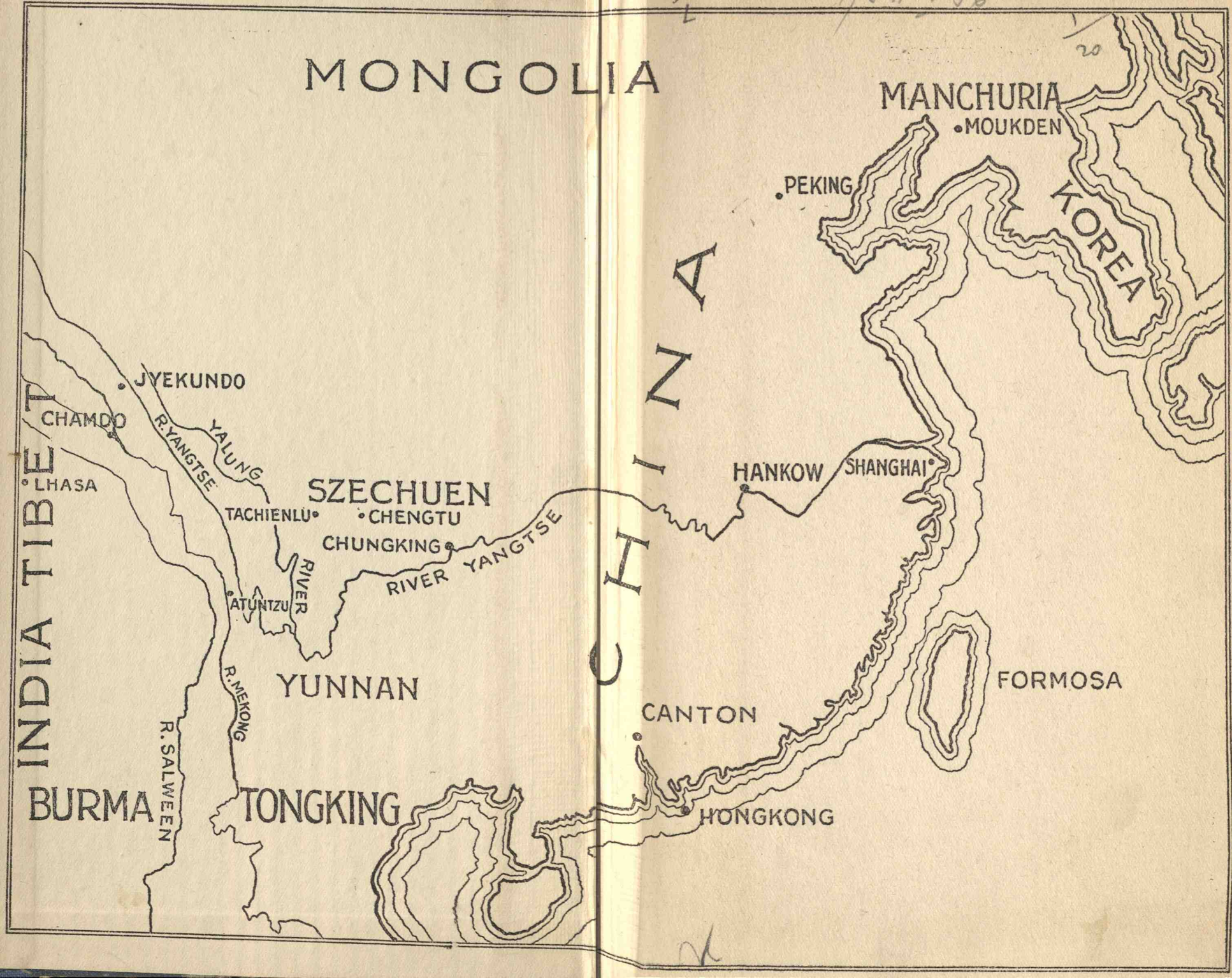
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TONGKING
HONGKONG

CHINA IN TURMOIL

STUDIES IN PERSONALITY

The papers of which this book is composed first appeared, with the exception of "The Magistrate" and "The Frontiersman," in *Blackwood's Magazine*.

THE AUTOCRAT.
GENERAL CH'EN HSIA-LING, WARDEN OF THE SZECHUEN MARCHES.

CHINA IN TURMOIL

STUDIES IN PERSONALITY

BY

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PREFACE

THE Consular officer in a country such as China which is in the throes of political and social upheaval is apt to find life as eventful as it is strenuous. He is witnessing the rebirth of a great nation, and is in close contact with the outstanding personalities whom the Revolution and its aftermath have thrown to the surface, men who are making history in their own part of the world. There is nothing humdrum or conventional about these men; they are themselves part of the upheaval in the midst of which they are working out their own and their country's destinies, pioneers blazing a trail for the glory which is to be China's, or in some cases, perhaps, wolves preying upon the herd, men all of them of marked and forceful individuality, disdainful where they are not unconscious of the inhibitions and the limitations which hedge in the activities of the ordinary man. They are a law unto their individual selves, and belong to all types save one —the weak, which goes to the wall automatically in this environment of revolutionary stress.

Such is the *milieu* in which the Consul lives, and such the men with whom he transacts his affairs. It can readily be seen, therefore, that there is likely to be no lack of incident and interest in his career. And so it was with mine. On the whole, perhaps, by virtue of being stationed for the major part of my time in the remote interior, I had more than my fair share of enlivenment. I was at one time acting Consul at Chungking, was twice acting Consul-General at Chengtu, and spent over five years on special service on the Chinese frontier of Tibet, where I was given the King's Commission as His Majesty's Consul at Tachienlu, the frontier headquarters. It was also my good fortune to be able to do a great deal of travelling, crossing the country from east to west and from north to south. Linking up my various movements, I have been from Peking to Burma and from Shanghai to Tibet.

On my retirement in 1924 I set to work to write of my impressions and experiences, but it was some time before I found a form which appealed to me in which to embody them. I wanted to give a picture of modern China as she is, and I wanted it to be readable, to be read by as wide a public as possible. The first form I tried was that of a book of travel, but after writing a few chapters I was dissatisfied and tore it up; then an historical survey, and tore that up. And then the present form, wherein I have set

forth both the Chinese situation and my own experiences in the course of a series of studies in personality, which I believe to be the dominant of the many factors that go to make up a political complex.

LOUIS KING.

CHINA IN TURMOIL

CHAPTER I

THE AUTOCRAT

He recognized no authority superior to his own conscience. And in actual fact, by virtue of the disorganization and disruption that followed the Revolution, he was untrammelled dictator in his own region. He commanded an army of ten thousand men, and ruled a vast district according to his own will, his sense of right and wrong; and the ultimate court of appeal of five millions of people was simply his conscience.

He was a masterful man, with a dominant sense of duty. He had been brought up in a hard school, had joined the army thirty years before, and had been through the mill. Those were the old days before modern ideas of the value of life and the dignity of the individual had permeated the army. The bamboo and the executioner's sword met all exigencies. Discipline, that was the keynote; and when he attained a satrapy of his own he applied it also to civil administration.

If men would not do their duty, in whatever walk of life, of their own volition, they must be made to. He could not supervise everybody, but he could and would make a striking example of offenders who came to his personal notice. Thus he shot a couple of Magistrates—that is, district Governors—for abuse of authority. He shot the Governor of a jail because an important prisoner had escaped. He flogged a number of leading merchants for failing to pay their taxes to time, and one of them died from it; a couple of conceited shopboys for ogling the ladies at a public festival. "Women must be protected from this sort of thing," he said to me at the time; soldier and civilian for this or that misfeasance, and so on. He had no sense of privilege: a transgressor was a transgressor whatever his status. He shot his own nephew for due cause.

He exacted unquestioning obedience to his authority, for without it, government, in his eyes, could not go on. But apart from that his spirit was democratic. He made no display himself, and disliked it in others. Men's worth rested not on their wealth or rank, but on their character. He hated the idea that anyone should, by virtue of anything at all, take the subservience of others as their due. Penury and lowliness did not strike him as something to be ashamed of. He had, in fact, a soft spot for the underdog. A private soldier or an artisan could be just as good a man as

anybody else. Indeed, many of his best officers were men he had himself raised from the ranks. He liked his officers to dress and live, of their own volition, no better than their men.

He took great pride in his profession. He would have agreed with Alcibiades that "soldiers should brook as little wrongs as gods." He had an immense faith in his own men, so much so that it was generally said that, in his eyes, a soldier was never wrong. But it was not quite that. When he had proof of guilt, he would mete out the most condign punishment. But in general his bias was with his men. He had always been a martinet, and he found it difficult to believe that men he had himself trained would lightly demean their uniform. An incident of the days when he was a mere regimental Commander showed how real the honour of the regiment was to him. A sergeant of his had been caught *flagrante delicto* in a peccadillo, had been taken off to General Headquarters, and there flogged. It was an insult to the regiment, for the man should have been handed over to the Colonel for court-martial and punishment. He went to General Headquarters and recovered his man. The latter, of course, fervently protested his innocence, and said he was willing to commit suicide to prove it. The Colonel took him strictly at his word, and the honour of the regiment was thus vindicated.

He was in no sense a hard-hearted man. Actions which seemed to many unduly severe presented themselves to him as deplorable necessities. He would on occasion shed actual tears, when it was all over, in pity of some particularly sad case. To those who did not come up against him he was kindness itself. He loved children and dogs and horses. And he was profoundly touched by any genuine and spontaneous appreciation by the people of his work. On one occasion he had left his capital to face on the border a menacing move on the part of a rival satrap. In his absence a large body of outlaws threatened his capital. He hurried back, a week's journey, to deal with this more urgent matter, and arrived in time. The people, in relief and gratitude, turned out in mass to meet him. And the autocrat, with power of life and death over them all, dismounted from his horse and walked humbly through the crowded streets, so moved he could hardly speak.

On another occasion it was rumoured that he was going to retire. All classes of the people were worried. Even people who were habitually shocked at his severity said that a change of ruler was unlikely to be for the better, and might very easily be for the worse. His people, in fact, appreciated him; he might be severe, but he had their interests at heart. He was their father and mother.

He was beset with difficulties. The province within which his satrapy lay was torn by internal dissensions and constant fighting. It was all the aftermath of revolution. Each satrap had to support himself on his own domains. And most of them had armies so swollen that they could not so support them. If, however, this General or that were to reduce his forces, and cut his coat according to his cloth, he would inevitably be swallowed up by his neighbour acting on the opposite principle of increasing his area to meet his expenses. General disbandment by consent? But who was to make the men in power disband if they did not want to? And the troops themselves were unwilling to be disbanded. Who was to force them to disband and form the underworld which the produce of the province relative to its population demands shall more or less starve? They had rifles in their hands, and if one General did not want them, another would; if nobody wanted them, better be brigands than starve.

It was all so simple in the old days of the Empire. Then there were few weapons of precision in private hands, and law and order were maintained with a relatively inconsiderable number of troops. The great bulk of the population was kept under, constrained to be content with a bare subsistence as the reward of constant toil, and the rabble was constrained to starve. But the Revolution scattered arms throughout the pro-

vince, and individual and conflicting ambitions recruited troops by the thousands; the able-bodied of the erstwhile underworld were absorbed into the armies, and there they stayed, so that there were now more troops in the province than it could support. Send them off to other provinces? But the other provinces are in like plight. These were some of the problems that exercised our politician of another portrait who aspires to paint a picture on the broad canvas of all China.

