

THE CHINESE PROBLEM.

BY THE EDITOR.

WESTERN people, even those who have visited China, find it hard to understand the present crisis, not only because the Chinese are a nation that in its habits, history, language, literature, tradition, and religion differs widely from any one of the Eu-



A CHINESE TEA MERCHANT.

ropean races in the Old World as well as in America and Australia, but also because the question is complicated and presents various aspects.

The contrast between rich and poor, literate and illiterate, the powerful and the wretched, is mild in Europe and even more so in



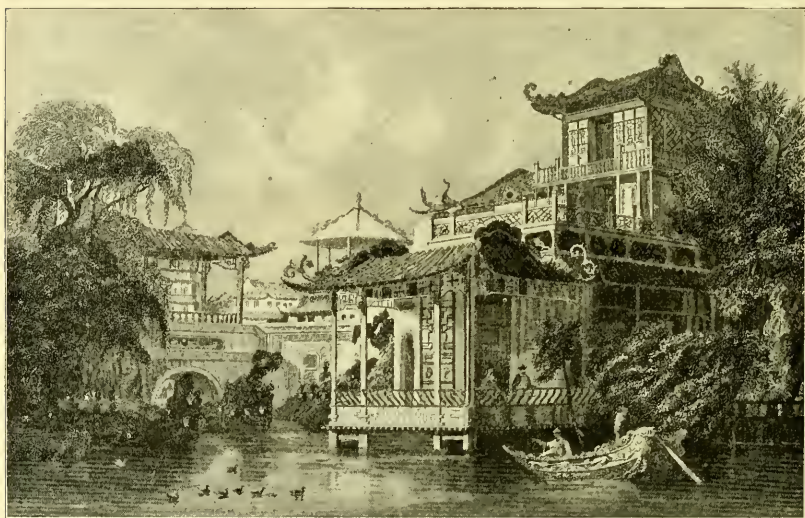
A MANDARIN'S HOUSEHOLD.



A MANDARIN BANQUET.

America when compared to the social differences of China. How grand is life in the imperial household, and what a display of wealth is exhibited by the mandarins and rich merchants, while the multitudes are as mere dregs, unworthy of consideration or even sympathy, except when they become dangerous by being seized with a revolutionary spirit and threaten the overthrow of the dynasty! This contrast produces interior troubles which are great, and thus China is not unlike a witches' cauldron, seething and boiling with rebellion and problems.

The ruling dynasty is not indigenous, not Chinese, but barbarian. In 1644, the Tartars took possession of Peking, and placed

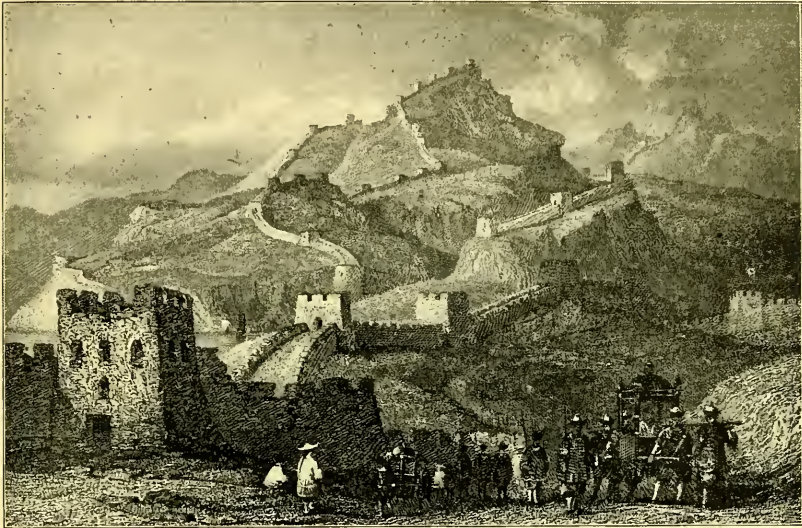


THE HOME OF A WEALTHY CHINESE MERCHANT.

