22</sup>

While these operations at Shuichow were taking place Tsêng's forces recaptured Nank'ang and Jaochow, reopening communications with Hunan and Hupeh. Yang Tsai-fu also had arrived before Kiukiang with the new Hunan flotilla<sup>23</sup> June 6. But they were rendered appre-

<sup>19</sup> *Dispatches*, VII, 13 ff. Lo Tse-nan died at Wuchang not long after this.

<sup>20</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 26b, 27.

<sup>21</sup> *Dispatches*, VII, 40-45; *Nienp'u*, IV, 31b, 32.

<sup>22</sup> *Home Letters*, V, 12a.

<sup>23</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 28.

hensive by the reports that the rebels in the four prefectures south of Nanchang were building boats in the inland rivers and creeks expecting to take advantage of the summer freshets to sail down to the attack of Nanchang. They did come eventually, only to be defeated by the flotilla.<sup>24</sup>

But these reinforcing armies called for more financial adjustments which drove Tsêng and the governor to the verge of despair. They therefore asked that the Hunan and Hupch armies before Shuichow be paid by securing a monthly appropriation of thirty thousand *taels* from Shansi and Shensi, two northern provinces far removed from the scene of hostilities.

Now came another blow. Tsêng had gone off to inspect the army at Shuichow, when news came of a great disaster to the army laying siege to Fuchow in eastern Kiangsi. This army had sustained many attacks, having taken part in some fifty-two engagements without defeat. This city was a strategic center on which the power to hold Jaochow along the lake and Kwanghsin toward Chekiang depended; it was on the road over which supplies must pass. On the fifteenth of October the rebels from within made a sortie and, aided by relieving forces, defeated the imperialists and took their camp, throwing them into a panic. They scattered and made their way back to Nanchang, where they once more threw the provincial capital into a panic and caused great alarm in Kwanghsin and Kiench'ang in eastern Kiangsi. It therefore became necessary for Tsêng to hurry back in order to calm the populace and to take the requisite steps for defending Kwanghsin.

On the twenty-second of November Kiench'ang saw the attack upon the imperialist camp by rebels and the en-

<sup>24</sup> *Dispatches*, VIII, 1-10; *Nienp'u*, IV, 30.

forced withdrawal of the Fukien army across the border.<sup>25</sup> About the same time a reproving edict came from the emperor asking why only defeats were reported when news of victories should be coming. Inasmuch as Shi Ta-k'ai was in the province might he not be bought off and brought over to the imperialist cause? Let Tsêng therefore hasten to think out a plan, win over Shi Ta-k'ai if possible, and again report cities captured. Failure, even if not reproved or punished, must cause Tsêng and the governor to wonder how they can bear to face the people of Kiangsi.<sup>26</sup>

One or two events did happen about this time, which, though not immediately presaging victory, proved in the end of the highest importance. The first of the two events was a victory at Yuanchow, and the capture of the city, November 26. But of more importance was the second, the return of Chow Hung-shan from Hunan with more recruits, accompanied by the brother of Tsêng, Kuo-ch'üan. They won a victory at Anfu, after which they proceeded to Kian. Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan proved to have great military ability, so much so that he was eventually chosen to conduct the sieges of Anking and Nanking.<sup>27</sup>

In his reply to the emperor Tsêng patiently and tactfully met the imperial charges, carefully explaining the situation. Kan Chow, to the south, was more than three hundred miles from the provincial capital and from a

<sup>25</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 37a.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*; *Dispatches*, IX, 4, 5a. This was grossly unfair. Tsêng could not have mustered more than 20,000 or 25,000 all told, to meet the clever Shi Ta-k'ai with three or four times that number. Moreover many of the Hunan forces were at Wuchang helping in the siege. The rebels were not far from their base and were living for the most part by plunder. The emperor, too, had neglected the oft-repeated calls for financial help, or could not send the money, and yet he demanded results. The emperor and the system had more to do with failure than Tsêng.