The immediate concern of our autocrat was, however, the governance of his satrapy. He sternly kept his army within the limits of the economic resources of his domain, and in doing so risked the danger of political extinction. But that could not be helped. His sense of duty precluded him from putting upon his people a burden they could not bear.

His area was well governed; his methods, while drastic, were anyway effective. But, of course, they made him enemies. The latter were wise enough to dissemble their hatred so long as they were in his district. Occasionally, however, he would get a broadside, in the shape of diatribes in newspaper and leaflet, issued from the security of a rival satrapy. Therein they would let themselves go, curse him up hill and down dale, accuse him of every crime they could think of. And his enemies within the gate would read these attacks in silent joy.

All this was very annoying to our autocrat, and sometimes a home-thrust would sting him to the quick. An antidote to the inevitable flattery and subservience of his own surroundings? It did not have that effect, for he was convinced that he was merely doing his duty. Surely everybody could see that? If he had offended now and then, well, we are all fallible. He wrote off these attacks as the venom of bad men, but they had a very definite effect upon him. They showed him the bitterness with which he was regarded in some influential quarters, and the dangers that awaited him should he fall from power. His conscience might sweep them aside as malice, but could he forget the sense of peril ahead? He was, in fact, in the expressive Chinese saying, "riding the tiger."

How had he got into this state? His conscience was clear. He had done his best to restore the security that used to obtain before the disintegration of recent years. He had kept taxation down to the old time-honoured levels. He had held aloof from the internecine warfare that harassed the rest of the province. He had put down brigandage. Perhaps he had overstepped on occasion the strict letter of the law in his administration of justice. But had he? Surely martial law was the only effective law in the prevalent circumstances? He might, of course, have sheltered himself from the first behind an

impersonal system of government. But would that have secured the people the administration they were entitled to, and which it was his duty to give them? It would not have. Clearly there was no help for it. The malice was there. His bed was made. He had enough to do in the present. The future must look after itself.

The psychologists tell us that it is no good repressing an unpleasant vista. You get a complex, and woe betide you. A harassed man is apt to be impatient at the best of times. But if he has a repressed complex as well? It showed itself in our autocrat. He would on occasion fly off into ungovernable rages. Why were men so obdurate? Why did they need constant coercion to make them do their duty? "Sack the lot" became with him "bamboo the lot," or "shoot the lot." In one of these outbursts he had two of his body-guards trussed and flung into the river, where they duly drowned: a sort of Tarpeian Rock treatment.

His immediate entourage, his councillors, and his household, and notably his wife, would do their best to restrain him in this mood. Their interference would, of course, increase his rage, but their object was to play for time and allow his good-nature to assert itself. And they usually succeeded, for his anger was as short-lived as it was intense. And when they failed in some

particular case, and after it was all over, he would remorsefully ask them why they had allowed him to do it.

He was always very friendly to the "stranger from afar." He looked upon us in the old-world courtly Chinese way as his guests. I got to know him very well in the course of years. By virtue of our positions I was his only official equal throughout his domain. And I suppose he found it a relief to talk with someone not a subordinate, and he apparently attached some value to my opinion of him, for he would on occasion go out of his way to explain to me this or that unorthodox action of his. We talked of many subjects—politics, religion, horses and dogs, and shooting, and of the future. What did he look forward to? He had an industrial institute for orphans in his home town in a far-away province. He had established it years before, and maintained it at his own expense. He would retire there, he told me more than once, and pass his days helping the poor and the weak. And I thought to myself that his orphans would not be spoilt for lack of the paternal rod. He would assuredly impress upon them all the sense of duty which was his own sheet-anchor, and start each of them off in life with the backbone of a guardsman.

A rival satrap, who hated him, once said to me bluntly that he was mad, that no one in his area could feel personally secure. And he quoted the

Chinese proverb: "In the mountains far from Court the monkey rules as King." I disagreed. I parried with our own saying: "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." He maintained order, and the people liked him.

CHAPTER II

THE POLITICIAN

He had taken an active part in the making of the Revolution; had lived for years in constant danger of detection; and had escaped on more than one occasion by the skin of his teeth. He had seen comrades fall by the wayside; some, including his own brother, under the executioner's sword; some, scarcely more lucky, flung into old-world jails; in some, fear had tempered ambition, and others had dropped out through the wane of their enthusiasm for a cause so full of peril and apparently so unpromising of success.

But success came, and in rather a curious way. The revolutionaries, so soon as their preparations enabled them to come out into the open with a show of force, found everybody agreeing with them. Of course, all was not well with the country; a new era had arrived; every patriot must strive with all his might to raise the country to her proper place in the world; there should be no unnecessary bloodshed; all must put their backs to the wheel of progress, and so on. A few

leaders felt that even the throne should be retained, that reform could very well proceed under its ægis, and that more stability would thus be attained. But they were in a minority, and the dynasty, accepting the general verdict, retired.

There was a period of reshuffling while the universal law of the strong and the weak asserted itself. The men with real force behind them—that is, with troops—became authority. Our politician was one of them; he was a military officer with a command in his own province; and he soon had therein a satrapy all his own.

But not for long. The Party to which he belonged, the men who did the spade work and made the Revolution possible, sent out a call to arms to down the autocrat at Peking, the throne's successor. He was one of the few who responded. The movement failed, and he escaped abroad. Followed a couple of years of exile, of propaganda and organization. Then the autocrat's necessities, his fears for the future, led him to a step that played directly into their hands. He had crushed opposition and asserted his authority throughout the length and breadth of the land, but in doing so he had to be ruthless, and made many bitter enemies. He was, in fact, "riding the tiger." What would happen to him when he got off or was pushed off? The only remedy was to change from President to Emperor; that would be the only effective act of indemnity; he would be

sacrosanct, and his successor would be his son. He tried it, and lost his life in the ensuing storm.

The reshuffling in our politician's province was this time complicated by a new factor, the presence in the province of a southern army which had come there to drive out the autocrat's troops. These latter, on their master's death, had readily withdrawn to their more important sphere elsewhere. But the southern army had not only remained, but forthwith set about to consolidate their position and bring the province under their domination. From it they hoped to replenish their war-chest, and further, its control by them would constitute a big factor in the next round of the political struggle.

The purely provincial armies, however, their allies in the late movement, were still in existence. Their leaders expected the out-province men to withdraw and leave the province to them. To them provincial self-determination was not a matter to be argued about; it was an axiom. By it the administration of the province belonged to them, and the deployment of its strength in the next struggle was theirs to decide.

The tension culminated in hostilities; the capital fell to the provincial leaders, and the alien Governor was slain, but the out-province men were discomforted rather than actually defeated. They saw, however, that things had gone too far. If they were really to dominate the province by

force they would have to bring up heavy reinforcements and fight a protracted campaign, the issue of which, moreover, might well be doubtful. They bethought themselves of our politician. He was a native of the province; he had come back with a command in their army, and they had given him back his old satrapy; he had shown in the past unquestioning obedience to the Party, and he had taken no part in the present fighting. They appointed him Governor.

It was frankly a compromise, and was accepted by the provincial leaders. Both sides hoped to use him to their own ends. The out-province men looked to him to carry on their policy. The provincial leaders expected him to eliminate the out-province element, and divide the province equitably amongst themselves; and the people welcomed his appointment in the expectation that he would restore peace, and afford them a good administration. He was their fellow-provincial, and his reputation was that of a capable, decent, level-headed man.

The new Governor developed rapidly under the difficulties, responsibilities and complications of his post. Who were these out-province men who inexorably demanded their pound of flesh? Were they really the great Reform Party he had served all his life? Surely there were no more than a clique therein, and capable of taking independent action if it suited them. Was there,

in fact, such a thing as the Party? Was it not simply a shifting alliance of individual leaders? He would form his own party. The provincial situation was, of course, inextricably interwoven into the political fabric of the country as a whole. But were the interests of the people to be subordinated to the general struggle between the old and the new, reform and progress to be held up indefinitely until the final issue of that struggle? He would first restore peace and prosperity to the province, and then throw its whole weight into the scales. He was Governor, and the province was his sphere of reconstruction.

But he had very little real power: he was merely *primus inter pares* amongst a dozen Generals. He had not the preponderant military strength that would have given him a free hand. Unable to coerce, he would have to try other methods. He would use men and parties, and not be used by them. Military leaders, political associations, the Press, the students, the merchants, the populace, secret societies, even the brigand organizations—all were grist to his mill. There was little indeed that he did not come to know about politics. The promising and favourite pupil of the master craftsman had, in fact, grown to full stature.

It was like bridge. The cards, the diverse components of the body politic. The players, any

one strong enough to take a hand. Your opponent to-day might be your partner to-morrow, and again be your opponent. And the stakes? Were they lost sight of in the absorbing interest of the game itself? Or did he really believe that thus would come true his early dreams of his country, regenerated and occupying her proper place in the comity of nations? I believe he did. What other course was there? Any doctrinaire, Chinese or foreign, could tell you what was wrong with the country, how all would be well if only so-and-so would do this and so-and-so that, and so on. But who was to compel the men in power to this or that course against their will?

It was not long before he had raised himself from an obscure provincial General to a force to be reckoned with in the political world of his country. His first tenure of the provincial Governorship lasted a couple of years. Then the storm broke, and he was defeated. Soon afterwards, however, he staged another campaign and was back in power; then he organized a federation of three provinces, fell again and was back again, and so the see-saw went on.

Did he ever doubt he was on the right track? There was no indication of it. To those who knew him over a protracted period his chief characteristic appeared to be his imperturbability. He was a man with a very definite purpose in life, and he seemed to have absolute faith that

nothing would stop him achieving it. It was characteristic of him that when he on one occasion broke his leg and gangrene set in, he refused to have it off, though the doctors told him it was a question of losing his leg or his life. There was much work to be done. How could he fight campaigns short of a leg? He lost neither leg nor life. Coué would say it was a clear case of auto-suggestion; Osty would put it the other way round, self-confidence based on subconscious knowledge of the future.

He had an exceptional control of his nerves, and he possessed courage in a high degree, both physical and moral. He would take any risks, and the opinion of others mattered to him only in so far as it constituted a political force. He was like a stout ship ploughing its way through angry seas, and it was always stormy weather in his world. He had an ease of manner and a quiet unassuming dignity that made you like him; but you might meet him time and again and never get any nearer to him than at your first interview, unless he wanted you to. And if he did, you could take that, though you probably wouldn't, as a compliment to your usefulness, present or potential. If you dropped out of the picture, it were as if you had never been in it. When you re-emerged, it was as though there had been no break in the continuity.

There is no denying that he is an exceptional

man. He has got rid of most of the weaknesses and some of the virtues that hamper the judgment and the action of the ordinary man. But what has he achieved with all his abilities? In truth, the art of success is no monopoly of his, no secret. It is expounded in text-books; and you may try it if you think it worth the sacrifice. Thousands the world over do. Nor is it infallible. There are not enough data, and there are too many uncertain factors. "If there were a sure way of getting rich," said Confucius parabolically, "even though one had to be a groom and keep horses, I would be willing to be one. But as there is really no sure way, I prefer to follow the pursuits congenial to me."