Shun-Shih upon the throne of the Empire of the Middle, whose family adopted the name of the Tai Tsing, i. e., the Great Pure Ones. Tsung Ching, the last emperor of the Ming, an indigenous Chinese dynasty, fled and after wandering about for some days in misery threw himself into the Yang Tse Kiang and was drowned. The Tartar dynasty forced upon the Chinese nation their ugly hair dress, the cue on a shaven head, and the Tartar tunic, but it adopted without reserve the whole Chinese civilisation. And yet although the mass of the Chinese people wear the Tartar cue, and the Tai Tsing dynasty is as Chinese in customs, tendencies, and

perhaps even in blood, as any former dynasty has been, the Chinese continue to hate the Tartars as foreigners, barbarians, and tyrants.

The Chinese are a people that respects culture, and they are ruled by a literary aristocracy called the Mandarins, viz., literati who have passed the state examinations, which are very severe, and have



THE GREAT WALL.¹

received appointments by the government. The large masses of the population are very poor, and there are everywhere innumer-

¹ Shi Hwang Ti, the first emperor who united (in 221 B. C.) the whole of China under his scepter, and ruled from 237 till 210 B. C., was a warlike monarch and a despiser of literature. He persecuted the literati and issued an edict that on penalty of death all the canonical books should be burned (213 B. C.). For the protection of the country against the inroads of the Tartars, whose territory forms now a part of the Chinese empire, he had the Great Wall erected through his General Meng T'ien; this is a colossal work worthy to be compared to the pyramids of Gizeh. Though more than 2000 years old, it still stands as a monument to its builders.

A Chinese historian says that one third of the population of the empire had to be pressed into service for the completion of the work, and more than 400,000 of the laborers died from maltreatment, overexertion, and lack of proper food.

General Meng T'ien is supposed to be the inventor of the writing-brush which replaced the cruder methods of scratching the letters on bamboo sticks with a knife. When the tyrant Shi Hwang Ti died, on the downfall of the Ts'in dynasty, Meng T'ien ended his life by suicide.

Tradition relates that the Great Wall was built by Shi Hwang Ti as the result of a prophecy that his empire was endangered by Hu, which is the name of the Tartar tribes in the North. The prophecy was unexpectedly fulfilled to the letter through the ruin which befell his house when his second and unworthy son Hu Hai usurped the throne.

Fu Su, the rightful heir, died in banishment, but the usurper was soon murdered (in 207 B. C.) by Chao Kao, the ambitious eunuch who had helped him to ascend the throne.

The Ts'in dynasty was succeeded by the house of Han, whose first sovereign, Liu Pang, received universal recognition in 202 B. C.

able individuals who are almost constantly on the point of starvation. It is a condition produced by the lack of system prevailing in China, for there are no high roads in the country, no means of an easy exchange of commodities, no good money of intrinsic value, etc. The hungry proletarians do not know how to seek relief from their troubles, and so they band themselves together in secret societies whose avowed aim consists in the restitution of the good old times as they are supposed to have been under the Ming dynasty.

While the standard of morality is comparatively high, while there is a great respect for learning, for authority, for ideals of all noble ambitions, education is not so much low as one-sided.



KUNG YUEN, THE COURT OF EXAMINATIONS AT PEKING.¹

Knowledge of natural forces or of any practical kind is almost absolutely absent, and the study of the literature of ancient China, the only knowledge that is deemed worthy and great, costs much time and renders the mandarins unfit for practical business.

The religions of China are noble in their purity and might have become a factor for good. But the uncritical state of mind which is produced by a one-sided education—it is not a lack of education but rather an over-education—renders the Chinese extremely superstitious, so as to make Buddhist and Taoist priests vie in their efforts to promote the general credulity. The literati as a rule are simply followers of Confucius, whose doctrines are a system of morality based upon the principle of authority, otherwise

¹ This and the last two pictures are reproduced from Wells Williams's *Middle Kingdom*.

neither affirming nor denying any religious truths as to God, the soul, and an after-life.