<sup>27</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 37b.

military standpoint ought to be defended from Kwangtung. The defeat at Kiench'ang was one inflicted on Fukien soldiers, whose withdrawal deprived Tsêng of forces in that direction. He was holding fast the city of Shuichow, the key to western Kiangsi, and commanding the roads into Hunan and Hupeh. Finally, Sui Ta-k'ai, whose movements Tsêng outlined for some time previous, once had the strangle hold on southern Anhui, and now had a similar hold on the prefectures of Shuichow, Lingkiang, Fuchow, Kian, and Kiukiang. If overtures were made looking to his submission, proof of the chief's sincerity would have to be exacted first by requiring the surrender of one or two of the cities he held.<sup>28</sup>

The emperor accepted these explanations with commendation. Following the advice of the governor of Hunan he also granted to the native district of Tsêng Kuo-fan, Siangsiang, the right to eighteen instead of fifteen literary graduates and fifteen in place of twelve military, a signal honor for Tsêng.<sup>29</sup> In this unusual distinction he was supposed to have ample compensation for the previous rebukes.

If the year 1856, now closing, had been one of darkness, there was nevertheless another side which was much more hopeful. Wuchang fell on December 19, 1856.<sup>30</sup> The strategic city of Shuichow was being held by Tsêng Kuo-fah; Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan was with Chow Hung-shan laying siege to Kian. The rebels were at swords' points in Nanking. It had been a year of great strain, of crisis. But reinforcements were now available. The army and navy released by the capture of Wuchang were on the way down the Yangtse and Tsêng was able to meet them out-

<sup>28</sup> *Dispatches*, VIII, 72-79; IX, 1-25, especially pages 4-7, which reply directly to the reproof.

<sup>29</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 38b.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 39a; *P'ing-ting Yuch-fei Chi-luch*, V, 20 f.

side Kiukiang, January 13, 1857. This brought four hundred boats under Yang Tsai-fu, thirty-six hundred men under Pao Ch'ao, and eight thousand under Li Shou-pin, which, added to the number at Shuichow and those directly under Tsêng Kuo-fan at or near Nanchang, made a total not far from sixty thousand, not counting those in the region of Kian and those coming from Kwangtung and Fukien.<sup>31</sup>

During the months of January and February a number of districts were captured from the rebels, though in some places they remained in strength, especially towards the Hupeh border and east of the Poyang Lake in Jaochow and Kweihsi.<sup>32</sup> At the moment when Tsêng thought that he might commence his projected campaign down the river, news came of his father's death. This required him to go into retirement, which he begged permission to do, the Hunan forces to come into control of Yang Tsai-fu and P'eng Yu-ling. Ten days after word had been received of their loss, March 16, Tsêng and his brother Kuo-fah set out for home, where they were joined by Kuo-ch'üan from Kian. The emperor granted Tsêng three months, which, however, was later extended, and approved his arrangements for the control of the army and navy. The financial arrangements were entrusted to Kwan Wen and Hu Lin-yi of Hupeh and Wen Tsen of Kiangsi.

But matters did not prosper after the Tsêngs left, and the emperor urged that Kuo-fan again take command. Tsêng, on the contrary, asked that he be allowed to prolong his leave. This was finally permitted on the express understanding that if affairs should become urgent in Kiangsi, he should be ready to set out at a moment's

<sup>31</sup> This estimate is from *Dispatches*, IX, 38a, which places the number exclusive of new arrivals at 50,000, or a total of about 60,000.

<sup>32</sup> *Nienp'u*, IV, 40b, 41a.

notice. His temporary detachment from responsibility gave him the opportunity to explain why, in his opinion, success had not yet followed his efforts.<sup>33</sup> First, though he had the rank of a cabinet officer and title of chief commander, his actual power was inferior to that of a provincial *t'ituh*. Second, all the revenues of whatever character must pass through the hands of the regular officials; being but a guest, Tsêng could not lay hands on any of these revenues and apply them to the support of his armies. Hence his never ending worry about securing needed funds. Third, he had had four different titles on his seals, all indicating high rank, but not clear enough to connote definite authority in the minds of officials or people. The commissions and orders issued under his seal did not beget suitable respect.<sup>34</sup>

During the year 1857 the Hunan and Hupeh forces in coöperation managed to drive out all the rebels from Hupeh north of the river as far as Kiukiang, and Hu Lin-yi joined in the attack of that city.<sup>35</sup> In October (the eighteenth) Huk'ow was captured and the entrance to the Poyang came definitely into the hands of the imperialists, whose lake and river flotillas now came together, having been separated since January, 1855.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, V, 5b, 6a; *Dispatches*, IX, 33-37.