There are not a few men as adept as our politician, and a great many proficient enough to prevent anyone, however able, getting clear away with it; and meanwhile the patience of the people is getting exhausted. That, however, is but another factor added to the problem; and perhaps our politician, or some other like him, will ride a cataclysmic social storm to ultimate success.

THE BRIGAND.
CH'EN PU-SAN AND ONE OF HIS MEN, CAPTURED AND IN CHAINS PENDING DECAPITATION.

Facing p. 33

CHAPTER III

THE BRIGAND

I FIRST met him at his own headquarters surrounded by his hard-bitten men, all bronzed and in rags. He had not been a brigand long. A brief six months ago and he had been an ordinary Lieutenant-Colonel of infantry. It came about in this wise. Their General was a man of ideas and ambition. He was a highly trained and efficient officer of the new school, and it was his first important appointment. With what hopes he went to the handful of soldiers, but two battalions in all, of his first command! He would make of them a model unit, and in time he would be given more and more material, until some day, not too far distant, he would play a big part, with a fighting machine perfected by himself, in the rehabilitation of China. But, alas! it was not to be.

With the exception of a single regiment, which is another story altogether, the army in which our General had such a small command was notoriously ill-disciplined, and there were reasons for this. But the General went ahead with his

two battalions. He gave them fixed hours; he drilled them thoroughly; he forbade gambling and opium. But he did not, and could not, pay them; that was another department, and the money somehow never came to his garrison post. Now, the Chinese soldier is a very reasonable person. He will stand a good deal of bossing about if he is properly paid; on the other hand, he will not kick over much at his pay being in arrear if he is left more or less to do as he likes. But all work and no pay he will not stand.

Officers and men kicked; the General answered by meting out various punishments all in accord with proper military practice. Our Lieutenant-Colonel, for instance, found himself degraded in rank; he still kicked, and was, with others, put under arrest pending being sent to General Headquarters on the capital charge of insubordination in the field.

It thus became a question of now or never. So one night a deputation from the whole garrison, led by the Lieutenant-Colonel, presented itself armed at the General's quarters. They did not intend, so the leader told me, to kill him. They wished to put their case, and get him to see their side of the matter. They went armed to show him they meant business, to scare him, in fact, and they succeeded all too well for their future comfort. The General, dug up in the middle of the night by armed and excited men, lost his

nerve. Instead of discussing the matter with them, he begged them to spare his life, and crowd psychology did the rest; he was killed. Wise, after the event? Easy enough, but who is wise at two o'clock in the morning in such a situation?

How explain themselves to General Headquarters? Obviously there was nothing to be done but take to the hills, as so many other bodies of men have done before and since for valid reasons. They elected the Lieutenant-Colonel their leader, and took to the hills.

At long last, for that particular region is difficult of access, a punitive expedition was in the field, endeavouring, with inadequate forces, to draw a cordon around a vast district. The mutineers, now brigands, broke out and swept down upon the town where General Headquarters were, impelled thereto not by any desire to look for trouble, but by the configuration of the country, which afforded but this one outlet from their impasse. And, as it turned out, they were not expected at Headquarters; the town was but feebly held, all available troops having been sent out with the expedition.

It was all a question of mismanagement. But what a quandary for the Governor, an amiable gentleman whom nature had never meant to be a soldier. He was a soldier, of course, and a highly trained one; indeed, an instructor of others. But amongst the qualities with which nature had

liberally endowed him there was not that indefinable something which makes for success in the field. If only that one model regiment of his with its cast-iron Colonel were with him, or even only the Colonel himself. But it was not; it was out with the expedition.

The Governor had more men in the town, and better armament than the brigands; but the latter were desperate men. Their lives depended on their getting through. And his life? It also depended on the issue. But did it? If he lost the city, could he not explain it away somehow or other? If it came to fighting, he knew he would lose it; and like the nervousness communicated to a highly strung horse by a timid rider, his men knew it also. Surely there must be some way out. The brigands were men after all; more, they were Chinese, and therefore reasonable men. They must want something, and he would give them anything in reason. No one wants to be permanently an outcast, getting his bread under great discomfort and perpetual peril.

I was an old friend of his. Could not I go up and see if matters could not be amicably settled? As a foreigner, the brigands had no animus against me; I was therefore in an excellent position to negotiate and save the town from the horrors of warfare. I agreed. After all, a peacemaker was always honoured in China; and it ought not

to be so very risky, unless, of course, the brigand should prove to be lamentably lacking in ordinary ethics.

So, supported by two stout-hearted missionaries with the general good of the town in their minds, I set off for the brigand camp on horseback one bitter February night, lanterns swinging as we wended our way up the gorge. We had sent a note in advance, and found the brigands lined up in their camp to receive us. Flaring torches lit up their arms and their tatters, and their faces tanned almost black by long exposure. They presented arms as we rode through their ranks. Then they broke rank, and swarmed, as many as could, into the ramshackle hut, where their leader received us, and the rest crowded the doors and windows.

It was an animated interview on their part. We said we had come as peacemakers on behalf of the General and of the town, and would like to take back with us some idea of the terms upon which they would submit to authority; and we hardly got another sentence in edgeways for the next half-hour or so. Our brigand and his men, now solo and now in chorus, shouted their grievances, hardships, and demands at the top of their voices. Some of them worked themselves up almost into hysterics.

Here, obviously, I thought, were a batch of men who felt aggrieved and feared the future. Fate, mismanagement, one thing after another,

and here they were, outcast and in peril of their lives. How many of the hosts of brigands in China are like this? They got so worked up that it was almost as if they had transplanted their animus on to us. We calmed them by saying that we were not authority but mere peacemakers. And we drank their tea and talked of terms. Pardon, reinstatement, arrears of pay. That was it in a nutshell; and it needed no psychologist to see that pardon was the real crux, the minimum.

We fixed a rendezvous for daybreak on the hillside half-way between town and camp, and rode home to get the Governor's answer. Nerves prevailed in the town as in the brigand camp. The town outposts shot at us at point-blank range, but no one was hit. The Governor was awake and waiting for me. He hadn't been to bed for quite a number of days. Yes, the terms afforded a basis of discussion. He had, as I knew, no money to pay the arrears, and no authority to accept any terms at all. He would agree for himself, but it would all have to be referred to superior authority. In the meantime, suspend hostilities.

Dawn saw us at the rendezvous. Empty. Just the bare hillsides and a biting wind. But soon along came the brigand and his whole army. "Excellent," he said, on my giving him the Governor's message. "We move into town right away."

"But the Governor can't possibly let you in; it needs arrangement and mutual agreement. He's not expecting you, and he'll open fire at sight."

"What, on a Consul?"

Obvious perfidy. A council of war after we had left their camp, where brains overcame character? That was it, as we discovered afterwards. We were to be used as hostages.

The brigands advanced, and battle was joined the moment they emerged within view of the town. The defence, with machine-gun and field-gun and rifle, was effective for the moment. The Governor was evidently not going to lose his town in broad daylight, anyhow, and perhaps he had taken heart, and was not going to lose it at all. We spent the day in the open, or, as we pleased, in a house which the brigands made their headquarters. We were under close guard all the time.

The battle went on all day and into the night, and disappointment did not improve the brigands' nerves or their tempers. They began to talk of killing us anyhow. They were ravenous but had very little—some rice and tea and cigarettes, that was all, but they gave us a share of it. By midnight they were desperate; their ammunition was giving out, and it looked as if the town, if taken at all, would have to be rushed. Our Lieutenant-Colonel was exasperated. He had

come in for a meal, and was sitting at our table. He cursed the Governor for breaking faith and fighting at all. I took him up. "The Governor has merely done his duty. It is you who have broken faith with him as with us, peacemakers who should be honoured, not held as prisoners. You thought that, with us in your hands, the Governor would not dare to fight. You were wrong and stupid." He glared at me, but his adjutant whispered something into his ear, and he turned away, and shortly left the table for the firing-line.

In the meantime the nerves of the defenders had given out entirely, and they withdrew under cover of a final outburst of firing; and so, when the assailants had finally steeled themselves to a rush, they met only a rearguard, which rapidly withdrew.

It had been a trying night for us in the common-room of brigand headquarters. As far as discipline went, it was a happy-go-lucky army. The room was crowded and noisy. Men came and went, lay about where they could find space, quarrelled, smoked opium. The wounded were also there, and a few prisoners strung to pillars in the great hall. One in particular of the latter, a mere boy, wailed piteously and begged our intervention. But the brigands were adamant. He had been taken in arms against them and must die; and who were we, anyhow, to speak for him?

—meaning, presumably, that we might thank our stars we ourselves were alive. They killed him at dawn.

Still under close guard, we rode into the town in the morning twilight. A dead city it seemed; deserted except for the very poor and a few civilian stalwarts. Shutters all up, and dead bodies lying about here and there, at which our ponies snorted and shied.

I had got the measure of our brigand by now. He had taken the town, it was true, and avenues of escape in all directions lay open. He might loot and kill as he pleased and pass on to pastures new. But he and his men were farther away than ever from their real desire, which was pardon. They had taken an important town, and put an important Governor in peril, possibly of his life, certainly of his position. And if they looted the town and killed, *inter alia*, the foreigners, what pardon could ever be theirs? Never would they see their homes again; theirs would be the perilous life of the hills, hunting and hunted, and sooner or later they would be caught and expiate their crimes under the executioner's sword. Whereas were he to stay his hand now, neither loot nor kill, restore discipline amongst his men, and administer the town as if he were an ordinary decent Chinese official, there was just a hope for him. Such overt signs of repentance might just be enough to turn the scales in his favour, to

convince the authorities that he was not past redemption, that, in fact, it was practicable to pardon and reinstate him and his men. The authorities might well be glad, should he thus prove it possible, to put an end in this way to further trouble and devastation.

I put all this to our brigand in a remarkably plain-spoken interview which seemed at first likely to end in an explosion. But when it had all got thoroughly into his mind, he became a changed man. He put himself in my hands, to get him a pardon if I could; he sent out there and then to stop the looting which had already commenced. He became, in fact, once more the ordinary decent Lieutenant-Colonel of infantry he had been before fate and circumstance had thrust him into the whirlpool. He saw my Egyptian cigarettes. Could I give him a box or two? A polite request from a man beyond the pale of the law, who had killed his own General and devastated a wide area, and in whose power not only my property lay but my life.

I then set off, the same night, with a delegation of the townspeople and accompanied by the brigand's third-in-command, to follow up the retreated Governor. The brigand saw me off, and wanted to lend me his own mule, for he thought my pony must have been tired out.

We found the Governor two stages away at the next town on the road, making preparations

for another defensive battle. He was feeling much better, and received me with transparent relief. I had not been killed, and that was so much to the good. Troops were being hurried up from behind, and were already arriving in force. How could he possibly have held the other town, seeing the lives of the Consul and the missionaries, in the brigands' hands, might have been forfeit to his success? So that was all right. He was through the wood; the brigands were no match for the big force that was rapidly collecting, and the fault for what had hitherto happened, if fault there were at all, obviously lay with the expedition which had let the brigands slip past.