The Western foreigners with their practical science might have come to the rescue of the Chinese, and for a while it seemed as if they would become the leaven that should leaven the dough of this stagnant civilisation. Adam Schaal, a German Jesuit, gained the ear of Shun-chih, and Kang Hi, his glorious son and successor, introduced many important reforms at the instigation of Father Ricci and others. But an unlucky star rose over the Jesuit missions. Jealousies between the Dominicans and the Jesuits led



THE TEMPLE OF CONFUCIUS IN SHANGHAI.

to quarrels on subjects concerning the Jesuit policy of yielding to the Chinese the right to regulate their mundane affairs according to their own notions. The Jesuits did not condemn Confucius as a pagan and infidel but suffered him to be regarded as a great moral teacher. They further translated the word God according to the ancient Chinese fashion by "Shang Ti," "the Lord on High," thus indicating that the ancient Chinese authorities had not been absolutely bare of divine grace. The pope decided against the Jesuits, but the Dominicans had little reason to enjoy their victory, for the Chinese authorities, little relishing the Dominican spirit, proscribed Christianity and drove even the Jesuit converts into exile.

Among the Protestant missionaries we must mention Gützlaff, a native Pomeranian, as specially successful. He was not an educated man, not a scholar, and scarcely a European. His books betray a gross ignorance in many respects but show a great zeal for the cause of Christianity. In spite of his shortcomings he must have been a remarkable man, a missionary genius, for the traces of his activity can be recognised in the Tai Ping¹ rebellion. He understood how to render Christianity palatable to the Chinese, and if we can trust the reports of MM. Callery and Yvan he was a Chinese half-breed, and thus Christianity naturally assumed in him a Chinese character.

Dwelling on the similarity of language used by the Christian Tai Ping rebels and Gützlaff's sermons, this remarkable missionary is thus characterised by MM. Callery and Yvan :

"M. Gutzlaff had the art of inspiring the Chinese people with the greatest confidence. He was of a middle stature, and tolerably stout; his prominent eyes sparkled beneath thick lashes, which were overshadowed by long black and bushy eye-brows. His face, with features the reverse of angular, and its light olive complexion, seemed to belong to that variety of the human race which we call the Mongol. In his Chinese dress, he was so exactly like a native, that he could have gone through the streets of the walled city of Canton without being recognised.

"One evening, during our stay in China, we spoke of him to the mandarin Pan-se-tchèn, who was much attached to him, and one of us expressed his astonishment at finding in a European the characteristics of the Chinese race. The mandarin quietly replied :

"'Nothing can be more natural. Gutzlaff's father was a native of the Fo-Kien settled in Germany.'

"This fact appears to us so extraordinary, that we should hesitate to relate it if Pan had not assured us that M. Gutzlaff himself was his authority.

"At all events, whether his origin was Chinese or not, M. Gutzlaff perfectly knew how to adapt himself to the ideas of a people who are at once sensual and mystical. He founded in China a sort of secret society called the "Chinese Union," the object of which was the conversion of the Chinese to Christianity by the Chinese themselves."

The Chinese are not naturally averse to Christianity. If either the Jesuit fathers or men like Gützlaff had had their way, China might by this time have become in the former case Roman Catholic, in the latter Protestant Christian. Christianity in China has become entangled with politics, and the Christian religion is regarded by the Chinese as the religion of the red-haired devils, the barbarians, the immoral foreigners who import opium and ridicule

¹ Tai Ping has become the name by which the rebellion of 1850-1867 is known among Western people. The leader of the Tai Ping rebels, Hung Hsiu Ch'üan, designated his rule the Ping Chao, or Peace Dynasty, because the final end of his mission was "to bring peace upon earth," and he was frequently called the *Tai Ping Wang*, or Great Pacifier.