<sup>34</sup> Seal in Hunan, 1853: "Seal of the former vice president of the Board of Rites, imperially commanded to manage village troops defending against and examining rebel affairs." The next seal, adopted late in 1854, read: "Seal of the former vice president of the Board of Rites, imperially commanded to manage military matters." In February, 1855, another was used, saying: "Seal of the imperially dispatched vice president of the Board of War, former vice president of the Board of Rites." Finally he had one reading: "Seal of the junior vice president of the Board of War." In the case, for example, of appointing Chow Hung-shan, officials were sceptical about the patents issued under seals of this character.

<sup>35</sup> *Nienp'u*, V, 7b.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* The former imperialist success at Huk'ow had been only temporary.

When this passage was thus cleared, Yang Tsai-fu set out on a romantic voyage through the Taiping region down the river, capturing cities as he went until he reached Anking. From thence without taking cities he continued for three hundred miles until he met ocean war junks from Tinghai. There was great surprise on these junks when they beheld the battle flags of the relatively small Hunan boats from the upper reaches of the river, for they looked on their presence so far from home as little short of miraculous. The fleet returned up the river after this feat, which was of importance because, if only for the moment, it had proved that the imperial boats were free to sail the entire length of the lower Yangtse River, through the very heart of Taipingdom.<sup>37</sup>

The operations about Kian in southern Kiangsi were long drawn out. During the summer the forces of Chow Hung-shan had suffered a defeat, in which the contingent belonging to Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan had behaved with conspicuous bravery, retiring in good order to Anfu. The governor then asked that Tsêng Kuo-ch'üan be recalled and put in active control of these operations. He arrived at Anfu towards the end of the year.

During January, 1858, Shi Ta-k'ai again entered Kiangsi, from which he had been absent for some time, and attacked Huk'ow, which, however, under the defence of Li Shou-i, resisted his efforts stubbornly. He then went through Jaochow and Fuchow hurriedly on his way to Kian, where he was met by all the available government troops and defeated at a small place called Sanküitan.<sup>38</sup> This forced his retirement from the province. Ling-kiang-fu was then taken by the Hunan army, January 22, 1858, and of all western Kiangsi only Kian and Kiukiang

<sup>37</sup> *Nienp'u*, V, 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Nienp'u*, V, 9.

still remained in the hands of the insurgents. The road to the province of Fukien was also open.<sup>39</sup>

Outside of Kiangsi the Taiping cause did not make much headway during 1857, partly because of Shi Ta-k'ai's absence in Kiangsi and elsewhere, and partly because the leadership in Nanking was largely in the incompetent hands of the T'ienwang's family. In Anhui the rebels were extremely active, being there joined by the Nien-fei from Honan, which made it necessary to keep a large army under Imperial Commissioner Sheng Pao and General Yuan Chia-san, to hold the boundaries between Honan and Anhui. Near Nanking, also, there was some fighting which resulted in victory to the imperialists; Ho Chun capturing Yangchow on December 27, while Tehsinga captured Kwachow about the same time. The capture of Chinkiang by Chang Kuo-liang was also an achievement that brought encouragement to the loyalists.

All these successes were encouraging, to be sure. But to Tsêng Kuo-fan, about to emerge from retirement, something better now seemed necessary than the former haphazard methods of supplying the forces he led. He again assured the government how terribly each move of his had been hampered by the obstacles which confronted him at every turn, and suggested that a bureau be organised—for which he submitted a list of names—to raise the necessary supplies and money for his armies, that he might be free to give himself without other worries to purely military matters. Such a bureau should be under unified control, with branches in Hunan, Hupeh, and Kiangsi. What that organisation failed to supply

<sup>39</sup> The Hunan army referred to in this paragraph is the T'su, not the Siang Army. It was organised on the same lines. Between August 17 and September 20 it captured the long-besieged Shuichow, and thence went to Lingkiang-fu.

Tsêng would try to raise.<sup>40</sup> During the third month of 1858 permission was granted for this by the Board of Revenue. The bureau thus organised henceforth served a useful purpose, though it did not completely overcome the difficulties in the way of securing adequate support.

<sup>40</sup> *Nienp'u*, V, 9b, 10a.