We put the new situation before him. The matter was out of his hands, but, true to his good nature and love of peace, he recommended by telegraph to superior authority that the brigands be pardoned. But it was not to be. Our brigand kept faith, but Nemesis, careless of human repentance, came from an entirely different quarter. The model regiment aforesaid, under its stern and capable chief, had learnt that the brigands had got through the cordon, and had followed them up as fast as possible. Not knowing that the matter was being negotiated, it fell, one break of day, upon the brigands unawares, and drove them pell-mell from the town.

Our efforts had not, however, been entirely fruitless. We had saved the town from loot and

sack, and, as it afterwards appeared, we had cured our brigand once for all of his complex. For he took the first opportunity to slip away from his band, and seek, no doubt, a life of peace elsewhere. But the fates were against him. After it had been driven out of the town, the band had resumed its devastation, and a price had been put on the heads of them all. Someone recognized him, denounced him to the authorities, and he was taken and executed. The last I saw of him was his head only, brought back and paraded in the town he had taken, and spared.

CHAPTER IV

THE IDEALIST

YOUR first impression of him was apt to be of astonishment at the contrast between his outward appearance and the reputation he bore of a man of terror. No one at first sight could have guessed, from the look of him, the sort of man he was. There was nothing rugged about his face. He was noticeably good-looking, in a comely rather than in an impressive way. And the effect was heightened when he was in uniform; his hand went naturally to his sword-hilt, and it was characteristic of him that the sentries at his doors stood with drawn swords instead of with the usual prosaic rifle and bayonet. He looked like some Prince Charming of a girl's dream, a knight-errant, or debonair cavalier; and he had, in fact, carried out, in the field not of romantic chivalry but of high politics, exploits that a D'Artagnan, a Bergerac, or a Brigadier Gerard would have envied. But there the resemblance ended. He was, I think, the strongest and most ruthless of all the forceful men I met who rode the storm of revolution to high office. What

there was of the histrionic in his composition was quite unconscious, the breaking-out of a psychological complex, an effort of his subconsciousness to redress a balance, to find relief, in the trappings of power and romance, from the memory of the subjection and the squalor which had been his lot for years on end. It was, in fact, an outward manifestation of the inner process by which nature seeks to cure a soul seared by fate and misfortune. The psycho-analyst would put it more prosaically, and diagnosing an exhibition-complex would probably be repaid with a sword-thrust.

However that may be, he was quite innocent of intentional pose; he made no effort to impress, nor was he conscious of the gallery. And if he was an actor, as you might think, he never played any rôle but one—himself. He held the limelight without any conscious effort; and wherever he was, he was in the centre of the picture. It was not his appearance, nor anything he said or did, nor was it entirely his reputation, for you felt his presence even if you knew little or nothing about him. It was that indefinable element we call personal magnetism; you sensed in some impalpable way the strength and the dynamic force that was his. He dominated the room, and was aware of it, taking it for granted. He was indeed always aware of himself, the self-consciousness, however, not of conceit or of a man not sure of himself, but of a lion-tamer when in the cage, a dominant

alertness. It was difficult to resist the interest he inspired in you, and you found yourself wondering what manner of man he was, what his past had been, and what the future held for him. At least I felt like that when I first met him. It was at the formal closing of a Session of the Provincial Assembly, and my Consular colleagues and I had been invited to attend. We spent half an hour in the reception-room with the three leading officials of the province, of whom he was one—he was at that time Director-General of the Provincial Constabulary. We then repaired to the Assembly Hall, and the respect in which he was held was evident when, his turn having come to speak, the whole house rose and acclaimed him. He made a striking figure as he stood there in the rostrum, a patrician all through, quiet, composed, dominant.

With the passage of time I got to know him well. Though he was still young in years, the fires of youth had long since been extinguished in him. I do not remember ever seeing him elated. He had no desire for gaiety, and was out of sympathy with those who had. All that side, the innocent as well as the licentious, of life was a closed book to him, and when he attained power he shut down all the night resorts of the capital, forbade singing-girls, and waged war against all forms of gambling, public or private. Many a respected citizen found himself heavily fined for

indulging in no more than the Chinese equivalent of a game of bridge. "They ought to set a better example," he said to me at the time. He would not admit that gambling, even in its mildest forms, had any social value as a relaxation. In general, he had lost the capacity for enjoyment, and had no understanding of that quality in others, the impulse towards amusement which informs ninety per cent. of mankind, and expresses itself in licence only in relatively few cases. His attitude was a psychological puzzle, to which his past supplied the key.

His life had been a grim business. He had been caught up by the revolutionary movement in all the enthusiasm of his youth, and flung into an old-world jail, from which he was released three years later when the Revolution succeeded. "Three years," he once said to me; "it was a lifetime." He never spoke of what he had gone through, but I knew enough and heard enough to realize it. In some *yamens* the jails open on to the outside courtyard, from which they are separated by heavy wooden bars. And I had on more than one occasion, while waiting in my chair for my visit to be announced, been harrowed by the sight and the clamour of the wretched prisoners, heavily shackled with chains that clanked as they moved, crowding up to the bars, dreadful spectres of humanity, for all the world like wild beasts in a cage; some begging piteously for food, others imploring one's

influence to secure their release, some gaping mutely, others laughing senselessly, or even pouring vile abuse upon you. Then the great gates would open and close behind you, shutting off all this horror, and you would pass through an inner courtyard or two, clean and quiet and with perhaps peach-trees in blossom, and find awaiting you at the top of his steps a cultured Chinese gentleman, the Magistrate. I once said to one of them, an intimate of mine, "I wonder you can live with *that* at your front gate." He misunderstood my meaning, thinking, or perhaps choosing to think, that I was commiserating with him. "I have to," he replied; and added philosophically: "Is not life in general much the same?"

He had been herded all the time with these sad wrecks of humanity, the jetsam and flotsam of the criminal classes, men—some of them—vicious by nature, and the rest brutalized by an inhuman penal system. The prison rations were insufficient to maintain life, and the prisoners lived on what their friends could send in to them, the jailers taking a heavy toll on whatever came in. Those who had no friends outside starved or begged or snatched from their luckier comrades. There was no privacy at all; they lived all together in the absolute intimacy of animals who are caged together, and like animals they slept on the ground, on straw. Very likely it was to this phase of his

experience that was due the impalpable wall you sensed around him, the reserve that kept the world at a distance, presenting a protective barrier against first contacts, and preventing, except in a few rare instances, the development of friendship into intimacy. He had evolved, in fact, a subjective privacy, part of that adaptation to environment through which he had preserved his life and equilibrium.

Such was the *milieu* in which he had passed the formative years from youth to manhood. It was an environment in which there was no room for human kindliness. The prisoners were brutes, and the jailers were no better. He had had on occasion literally to fight for his life. He won through. With nothing but the will to dominate, for physically he was not a particularly powerful man, he yet succeeded in dominating his fellow-prisoners, two or three of whom, indeed, attained relative distinction in after years as his lieutenants.

In that particular province the Revolution broke in a storm of fury. For a tense moment all authority vanished, and there was a general jail delivery. He was free. And his first thought? Strange, incredible as it must appear, he sent for a photographer, and refused to have his shackles off until he had been photographed as he then was —a gaunt spectre in chains and rags, with hair and beard in dishevelled riot, his whole person vermin-ridden, caked with grime and hung with

wisps of straw, and his face ashen, contorted, terrible. You may think of this or that possible motive for this extraordinary proceeding, but none of them will fit the circumstances. Remember it was the actual moment of his release from the living hell he had endured, not for a few months, but for years on end. I confess I find the episode unique, inexplicable, the manifestation of some impulse, beyond the reach of psychology to fathom, deep down in his tortured soul.

His next act was still strange, yet understandable, masterful. He did not go home, but moved across from the jail to the vacant seat of authority in the same *yamen* which happened to be the headquarters of the police administration of the province; and the next morning the capital awoke to read a proclamation, over an unknown name which was soon to become a byword throughout the province for ruthlessness and courage, in which he styled himself the Director-General of the Provincial Constabulary, and ordered all and sundry to keep the peace under pain of his displeasure. The foremost of the military commanders in the revolutionary party, fearful of being forestalled, hastened to follow suit, and brushing aside the civilian leaders, proclaimed himself the Governor-General of the province.

Barely a year later both these masterful men were eliminated by another soldier, their equal in

force of character, their superior in finesse, who, in alliance with the autocrat of Peking, gathered into his own hands the paramount authority they had shared and, indeed, contested. It was the attitude of the Chief of Police that made this *dénouement* possible. Though he was himself a soldier—he had been a Captain of infantry before his incarceration—and his police were troops in all but name, he took up the cudgels on behalf of the civilian against the military. He stood for law and order, and came up against the military view-point that the troops were not subject to the civil authority. But the licence they were allowed was clearly subversive of public order. A clash was inevitable. And *mirabile dictu* he found the master-craftsman of Peking was with him. The greatest of all the exponents of might encouraged him to the fray, confirmed him in his office, and gave him to understand that an even higher post was within his reach, dared he but grasp it. He was not at that time much of a politician, and I doubt if he realized that he was to be used as a cat's-paw against the Governor-General, whose unyielding adherence to the principle of provincial autonomy made his elimination essential to Peking. In any event, his action would have been the same; he stood on his own legs, and needed neither bait nor encouragement to make him do what he conceived to be his duty. The military flouted the law, of which he was the

public custodian. He increased the strength and the efficiency of his police, and then threw down the gauntlet, arresting and dealing with military offenders under the very nose of the Governor-General. The latter, who was also no politician, was curiously apathetic, the fact being he had a personal liking for the Chief of Police, and he privately thought his standpoint was right and ought to prevail. The military were incensed, and his staff persuaded him to go off on a military expedition against an outside foe. Who but the Generalissimo himself could bring the campaign to a successful issue, to the eternal glory of the provincial arms? The Chief of Staff, an astuter man perhaps than the master-craftsman himself, now took the helm, and eliminating one by one the intractable elements in the provincial body politic, gradually brought the whole province under his own undivided sway, and then handed it over, a compact and obedient unit, to the nominee of Peking.

The Chief of Police had been one of the first to go. He had, it is true, won the respect and the approval of the general public, but he had antagonized not only the troops but also the great secret society which honeycombs that particular province. Originally established some hundreds of years ago as a mutual aid society, this latter had been driven underground by the Manchu rulers of China, and had developed gradually into

a potent force for evil; and in the disintegration that followed upon the collapse of the Empire it came into its own. Nearly all the troops were members of it, and tens of thousands of the able-bodied of the rougher elements of the populace. As far as I could discover, it had no supreme head; it was not a compact body, but a loose association of self-governing lodges held together by a community of ideas, in general co-operating where their interests touched, but sometimes in regional conflict where they clashed. It possessed, in fact, the only kind of organization, which it had evolved like the giraffe its neck, compatible with survival.

It was characteristic of our idealist that, like some mediaeval knight, *sans peur et sans reproche*, he unhesitatingly drew his sword upon this fearsome dragon when it raised its head and spat at him. He closed down all the lodges in the capital, and made a striking example of a few of the sectional leaders. People wondered how long he would survive, and no one was surprised when shortly afterwards an attempt was made upon his life. He was riding with a couple of his police down a side-street closed in by the blank outer walls of private residences; a shot rang out, and he was hit in the thigh. He crashed through the gates of the house it came from, and was upon the sharpshooter before the latter had had time to escape; or perhaps the man had thought the

episode over, and that it only remained for the police to remove their dead. Anyway, he was still there, and was cut down by the sword of his would-be victim. The first round had been won. But the society had later the satisfaction of being the instrument through which he was eliminated. His police were members of it almost to a man, and the word went round through the lodges that the Governor-General was about to relieve him of office and to appoint the Chief of the General Staff in his place, and that the occasion would be marked by an increase of pay, to say nothing of comfort, the latter in that there need be no more of those strenuous encounters between policemen and soldiers which were so unpleasant to both. The change was effected without incident. How could he, single-handed, fight two armies—his own and the enemy's? It was, I believe, his first introduction to the purely political side of the art of government.