the most sacred traditions of the nation. Christianity as commonly presented to the Chinese is not the Christianity of Jesus, but Western Christianity of some sort or other, and to all outer appearance the rupture with Chinese tradition is more important than the morality of the Christian faith. A great number of Western missionaries seem to think that they must change the Chinese into Europeans, otherwise their conversion would not be complete, and thus they fail in their efforts toward Christianising the country. As an instance of the wrong methods of missionarising I quote a passage from the Rev. Hampden C. DuBose's book *The Dragon, Image, and Demon*, where he describes the Chinese institution of preserving the family traditions in Ancestral Halls, forming sacred centers of family life, and though family traditions are sacred to us, our Christian missionaries proposed to destroy them as pagan in China and request converts to renounce them. DuBose says¹:

"These buildings are not so conspicuous as the idol temples, but they are very numerous, as any family or clan may have its temple, generally marked by the funeral cedar. Here the 'spirit tablets' of departed forefathers are kept, 'containing the simple legend of the two ancestral names carved on a board,' and 'to the child the family tablet is a reality, the abode of a personal being who exerts an influence over him that cannot be evaded, and is far more to him as an individual than any of the popular gods. The gods are to be feared and their wrath deprecated, but ancestors represent love, care, and kindly interest.' If the clan do not own an ancestral hall, there is 'in every household a shrine, a tablet, an oratory, or a domestic temple, according to the position of the family. It is a grand and solemn occasion when all the males of a tribe in their dress robes gather at the temple, perhaps a great 'country seat,' of the dead, and the patriarch of the line, as a chief priest of the family, offers sacrifice.

"In these halls the genealogical tables are kept, and many of the Chinese can trace their ancestry to ten, twenty, thirty, and sometimes even to sixty generations. These registers are kept with great care, and may be considered reliable.

"Much property is entailed upon these ancestral halls to keep up the worship, but as this expense is not great, all the family have shares in the joint capital, and the head of the clan sometimes comes in for a good living. At baptism converts to the Christian faith renounce their claim to a share in this family estate because of its idolatrous connexions.

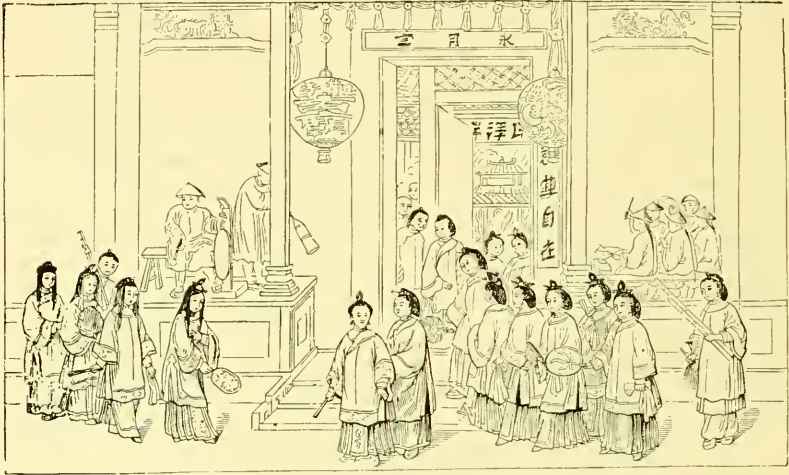
"Should a man become a Christian and repudiate ancestral worship, all his ancestors would by that act be consigned to a state of perpetual beggary. Imagine, too, the moral courage required for an only or the eldest son to become a Christian, and call down upon himself the anathemas not only of his own family and friends, but of the spirits of all his ancestors.'

"When we preach against this form of paganism it seems as heathenish to the Chinese, as if at home we taught a child to disobey his father and despise his mother. 'It forms one of the subtlest phases of idolatry—essentially evil with the guise of goodness—ever established among men.'"

¹ Pp. 81 ff.

If Christian missionaries cannot find a way in which they can make it possible for converts to continue to honor their ancestors, if they are bent on destroying everything properly Chinese and attempt to change their converts into imitations of European culture and habit, they do not deserve success and we cannot blame the Chinese Government for regarding them as a public nuisance.