A few years later there was a turn of the wheel, and he was back in office, this time as a General of Division with a satrapy all his own. He made of it a sort of oasis of peace and order in a province famous for its turbulence and distracted by the alarums of war and the depredations of brigands. It was during this period that he performed an exploit which, for cool daring crowned with success, must almost be without parallel. With a dozen of his bodyguards he rode

one day into the provincial capital, went in turn to the houses of three or four important men who were playing a hand against him in high politics, dispatched them each in his own compound, and rode quietly back to the safety of his own satrapy. The capital was full of troops and armed police, who knew him and were surprised to see him come and go, but, having no instructions regarding him, let him pass. What he had come to do, and had done, they and the authorities only learnt after he was out of reach. This time he was the instructor, not the instructed, in the astonishing game of high politics. He had reached full stature. "A dangerous man," a politician informed me sadly. "He hardly opens his mouth, and no one can tell what is going on in his mind, but suddenly something formulates and is followed by swift action."

Months passed, and then the wheel of change, which revolves somewhat rapidly in times of revolution, took another turn, and he fell; and another, and he was back in office. The astute politician who was now in the saddle put him in command of military operations against the brigands. It would appear that the latter, while not without merit acquired in the late campaign, had got presumptuous, and needed a lesson. He was in his element, achieved victory after victory, and hundreds of heads rolled in the dust, until the brigand organizations, reduced to a proper frame

of mind, begged that he be called off, and threatened, if he were not, to murder a few foreigners in outlying places and thus involve the Governor-General with the foreign Powers.

The idealist seemed to take it philosophically. I think he was beginning to feel that all this regional effort led to nothing, that you could not do much seated on the rim of the political wheel. He retired and turned his attention to another sphere of action. The student movement was making itself felt. Surely there was hope here for the radical regeneration of his country? The material was excellent. They were all in the deadly earnestness of youth, and had its ruthlessness, and thousands were ready and anxious to sacrifice their lives, were capable of going to the stake for their ideals. They were men after his own heart, of his own calibre.

"When the social storm that is brewing breaks, if it ever does," I said to a mutual friend in high office, "I shouldn't be surprised to find him riding the whirlwind, his inevitable sword in hand."

"If he hasn't already succumbed to his opium pipe," was the laconic reply.

I wonder.

CHAPTER V

THE SOLDIER

He had enlisted at the age of eighteen in the old days, a brief dozen years ago, when no very noticeable prestige attached to the status of a private Chinese soldier. Followed a decade packed with campaigning on the roof of the world. The sun and wind of Tibet had dried the sap of youth out of his face, and left it like an old leather glove. A Tibetan sword had slashed across it, giving him a scar which was but one of the lines in a face seared with experience and privation. And he limped, another old wound. His fate had caught him up, tossed him hither and thither, and finally left him derelict on the wrong side of the frontier. And there I met him.

It was all a question of high politics, the relations of China and Tibet, and he and his fellows but pawns of no individual importance, soldiers of the Chung Ying expedition to Lhasa of 1909-10. Nothing happened until the expedition, some 1,500 men in all, had been nearly five months on the road. Then they met the first barrier. It was unpleasant. They had not

OLD-STYLE CHINESE SOLDIERS. HIMALAYAN BEAR IN FOREGROUND.

THE SOUTH GATE OF TACHIENLU.
TWO MODERN CHINESE SOLDIERS ON SENTRY DUTY.

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expected armed opposition on the road. Travel in Tibet is strenuous enough under the most favourable circumstances; and if you are short of supplies, transport, proper clothing, and so on, it becomes, especially in winter, a life-and-death affair. The barrier was swept aside with considerable slaughter. So was the next a few days further on. A question of armament. The Chinese, with rifles, were opposed by men armed with swords and matchlocks.

The expedition found no more barriers, and reached Lhasa in the middle of the New Year festivities, when the holy city is very crowded indeed. The Chinese, though their entry was unopposed, were not comfortable; so few of them, however relatively well-armed, in a city of thousands. They fired into the air. Not bravado, but a bluff to conceal weakness. "We were scared and hoped to scare them," said our corporal, for such he was by then. Unfortunately some of the shots struck the Potala, the palace of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the ruler of Tibet, who left the same night for India. Such was the sequence of events according to the corporal. This was not at all what Chinese statesmanship desired. They wanted the Dalai Lama to "tremble and obey," not go away. The Imperial Resident's luck was clearly out. He hadn't fired the shots, yet he must henceforth make bricks with very little straw.

Peace reigned for a year or two at Lhasa, but there was no peace for our corporal. Off he was sent on an expedition to open up a more direct line of communication with the frontier, an endeavour which aroused the armed hostility of the Tibetans of the regions concerned. The campaign lasted four months, and the small expedition, being totally inadequate to its purpose, achieved nothing but automobility, like a stout ship ploughing through angry seas. The engagements were mostly of the barrier kind. The Tibetans would erect a wall of loose stones across the road, and the Chinese would dislodge them by rifle-fire. Occasionally, however, the Tibetans would descend upon the expedition with their heavy swords, and endeavour to wipe it out once for all. It was in one of these rushes that the corporal got his sword scar.

Then came the Chinese Revolution, and the Imperial troops at Lhasa, sick of exile and with their pay in arrears, decided to revolt in sympathy. There was nobody in particular to revolt against, except perhaps the unfortunate Resident, whose luck was again in abeyance. But the troops construed Revolution in the sense that you might do a little looting. They first looted their civilian compatriots at the Tibetan capital, and then turned their attention to the Tibetans themselves. The latter, however, were by no means so helpless. They took to arms, and the Chinese were

soon in dire straits, from which they were finally extricated by diplomatic intervention, and repatriated through India.

Our corporal, however, was at the time in garrison, with a hundred or so of his fellows, in a small hamlet some days' journey from Lhasa. They tried to make their way to the capital, but the roads were again blocked, and they were not in sufficient strength to force the new barriers. They were successfully held up at a barrier six days' journey from Lhasa; here they lost their commander and nine men. They retreated in the direction of China, and met further barriers. A stretch of inhospitable country which would take a well-equipped traveller a month to cross lay between them and the nearest Chinese garrison on the frontier, and that garrison was itself sustaining a siege.

The chances of our corporal and his comrades ever getting through to safety anywhere were nil. They, however, fought their way along sturdily. An organized effort would, of course, have destroyed them without difficulty; but, luckily for them, it was all guerilla warfare, each hamlet making its own local effort to wipe them out. At one place thirty of them got separated from their fellows, and cut their way back with the loss of twelve of their number. A little farther on they were held up six months, beleaguered in a small hamlet; they might have

held out there indefinitely, had not the besiegers got between them and their water-supply; after three days of that, they cut their way out in a surprise rush, losing ten of their number. At another place twenty of the party got cut off, and were never seen again. Finally, over a year after they had set forth, the party, now numbering but thirty-five men, reached the frontier garrison, and found it just relieved by fresh troops from China.

You would think that our corporal would now be granted a long period of home leave—*otium cum dignitate*, hero and veteran—in his native village. Not a bit of it. He was promptly detailed off to an outlying garrison, and was soon fighting again. On one occasion the Chinese were endeavouring to dislodge half a company of Tibetan troops from a fort they had taken. They couldn't starve them out or drive them out by rifle-fire. So the Chinese commander called for volunteers to burn them out. Our corporal was one of them. I asked him why he volunteered; surely he had had his fill of fighting? He said he had got used to it, and anyway there was a reward of twenty rupees per man. I expect this was merely self-depreciatory. Probably he had been through so much that he didn't care what risks he took. They crept up to the walls, fixed the faggots, and soon had the fort in a blaze; the garrison burst out and were killed to a man.

Soon came a period of peace on the frontier, whilst diplomats in far-away comfortable places argued the whys and wherefores of this and that, and endeavoured to arrange a settlement. Three years passed, with our corporal still in garrison. Then came the renewal of hostilities, resulting in the Tibetan wave which swamped the frontier. The outlying garrisons were driven in to frontier headquarters, which fell, surrendered, after a long and stout defence. The Tibetans had learnt the lesson of the British and Chinese expeditions of 1903-4 and 1909-10 respectively. Swords and matchlocks and militia no longer, but organized troops with modern rifles. It looked like a choice between surrender and annihilation. Nevertheless the corporal said the majority of the garrison were opposed to surrendering. And I can believe it, if they were of the same calibre as our corporal. Men of his type just peg along sturdily without much thought or fear or hope. He had been in worse places, and had come out with his life and his rifle. And the General himself was another old frontier stalwart; indeed, he executed his second-in-command a few days earlier for advocating surrender.

"Then why did you surrender?" I asked the corporal.

"Our officers said we would all get three months' pay and be allowed to go home in peace." That was probably it. The old frontiersmen did

not believe in such promises, and were used to tight places; but there were many newcomers amongst them, and their hopes and fears must have carried the day. They gave up their rifles, did not get the three months' pay, but were duly repatriated, via Lhasa and India. The old stalwarts were indignant; they talked of taking it out of their General, of refusing to go home, of folding their arms and dying if need be where they were; but this phase passed off, and they submitted, as we all do, to *force majeure*.

So our corporal once more on the old, old road, toiling painfully over the same old passes. His wounded foot gave out at the very place where, eight years before, his expedition had met, and swept aside, the first barrier. There he rested, in penury of course, half a year. When he was fit to walk again he was too late for repatriation via India. They had all gone long since. Back again, a month's journey, to the old frontier headquarters, still in Tibetan hands, and another half-year there, perforce on charity, waiting till something turned up.

It fell to me to be that something. And so a few days later our corporal bade his farewell, he and a comrade in like plight. Two Tibetan girls came to see them off, and it was a sad parting. No doubt it was these women who had really kept them alive. Womanhood, out of love born of pity, belying the harshness of the world

to man in distress. One would have thought our corporal beyond the weakness of tears, but he wasn't. He broke down, mounted hurriedly, dug his heels into his pony, and galloped off. In front of him, a month ahead, China; behind, a Tibetan girl in tears.

Long afterwards I heard of him again. He had re-enlisted.

CHAPTER VI

THE CIVILIAN

One of the results of the Revolution was to topple the civilian from his pedestal and set the soldier upon it. Here and there, there was a sharp tussle between the two, brought to a conclusion in some cases by a firing squad or the executioner's sword. But in general such extreme measures were not required, and the civilian, hitherto paramount, quietly became a nobody, save in so far as he had the support or the protection of a military commander.

Even the master-craftsman of the Revolution found himself dependent on the military, his mandates obeyed only when they met with the approval of the men in actual command of the armies nominally his own. A less purposeful man would have become a mere figure-head, but not he. His reaction was characteristic of the dominant personality which was his. Whom he had set up through revolution he could throw down by the same means; and he staged campaign after campaign to oust this or that commander too independent to take orders; but it was all of no

THE CIVILIAN.
MR. HAN KUANG-CHÜN, MAGISTRATE OF KANG TING HSIEN (TACHIENLU).

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avail. Each, as he felt his power, went the way of his predecessors. Was he not the commander of the army which was the basis of authority, and his nominal master but a politician, and a civilian at that, dependent on his support?

What was the explanation of it all? Was loyalty a thing of the past, or was it that the ambitions of strong men had hitherto been held in check, and constrained to express themselves within cast-iron limits, by the very governmental machine he had himself shattered to pieces in the Revolution? And the old revolutionary, indomitable though dying, turned to the Soviets, and thought to try the committee system of government whereby the revolutionary leaders in Russia had retained dominion over both army and country. But he died before he could put the experiment into operation, and left it a bequest to his followers.

Though the Magistrate, for such was the civilian who is the subject of this sketch, had held office under the Empire, he was very young in those now far-off days, in time barely a decade and a half ago, and hence he was able to adapt himself to the new conditions, which presented themselves to his colleagues of the old school as subversive of the very basis of ordered life. He belonged, in fact, to the new school of Chinese officialdom, men of a harder type than their predecessors.

The men whom the stress and strain of the Revolution and its aftermath have thrown up to the surface derive from all classes of the people. One, a satrap of my acquaintance, started life as a brigand; another I knew had been in his youth a theatrical assistant, which, in Chinese eyes, is about the lowest occupation a man can follow; one was the son of a labourer; and another a member of the old, the only, aristocracy of China, the literati; and so on. But they all had in various measure one quality in common, and that was a certain sternness of character, a sort of zest in dealing blows, and a stoic equanimity in receiving them. Force of character, not scholarship, was now the key to high office. "But I'm a scholar," a gentleman of the old school was heard protesting to a military press-gang as they roped him in to carry loads for the troops. "You'll still be that when we've done with you," facetiously replied one of the common soldiers, who, half a generation ago, would have thought a gentleman as far above him almost as the gods.

Though we conventionally translate his Chinese title by the word Magistrate, the hearing of cases was but a part of the multifarious duties of his office. He was the administrative, executive, and juridical head of a county as large as Yorkshire, and Mayor and Corporation of the town which was his capital. In his own county he was, in a word, the Government.

He was barely middle-aged, of equable temperament, and good physique. His pleasures were of the mind; he did not seek physical exertion, but was fully adequate to it when it came his way. And it very often did. He had travelled all over not only his own district but the whole satrapy of which his was the headquarters county, had more than once taken out a handful of his militia in chase of outlaws, and was familiar with life in camp and bivouac. He would spend months of sedentary life in his capital, taking absolutely no exercise in our sense of the term; and then, at the call of duty, set off on horseback on some trip requiring physical endurance in marked degree. But he thought nothing of that. He would come back the picture of health, and refer to himself playfully as a brigand, in explanation of the swarthy and untownlike appearance which would linger a week or two.

He presented to the world a mien of placid benevolence. You might have thought from the look of him that he had not a care in the world, that his whole life had lain in quiet waters. But it had not. He was a harassed man of affairs, beset with difficulties, habitually dealing with troublesome questions, and constantly called upon to risk his life.

I knew him over a course of years, and do not remember ever seeing him agitated. On one occasion his capital was surrounded by a band of

outlaws, some hundreds strong, notorious for their ruthless brutality. It happened that there were at the time but fifty soldiers in garrison, under the command of the mystic of another of my portraits, and the Magistrate himself had his thirty armed police. The mystic went out with his handful of men to engage the enemy and was rumoured to have been defeated, whereupon panic set in, and people tried to leave the town. The Magistrate closed the gates, announced that the outlaws had suffered a reverse, and ordered everybody to go about their affairs as usual. He then came round to see me. Would I be so good as to dissuade any foreigners who might want to leave? If they left, it would have a most disturbing effect on public confidence. I agreed, but added, banteringly, that the question hardly arose, seeing the mystic had routed the foe. He laughed, and said that if the worst came to the worst he would issue arms to all the able-bodied in the town, and was confident that he would thus be able to hold it. But he did not want to take this step until the last possible moment, for everybody would gather from it that things were desperate, and there might well be pandemonium. In the meantime he was going out that night with his police to reconnoitre. Yes, he knew it was the practice of those particular brigands to torture to death any official who fell into their hands. "The superior man," I quoted, "is fearless. Conscious

of his inner rectitude, of what should he be afraid?" He threw the ball back. "The superior man," he replied with a twinkle, "disregards people's shortcomings and emphasizes their qualities." The bold front he and the mystic put up delayed the assault upon the town until the arrival of the satrap himself with his troops, and the danger was over.

There was that indefinable element about him we call personality which impressed even the soldiers, habituated though they were to contempt of the civil authority. A colleague of his had his *yamen*—that is, his official residence—wrecked over his head for failing to provide the transport they required. Another had twice been put up against a wall in front of a firing squad. A military press-gang took the chair-bearers of one, and, when he expostulated, threatened to take him too. Another had been assaulted by the troops in regard to the military rations he was responsible for. But somehow nothing of this sort happened to our civilian. The nearest approach to it was on one occasion when his men had impressed, for the use of the troops, a number of labourers who happened to be cronies of the soldiers in garrison. The latter went in force to his *yamen*, and loudly demanded their release. He came out and told them quietly that they had the force sufficient to release them, and they could exercise it if they wished, but he would impress no more men to

take their places. And the soldiers thought better of it, withdrawing without further ado.

He was always courteous, but did not admit people easily to his confidence and friendship. Towards strangers and people he was not in sympathy with, his face could be a veritable brick wall of bland impassivity. He did not consider politeness demanded agreement with whatever was said, however foolish. In social as in official discussions he had a disconcerting way of taking you up, though in all good humour, pointing out the flaw in your argument and toppling over your house of cards. This sort of thing was apt to make him *persona non grata* with some people. But wrongly so, for he did not take it amiss if you did the same to him, but thought the better of you for it. He enjoyed, in fact, the matching of wits as others enjoy a game of cards.

He ruled his county as a father rules his household. In common parlance, he was the "father and mother" of the people, a designation which roughly expresses both the wide extent of his authority and the benevolent way in which he was expected to exercise it. And he had been so long in this distinctive office that he had unconsciously acquired something of a paternal attitude towards the world. He really looked upon the people as his children, and had their interests at heart; though he was not particularly

gentle with those of them who transgressed, but rather wielded the paternal rod with unsparing vigour. He would have agreed with our adage of "spare the rod and spoil the child." He thought no more of ordering a man or woman to be flogged than some parents think of spanking their children.

And the people apparently agreed with him. But did they? I doubted it. I suppose we all more or less read a situation in the light of our own predilections and prejudices, and imagine that which we think should be, actually is, though very likely it is not. And so one day I propounded to him the theory that persistence in this old-world punishment, in these days when new ideas of the rights and the dignity of the individual were abroad, could not but play into the hands of the social agitator in his work of disruption. Various analogies, I said, could be found between China and Russia, and this was one of them. That men, and especially women, could be flogged at all, the horror and the indignity of it, did this play no part in the mental attitude of the people which made the upheaval in Russia possible?

He did not see the matter in that light. He maintained that the people preferred this sort of punishment to imprisonment. Who was to support the family while the bread-winner was in jail? And it wasted a man to lock him up; his labour, especially if he were a skilled workman,

was of importance to the community. A change would entail various social adjustments, to say nothing of a considerable financial outlay. It was a complicated question, outside his province as a Magistrate, and he could merely carry on in accordance with custom and public opinion.

Public opinion—that was his sheet-anchor, and he seldom deviated from it, except in obedience to orders from above. But orders were orders, and his loyalty to the satrap was absolute —a loyalty founded not on subservience but on his sense of duty not unmingled with an element of personal affection. If he received orders he did not like, he would brave the autocrat's wrath and endeavour to have them withdrawn; but if he failed, he would carry them out. Under such circumstances he shot a member of his own staff, a close personal friend, and then buried him with all honour, at his own expense, and with himself as chief mourner.

In only one respect did his administration run counter to public opinion. He had ideas on street cleanliness which were in advance of the times in his particular part of the world. He insisted on each householder fulfilling his obligation of keeping the stretch of street outside his premises clear of rubbish. It was an uphill fight. He would often go out in person, busy man though he was, and see to this. You would see him, seated on his camp-stool, looking on while

some delinquent, hauled out of his house, cleared up the rubbish outside it. On one occasion the doors of a house were not opened to his demand, and his men broke them down, finding within just one solitary fellow, who was promptly flogged for his contumacy in not opening his doors to his governing official. It afterwards transpired that this man was not the householder, who happened to be out, but a visitor just arrived from the countryside. An unfortunate welcome, and no doubt the victim, on his return to his village, told a harrowing story of the unexpected dangers of town life.

In connection with this incident I propounded to our civilian the theory that " an Englishman's house is his castle," and that he, the Magistrate, could not similarly have entered a foreigner's premises. I found he thought that, as territorial authority, he had the general right of entry into all premises within his jurisdiction. " Do you mean to say," he said, " that if a murderer enters a mission compound, my men cannot enter in pursuit? " " Certainly," I replied. " According to the Treaties, you must first get the Consul's permission, unless, of course, the missionary agrees to let your men in. Mostly he would, as few people really like a live murderer on their premises." " Common-sense stronger than the Treaties," was his laconic comment.

He objected also to pigs and stray dogs in his

streets. The latter were easily dealt with. It happened that some of the troops in garrison belonged to a province where dog-flesh is esteemed a delicacy. They were given permission to eat any stray dog they saw—a particularly fat dog of mine who was out *incognito* was saved from this fate at the eleventh hour—and soon there was not a canine left on the streets. But the same process could not be applied to the pigs, though everybody would have been glad to eat *them.* Public opinion, however, would not have stood for such an outrage on the rights of property; and finally, in despair he bade his men one day throw into the river every pig they saw on the streets. The owners had to fish them out, a proceeding which was not without its comic side, and brought home to the people that the prescriptive right of the pig to rummage abroad was locally at an end.

I think he was the man I got to know best of all my Chinese acquaintances. We advanced imperceptibly from the relations of official with official to the easy intercourse of private friends. At first our calls were official, and our dinners formal, the by-products of official intercourse. And then we began dropping in on each other at all sorts of times and without any special business in hand, and staying, the one with the other, to pot-luck—which is still rare between Chinese officials and the official representatives of the stranger within the gate.

Our friendship had already progressed a long way when an incident occurred which revealed to me another and more intimate side of his sterling character. His aged mother, whom he held in the highest veneration and devotion, died, and I had gone, as a friend of his, to pay my respects at the funeral ceremonies. The central hall of his *yamen* was arranged as the mourning chapel, and a photograph of his mother was set up there on an altar. Around knelt the mourners clad in white sackcloth, himself amongst them. All his colleagues and friends attended severally, including the autocrat himself, whose subordinate he was, and who had power of life and death over all the people, and each prostrated himself before the portrait; whereupon he, as chief mourner, made acknowledgment by prostrating himself before him.