The writer of this article is not opposed to missions, nor does he believe that all the missionaries of China are guilty of the errors here censured. He knows several missionaries and cherishes the highest respect for them. He has corresponded with some of them, who he believes are a credit to their country and to the faith which they promulgate. The fact remains nevertheless that there



PROCESSION OF THE LADIES TO AN ANCESTRAL HALL.

are great numbers of missionaries who are not moved by the right spirit and among them those who are pious Christians, yet lacking in tact, lacking in education, lacking in wisdom, exercise perhaps the most injurious influence and hurt both the cause of their religion and of the country whence they came.

The missionary problem is perhaps the gravest complication in China, but the hatred of the Chinese is not directed against Christianity as such but against the religion of the Western foreigners. It is true there are passages in the New Testament that are extremely offensive to the Chinese, for instance Luke xiv. 26 :

“If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

A CHINESE COURT SCENE.¹

¹ It is not an unusual occurrence that the sons of criminals beg the judge to be allowed to take upon themselves the punishment that is to be inflicted upon their fathers.

A broad interpretation of these words might surmount the difficulty, but Christianity as commonly preached to the Chinese implies a contempt for Confucius and the institutions of the sages of yore together with the national character of the Chinese. Thus, only the lowest dregs of the nation are converted and most of them for sinister purposes. Sometimes (as Dr. Hirth, a well-known German sinologue, told me) these converts are criminals who thereby seek to shield themselves against the severity of the law; as many missionaries in pious innocence accept the statements of their converts in good faith, it happens that burglars and thieves are baptised and then protected by the interference of European consuls against the prosecution of the Chinese authorities which are ingenuously assumed to be instituted on account of their faith.

In addition to the missionary problem, there is the commercial problem which serves to render the social conditions still more intolerable to the poor. The Western trader is exempt from Chinese jurisdiction, and although this is a necessity both in the interest of Western residents and in consideration of the barbaric methods of punishment as well as the summary ways of dispensing justice in China, it increases the hatred of foreigners in a high degree. Think of it: a Chinaman cannot defraud a foreigner without being liable to be severely punished; but if a Chinaman be cheated by a European or perhaps an American trader, he has no redress whatever. The wronged Chinaman can go to the ambassador or minister of the nation to whom the man who beat him or cheated him, belongs, but the ambassador has been sent to protect his countrymen, not to sit in court over them and punish them. He is apt to hear and accept the statement of his countryman and cares very little whether or not the plaintiff goes away satisfied.

The Chinese are upon the whole very reliable in business; even the coolie laborer keeps his word, and Chinese merchants stick to their contract though it may be merely oral, even when by an unforeseen change of circumstances they should be the losers.

Maltreatment of the Chinese at the hands of Europeans is very common. A captain who in a German port had whipped a Chinese deckhand so mercilessly that the latter tore himself loose, and jumping overboard drowned himself, declared before court that Chinese hands must receive the barbarous punishments to which they are accustomed in China, otherwise they would have no respect for their superiors. No investigation would be held if similar accidents or deaths on account of cruel treatment occurred in Chinese waters. A young bank employee whom the writer met in

travelling endorsed these views most emphatically. He said: "If a Chinaman does not at once make room for me in the street I would strike him forcibly with my cane in the face." "And that goes unpunished?" I ventured to ask him. "Should I break his nose or kill him, the worst that can happen would be that he or his people would make complaints to the Consul, who might impose the fine of a dollar for the misdemeanor, but I could always prove that I had just cause to beat him."

The Chinese are possessed of extraordinary patience, but if their patience is exhausted, their rage knows no limits. The indignation of the Chinese against foreigners has been smouldering for a long time and the ambassadors at Peking received many warnings, but they could not believe that the meek Pekingese would ever dare to attack them.

Under such conditions it is all but impossible that the Chinese people should have any respect, let alone love or admiration, for Western civilisation; and yet on the other hand it is quite natural that a great rebellion should break out which was at the same time a national Chinese reaction against the Tartar tyrants and a Christian movement such as was the Tai Ping rebellion.

The rebellion in China, which broke out in 1850 and was finally suppressed in 1864 by General Gordon, was the product of all the factors that oppose the present Chinese Government. It was national Chinese as opposed to the Tartar usurpers; it was Christian, but it was a Chinese Christianity after the fashion of Gutzlaff, not dressed in European broadcloth, and using the terms of the Protestant translation of the New Testament. There were several leaders at the head of the movement, but two were of special prominence, Tien Teh (Heavenly Virtue), a person who claimed to be a descendant of the ancient Ming dynasty, and Hung Hsiu Ch'üan, a Christian who called himself Tien Wang, or Heavenly King. The former was nominally the emperor-elect of the rebels, but he seems to have been a mere figure-head, and after his death even the latter, the real soul of the rebellion, became the acknowledged head of all.

The Tai Ping rebellion might have succeeded had not the English Government, trying to ingratiate itself with the Chinese authorities, offered their best general to help them to suppress the Tai Ping. The fact seems strange at first sight that a Christian nation should suppress a Christian movement in China with bayonets and guns; but we must bear in mind that the Christianity of the Tai Ping rebels, not being the Europeanised Christianity of the

English missionaries, was regarded as spurious, and thus the English government cherished grave doubts as to the advantages which she would reap if in the place of the hated Tartar dynasty the Chinese would be governed by a Christian, but none the less a Chinese ruler. An indigenous dynasty would probably pursue a policy that would be more hostile to foreign traders than the Tartar dynasty was, who on this occasion might be taught how useful to them an English alliance would be. On the other hand, Christian China



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TIEN TEH, THE PRETENDER OF THE TAI PING REBELLION.

would have a claim to considerations such as no one thinks of granting to old pagan China.

Sir George Bonham visited the rebels and gave an account of their character which seems to have had much weight with the British Government. He says:

“I found the insurgents had established a kind of government at Nankin, consisting, in the first place, of Taeping, the Sovereign Ruler, who is supposed by the believers of the new sect (if such do really exist) to hold the position or rank, either spiritually or in a corporeal sense, of younger brother of Our Saviour. There was little attempt at mystery as to Taeping's origin on the part of the insurgents,—it was admitted by several parties that he was a literary graduate of the Canton

province, who, being disappointed in his literary honors, took to what the Chinese are in the habit of calling 'strange doctrine,' that is, he studied the missionary tracts, copies of which were procured, there can be little doubt, from the late Dr. Gutzlaff's Union. Taeping and his small nucleus of adherents then embarked in this insurrection, and, after three years' perseverance and general success, they ended by capturing Nankin and Chin-Keang, where we found them in full force. Under this Sovereign Ruler are the five princes above alluded to, first and second ministers, and a host of so-called mandarins—most of whom are Cantonese. I should not estimate their force of real fighting men at less than 25,000; though I believe that of the original number who started from Kouang-Si, not more than 7,000 are now with Taeping."

Sir George Bonham translates also the answer which the leader of the Tai Ping rebels gives to the English embassy sent to him, and this answer, though full of benevolence for the English, leaves no doubt that according to the ancient Chinese tradition he, the Tai Ping Emperor, regards all nations as his subjects.

"The Heavenly Father, the Supreme Lord, the Great God, in the beginning created heaven and earth, land and sea, men and things, in six days; from that time to this the whole world has been one family, and all within the four seas brethren; how can there exist, then, any difference between man and man; or how any distinction between principal and secondary birth? But from the time that the human race has been influenced by the demoniacal agency which has entered into the heart of man, they have ceased to acknowledge the great benevolence of God the Heavenly Father in giving and sustaining life, and ceased to appreciate the infinite merit of the expiatory sacrifice made by Jesus, our Celestial Elder Brother, and have, with lumps of clay, wood, and stone, practised perversity in the world. Hence it is that the Tartar hordes and Elfin Huns so fraudulently robbed us of our Celestial territory (China). But, happily, Our Heavenly Father and Celestial Elder Brother have from an early date displayed their miraculous power amongst you English, and you have long acknowledged the duty of worshipping God the Heavenly Father and Jesus our Celestial Brother, so that the truth has been preserved entire, and the Gospel maintained.