I had not meant to attend, for I felt that the presence of an infidel might well strike a jarring note, offending not only the living but even the dead, themselves the gods of this most ancient of surviving human cults. The Magistrate, however, sent me a special message to the effect that he looked upon me as a close friend, that I was expected, and must not fail to come. This put me in rather a quandary. Of course, I could not perform the customary obeisance; I don't know why, but I suppose it is that we are a stiff-necked race. Not all of us, however, for Manning, the

first Englishman to reach Lhasa, prostrated himself before Buddha's Vice-Regent on earth; and our early envoys to China, Lords Macartney and Amherst, pressed to kowtow to the Son of Heaven, expressed their willingness to do so provided Chinese officials of equal rank would perform the same obeisance before a portrait of our King. But things have changed since those days. Perhaps it is that, with Empire, we in the East have inherited individual prestige; like the nose of Bergerac he could not discard nor allow to be impugned. I compromised. I would bow before the portrait, and I did so, not perfunctorily, but three times, in accordance with the formal commands of the Master of the Ceremonies. And the Magistrate, in full view of a considerable public, prostrated himself to me, an alien, in acknowledgment. He was perfectly dignified; it was I who was embarrassed.

It was in a mood of abstraction that I rode home to my Consulate through the streets of his capital. So this was the man whom some thought anti-foreign and others supercilious, his imperturbability a pose of superiority. How easily, I thought, are public men misjudged. In truth, there was no pose about him. He really was superior. His was the self-restraint, the good manners, the general poise of a man sure of himself. He was, in fact, an outstanding example of that fine product of generations of Confucian

discipline—a Chinese gentleman. Anti-foreign? I never saw any sign of it, and this public action of his belied it *in toto*. And where was that prejudice of race, preached and practised by people like the ex-Kaiser, careless of the world's peace or ignorantly playing with fire? Surely in this we, and not the East, are the culprits. Anyway, he had none of it, and I remembered the saying of the Chinese sage: "Amongst men of real culture there is no such thing as prejudice of race or class."

CHAPTER VII

THE MAN OF AFFAIRS

THE first impression he inevitably made was that he was compact of good-humour. Fat of body and almost chubby-faced, he looked sleek and comfortable, a man at peace with himself and the world. And his friendly, almost jovial, manner completed the picture. A prosperous merchant, you would have thought if you had not known who he was. And indeed he had that instinct of acquisitiveness, all the more effective for being subconscious, which animates the mole and makes a millionaire—as often as not in spite of himself. But the resemblance hardly went further than that. Despite appearances he must have been, you felt, as ruthless as any of the men who fought for place and power in the storm and stress of the Revolution and its aftermath, or he could never have won through, have held his own amongst them. And he was. You could not know him long without becoming aware of it, without realizing that his appearance was deceptive, that beneath that soft exterior was a man of iron will and resolution. He looked prosaic, and was any-

thing but it. He was a cool-headed opportunist, easy-going only in non-essentials, supple, imperturbable, irrepressible, a manipulator of men and events. And he had the advantage, immediate if not ultimate, over many of his rivals in that he was devoid of emotional idealism. He stood on solid ground, kept his personal feelings well in hand, and his attention fixed on his purposes. He did not allow himself the luxury of going off at a tangent, of chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, or tilting at a windmill. These things might, perhaps, become a poet or a child, but hardly a ruler of men.

He sensed this quality in others, and turned it where he could to his own ends, but at heart he had no real understanding of it, and thought idealism either a pose or an aberration. His own vision was strictly limited to the world of reality. He did not seem to have any particular ideals: no picture in his mind, for instance, of a regenerated China speaking with authority in the councils of the nations. He often gave vent to the noblest sentiments, indeed almost invariably when he spoke in public, and no action of his ever lacked the support of some motive impeccably platitudinous. But this was all policy with him, a protective covering, a concession to the herd, to the idealism which something down in the depths of all of us demands shall be given first place, or at least be emphasized, in our utterances, to, in brief, the conscience of mankind, the force that

differentiates man from the rest of creation. If people will not practise what they preach, at least, we insist, they shall preach it or we will have none of them. He preached it fervently but unconvincingly. He was out, you felt, for himself. He never said so, of course, but his actions seemed to say it for him; or perhaps it were fairer to him to say that he did not believe the motives behind human action were particularly lofty, and that he dealt with men along the prosaic lines his experience or his instinct commended to him. It seemed to work in his case, for he raised himself in a very few years from an obscure staff officer to a national figure.

He lost something, of course; in his case that indefinable something we call personal prestige, the instinctive tribute men pay to exceptional worth. Somehow or other he never got that from his equals, his fellow-satraps. His personality, the sum total of the man he was, did not, apparently, command their respect, and they almost invariably talked of him in slighting terms. One of them once summed him up to me in a quotation from the Chinese sage: "Respect yourself, and you will be respected." That was it, apparently—if we stretch the meaning of the aphorism to the full limit of its metaphysical content. They sensed that he was inspired by nothing at all, or at least by nothing outside his own interests; and though he was on more than one occasion *primus inter pares*,

in political power, amongst them all, yet he seemed to count in their eyes for less than almost the least of them, even than men who had fallen from power.

I remember one occasion on which this was particularly noticeable. He was at that time Governor-General of the province, and I had invited him to dinner, together with a galaxy of satraps who happened to be at the provincial capital attending a military conference and a number of other political personages of note. To emphasize his position he had intentionally delayed his arrival until the other guests were assembled, his staff telephoning through to be sure of that, and was announced while we were drinking cocktails. There was the usual commotion outside, his bodyguards forming up in the courtyard and presenting arms as he stepped out of his chair; and he was ushered into the room by half a dozen orderlies. The company, however, was not particularly impressed, and more than one group barely interrupted their conversation to give him the bow of recognition etiquette demands. A few minutes later there arrived, unaccompanied, the idealist of another of my portraits, who was at that time out of office. He was received with noticeable attention and respect, though there were no hero-worshippers present, and hardly a man there, certainly none of the satraps, consciously thought that the newcomer or anybody

else was his superior, or even, perhaps, his equal.

The contrast was so marked that the Governor-General could hardly have missed it, but if he noticed it he did not show it in any way. Perhaps he thought it a very ordinary manifestation of human perversity or idiocy, and, anyway, he was encased in an impenetrable self-esteem which was fully equal to preserving his equanimity in the face of the opinions, real or affected, of his fellows. A colossus such as he must expect to be misunderstood by ordinary men, to arouse their jealousy, even their hatred. Indeed, he once said as much to me on another occasion in connection with a campaign of abuse directed against him by a rival satrap, and I remember replying gently that Chuangtzu had a very apposite simile in the cicada which wondered wherein lay the sense of the leviathan flying thousands of miles up into the air. "Quite so," he said, unabashed, delighted, no doubt, to find a man of so sound a judgment.

His high opinion of himself was, however, by no means ill-founded. He was a very exceptional man; in some ways a veritable colossus. Indeed, without such self-esteem, whether conscious or not, few men have ever made history; and instances readily occur to the mind of dominant personages with whom it took the final form of a belief they were divine. Our man of affairs went to no such lengths, but he could hardly but

realize his superiority to most of his fellow-satraps, and the gulf that separated him and some of them from the commonalty of men. He could scarcely be expected to ascribe in his own mind his outstanding success, the ascendancy he attained, to fortuitous circumstance, to anything indeed but to his own merit. He dominated, if not—except nominally—the whole province, at least his own satrapy, wherein the lives and fortunes of ten or more millions of his fellow-countrymen were at his mercy. That, it will be admitted, provided a fairly concrete basis for his self-esteem. And, everything considered, he bore extremely well this burden of untrammelled authority over his fellows which is apt to unseat the equilibrium of any but exceptional men. It was, indeed, as searching a test as could well be imagined. He came through it with flying colours, a tribute to the innate decency and common-sense of the man, and to the stability, the standards, and the inhibitions which were his inheritance from generations of Confucian discipline.

He exercised his power with a noticeable self-restraint, and interfered very little, and then reluctantly, with the age-old mechanism of administration. His rule was on the whole lenient and his satrapy well governed, save in one very important matter—taxation. He impoverished his people to get the funds he needed for his armies and his political activities. Money he conceived

as a necessity, without which he could not play his rôle on the stage of high politics. It was indeed the chief weapon in his armoury. In exacting it, through taxation, arbitrary levies, forced loans, and so on, he was quite ruthless; and protests and recalcitrance were met with naked force, in extreme instances by a firing-squad or the executioner's sword. This sort of thing was eloquent of the essential hardness that lay behind the sleek and amiable exterior of the man. Nevertheless, he really did seem to dislike violence, though he used it without hesitation when he thought it necessary.

On one occasion a sergeant of his own body-guard was arrested and brought to headquarters for contravening a transitory regulation against gambling. He happened to be himself engaged at the moment in a game of dominoes with some leading officials and merchants, but he went out to deal with the offender, meaning, he told me afterwards, merely to reprimand him. The sergeant, however, insolently pointed out to him that he also was gambling; and what was the difference between dominoes and dice? He was shot without further ado. "If I were to let that sort of thing pass," he said to me, "my control over the army would be at an end." His judgment may or may not have been right, but the incident was typical of what I might call his calculated ruthlessness, policy, not temper.

His attitude towards another matter was equally characteristic of him. It was during his first tenure of office as Governor-General, and the capital was on the point of being assailed by a rival faction. The New Year was approaching, a time when the religious observances of the people imperatively demand the firing of crackers; and he was afraid that this custom might operate to the advantage of the enemy, or even be intentionally turned thereto by them, cracker-fire and rifle-fire not being easily distinguishable. He therefore gave orders that no crackers should be fired that year. The people disobeyed almost to a man. As one householder put it to me: "Governors-General come and go, but the gods must be served." He took no notice of it, realizing his order was a mistake, and that he was up against something stronger than military force. He was not the sort of man to emulate the praying-mantis of another of Chuangtzu's similes, which tried to stop a chariot with its arms. The reaction of another satrap to a similar disobedience was quite different. In his case it was not the New Year; but a wedding happened to take place while his restriction was in force. Crackers were fired as usual, and he descended in person upon the culprits, dragged off the bridegroom, and had him flogged for contumacy, an outrage public opinion was slow to forgive.

Our man of affairs treated public opinion in

general with a noticeable deference, recognizing in it a political force of great importance, but he was in no sense deterred from his purposes by it. To the Press and to the student movement he gave, where he was not actually manipulating them, an almost absolute freedom, so long, however, as they did not stand in his own way. But if somebody else set them to that course, or they tried it of their own volition, there was very little of the *suaviter in modo* about his reaction. As far as I know he had only one trial of strength with the students. He had appointed a new head to the leading university of the provincial capital, and the students refused to receive him. He sent his soldiers, turned the whole university out into the street, and installed his nominee; and when the students rallied and stormed the gates, his men opened fire without hesitation, routing the assailants with considerable loss of life. The students reconsidered the matter, and decided to take him as he was, appreciating, no doubt, the wide latitude he allowed them when they did not cross his own path. And not very long afterwards the whole body of them testified their respect for him by taking part in a grand fête he staged for himself at the capital on an occasion of domestic felicity. Laudatory addresses were presented by all the public bodies, the newspapers of the day were full of his meritorious deeds and high hopes, the streets and shops and houses were

all gaily decked, by order, with flags and bunting, and after dark there were fireworks and lantern processions. It was in all a memorable day, a Roman triumph, but nobody was butchered unless it was, perhaps, a certain goddess, who is often slain but never dies.