"But now that you distant English 'have not deemed myriads of miles too far to come,' and acknowledge our sovereignty, not only are the soldiers and officers of our Celestial dynasty delighted and gratified thereby, but even in high heaven itself our Celestial Father and Elder Brother will also admire this manifestation of your fidelity and truth. We therefore issue this special decree, permitting you, the English chief, to lead your brethren out or in, backwards or forwards, in full accordance with your own will or wish, whether to aid us in exterminating our impish foes, or to carry on your commercial operations as usual; and it is our earnest hope that you will, with us, earn the merit of diligently serving our royal master, and, with us, recompense the goodness of the Father of Spirits.

"Wherefore we promulgate this new decree of (our Sovereign) Taeping for the information of you English, so that all the human race may learn to worship our Heavenly Father and Celestial Elder Brother, and that all may know that, wherever our royal master is, there men unite in congratulating him on having obtained the decree to rule.

"A special decree, for the information of all men, given (under our seals) this

26th day of the 3d month of the year Kweihaou (1st May, 1853), under the reign of the Celestial dynasty of Taeping."

If the British diplomatists expected to earn the gratitude of the Tartar dynasty, they were greatly mistaken. The assistance which General Gordon gave them in the suppression of the Tai Ping rebellion, was regarded as the service of vassalage and a temporary return on the part of the British to the consciousness of their duties toward the Son of Heaven, to whom all the nations of the earth owe allegiance. But the friendship of the Chinese authorities with the British Government soon began to subvert the confidence of the Chinese in their rulers, and the secret societies again increased in power, finding supporters even among the highest mandarins and princes of imperial blood. The present Emperor was suspected of being a friend of Western civilisation, while the Empress Dowager favored the partisans of national traditions.

According to the rules of filial piety so deeply engraved on the hearts of the Chinese people, the highest virtue is obedience to parents. Thus it happens that the Emperor's first duty is respect for the wishes of his mother, or of her who stands in the relation of mother to him. This is the reason why the Empress Dowager is *de facto* ruler of China.

The Empress knows that the dangers which threaten the throne of the Tartar dynasty through the secret societies at home are more serious than the threats and attacks of the Western powers. She seems to have saved the throne by allying herself with the secret societies against the Powers and thus demonstrating to her subjects that the Tartars are solidary with the Chinese against the foreign devils. An alliance with the Powers, or merely a friendly *entente* with them, might have roused the slumbering lion and made a quick end of the Tai Tsing dynasty.

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The history of the relations between Europe and China exhibits a series of blunders both on the side of the Chinese and the European governments; and the root of the evil on either side is haughtiness.

It is reported that Emperor Charles V. in his old days used to say :

"Quantula sapientia mundus regitur!"

[With what little wisdom the world is governed !]

How true that is! If the men that fill the leading positions of the world would only use a little discretion, if it were merely the

common sense of a pious farmer or peasant who has religion enough to be afraid to do wrong, how much better would the world fare than now when diplomats claim that nations are not bound by the moral maxims which individuals are bound to respect. Think what wrongdoing might have been avoided by a little dose of prudence in modern history! Think of the Opium War with China, think of the Boer War, think of the War of Secession in our own country. As to the latter, the money it cost would have sufficed to buy off all the slaves of the South several times over. But the trouble is that both parties as a rule are impervious to reason, and their conflict becomes inevitable, each side having the advantage to declare that though they themselves be wrong in many respects, their adversaries are not less blameworthy.

So far, the best argument of a belligerent party has commonly been the street-boy's answer to his antagonist: "You are another!"