He loved display, the trappings and the pomp of power, and habitually surrounded himself with them. He was even more attached to the substance of which these were but the shadow. He was avid of power, and was entirely fearless, in a cool, calculating sort of way, in the pursuit of it. That his nerves were of steel was evident when a hired assassin shot at him point-blank as he was leaving his *yamen* one day in the midst of his retinue. The bullet missed, and before the man could fire again or the Governor-General's body-guards had collected their wits, he whipped out his pistol and shot him himself. The fat, unwieldy man had shown himself quicker and cooler than anyone else present.

But though his courage, physical and moral, was undoubted, he seldom trusted his political fortunes to the arbitrament of the sword. Perhaps it went against the grain with him to have recourse to hostilities when his ends could be gained, with equal if not greater surety, by finesse. However that may be, he never really fought a campaign. He was a convinced fence-sitter, dexterously keeping aloof from the internecine warfare

endemic in that particular province. He conserved his strength while his fellow satraps exhausted theirs on each other, and the end of each campaign almost invariably saw him about the only general with a fresh and intact army and undiminished resources. And when, in spite of himself, he was drawn in, he always kept this consideration in view, and fought half-heartedly. On one occasion he brought a well-thought-out campaign to the usual deadlock of mutual exhaustion by failing to fall, as arranged, with his full strength on the enemy's flank—how could he, when half his army had revolted and gone over to the enemy? The campaign over, the mutineers, who had remained as inactive as ever under their temporary allegiance, returned to the fold, and were forgiven.

This sort of thing made him *persona non grata* with his fellow-satraps, but somehow or other they never managed to get together and fall upon him in a body. It was not very difficult for him to play them off against each other, for they all had their individual axes to grind, and his help, even if it were no more than a contribution to an impoverished exchequer, was better than his hostility, for his army of thirty thousand men was anything but negligible, and might, who knows, one day get orders really to fight. Men who had suffered from his perfidy and had sworn to have his blood somehow thought better of it, wrote him

off as impossible, and sought to use him when they could. He attained the established position of a confirmed neutral, and they and their fellows, mutually jealous, found themselves electing him Governor-General rather than let that post fall to one of their own number.

He was twice, by the election of his peers, Governor-General; and even when out of that office, remained the most influential of all the individual satraps in the province. They came and went; he went on for ever. His influence went beyond the confines of the province, and he carried weight in the wider sphere of national affairs, with which, indeed, the provincial situation was intimately connected. He stood out, a giant, among his fellows, but was he an Olympian? Would the blind force that actuated him push him to greater heights, to play one day a leading rôle in his country's affairs? "If he could overcome his rapacity he would be a great man," said a common friend, to whose judgment of his own people I usually bowed. "Great—without vision?" "We have quite enough visionaries," was his answer. "We want men like him, the ordinary man with extraordinary qualities." "A duck with crane's legs?" I queried.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FRONTIER PRINCE

THIS is the story of the passing of a friend of mine, the foremost of the feudal lords of Kham. Though he was not a Chinese but a Tibetan, I include him amongst my Chinese portraits, for he held office under the Chinese, and his fate unrolled itself on the Chinese stage. He was the King of Chala. He and his forebears had ruled a country as large as Wales in unbroken line for eight centuries. Where they came from and when, he did not know; eight hundred years ago they were there as Kings of Chala, and his records went back no farther.

His was a beautiful country. Vast rolling downs a joy to ride over, the habitat of nomads with their herds and flocks; great mountains rising sheer, or by stupendous slopes, up to snow-clad peaks lost in the clouds; pleasant valleys dotted with farms and hamlets; parklands and forests, woods and glades, glaciers and roaring mountain torrents. The whole on the roof of the world, sky-high in comparison with England, his lowest valley 8,500 feet above sea-level, and most

THE FRONTIER PRINCE.
THE KING OF CHALA, WITH HIS SON AND NEPHEW.
HIS CLOTHES BULGE AT THE CHEST BY REASON OF THE MINIATURE SHRINES AND OTHER SACRED ARTICLES HE WEARS UNDERNEATH.

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of his territory thousands of feet higher. And his subjects, the fine product of a great environment, children of the vast vistas and the wind-swept uplands of high Asia, in mind and body the equal of any race in the world.

The iron might well have entered into his soul, but if it had, there was no outward sign of it. He had been king, had been deposed, and retained in the new administration in a subordinate capacity. But he showed no bitterness. In his sturdy Tibetan way he met all the ups and downs of life with an invincible fortitude. There is always plenty of time for changes of fortune, the quality of length appertaining alike to man's course through eternity and to the wolf's tail, as the Tibetan proverb puts it. In the meantime it was not for him to rail, nor in him to give way to weakness. The eagle, shackled by *force majeure* to a cross-bar, preserves the unruffled bearing of the king of birds; and so it was with him.

He had been crushed by forces over which he had no vestige of control, passed over, in fact, by the juggernaut of world politics. It came about in this wise. The Bodhisat Avalokitesvara, whose function it is, for the advancement of mankind, to incarnate in various forms throughout the ages, from the dawn to the doom of time, appropriately chose the roof of the world for his habitat, with incalculable consequences to a country which,

lying away from all the great highways of the world's traffic, would hardly otherwise have been called upon to play a rôle on the international stage. The first consequence was that the relations of China and Tibet, which had commenced a thousand years earlier when Song-tsan Gam-po, King of Tibet, invaded the Empire, and was given the Chinese princess Wen Chang to wife, entered upon a new, the modern, phase, the first Manchu Emperor of China constituting himself, for the prestige and influence it brought him throughout high Asia, the lay supporter of the Divine Ruler of Tibet.

Subsequently the Empire, reacting painfully to the impact of the West, granted us much the same trade facilities in Tibet as we already had in China. But the Tibetans would have none of it. They admitted no right on the part of the lay supporter or anybody else to be weak or accommodating at their expense. They did not want our trade; and some deep-rooted instinct warned them that the infiltration of alien ways and ideas would be the death of the particular civilization they had evolved in a happy seclusion.

At this critical moment it was pointed out to them that Russia, thousands of whose subjects in Asia were adherents of the Tibetan Church and regarded the ruler of Tibet as divinity, would be a much doughtier champion than China; and, while not wanting to get in herself, was quite

equal to keeping everybody else out. It is not to be supposed that the Tibetans thought the millennium had come, but they certainly at that time believed, with indeed most of Asia, that Russia was the greatest Power in the world, and they considered she deserved a trial in the capacity of lay supporter. She also, however, proved a broken reed. The Lion roared, and the Bear and the Dragon lay quiet, saying nothing or, anyway, nothing to the point. But when the Lion, comforted and unexpectedly amiable, retired, the Dragon got busy and decided to swallow the matter at issue and thus confront the other two with it inseparably associated with himself, which would amount to a *fait accompli* of an unmistakable nature. In other words, the Empire determined to conserve its interests in Tibet by converting that country into a Chinese province.

Tibet from time immemorial has been a congery of states centring at Lhasa, the capital of the supreme ruler, the head of the feudal system of which they were the component parts. At first the sovereigns at Lhasa were just kings of Tibet; then priest-kings, the head of the Sakya Church raising himself to the throne; and finally god-kings, when the Abbot of Drepung, to whom it was divinely revealed that he was the embodiment of Avalokitesvara, wrested the kingdom from the Sakyas. The component

States were ruled by their respective potentates, some of whom were laymen—kings, princes, and heads of clans; and others, priests—living Buddhas and abbots of great monasteries. They all acknowledged the ultimate sovereignty in temporal as in spiritual matters of the divine ruler at Lhasa, and, for the rest, enjoyed a virtual independence in their several domains.

The Empire now set about cutting up the country into Chinese administrative units under Chinese officials. Considerable progress had been made—in fact, all Eastern Tibet had been dealt with along these lines—when the Revolution occurred, and Lhasa was enabled to reassert herself, claiming her historic sovereignty and the hegemony of the whole country. The Chinese managed, for the moment, to hang on to most of their gains in Eastern Tibet, but a few years later Lhasa recovered most of this territory.

Such was the situation in its main outlines that formed the political background of the King of Chala's life. Far from having any *animus* against the various princes they had dep[illegible], the Chinese were anxious to enlist their influence with their former subjects to the support of the new administration. The King of Chala they considered of especial importance. His domain, by virtue of its location on the exact geographical and ethnological frontier of China and Tibet, had

long been a sort of political and commercial clearing-house between the two countries, his house enjoying in consequence a prestige throughout Tibet disproportionate to its actual territorial holding. His views, in brief, were certain of a hearing in any quarter. Assuredly he could, if he would, be of use—he might, indeed, be invaluable. They gave him office, and he accepted it.

They encouraged him to keep in touch with every political movement throughout the country. He did so, not as the mouthpiece of others but as a man carrying weight and authority of his own. They further used him in administrative work; and he construed the powers they gave him in the wide sense of a colleague responsible for a branch of the Government. He had been king, accustomed to rule, and arbitrarily. He did not now conceive himself an underling called upon to refer everything to superior authority. Nor apparently did the new administration so regard him, for they tacitly allowed him to exercise functions which could not properly be considered to appertain to his office.

With all the authority given him he was able largely to ignore, as far as his own people were concerned, the change which had been wrought in his status. To them he was still the king. And the powers he had lost, for instance—the power of life and death over them—were counter-

balanced by the authority he had gained in the wider sphere of diplomacy.

Naturally enough, he was not in sympathy with democratic ideas, and deplored the change from Empire to Republic. One day when I was taking tea with him in his palace, now his *yamen*, we heard a man shouting angrily below—an unpleasant voice as of a man affecting rage and conscious he was cutting a poor figure, like a petulant child doubtful whether it will be consoled or smacked. His *major-domo* came in to say that one of the Governor's adjutants was making trouble about transport, and demanding to see the King himself. "Show him in," said the King quietly, and the adjutant appeared. Seeing me, his bluster dropped from him instantly, and he became all smiles, for I happened to be not merely the Consul—that of itself was not of much moment in his eyes—but the personal friend of his master the autocrat. After he had gone the King said, "It was not like this in the days of the Empire. Good manners have been discarded, and the sense of subordination and propriety lost. People do as they like, and are held only by fear." I suggested that it was the aftermath of Revolution, and quoted the Chinese proverb: "After great rains the river is muddy, but soon the water clears." He demurred. "In deposing the Emperor they offended heaven, and are being punished for it. Since the Republic there

has been nothing but fighting and flood and drought."

He hoped that one day his kingdom would be restored to him—that was the *leit-motif* of his life. It was his duty to his house, to his ancestors and his descendants, to stick to the ship, disregard danger and chagrin, exercise all the power he could, and keep himself to the fore, so that when the time came he would be there and ready to resume the kingdom. He would not, as some of his fellow-princes had done, retire into the peace of private life. Others had simplified matters for themselves by throwing in their lot whole-heartedly on this side or that, China or Lhasa. But that also he would not do. He wanted the *status quo ante*, the virtual independence his kingdom had enjoyed for so many centuries. Who would restore that? He revered the ruler of Tibet as Deity on earth. But if he threw in his lot with Lhasa, and Lhasa failed, where would his kingdom be? If with China, and Lhasa succeeded? It was indeed unlikely, though not impossible, that Lhasa would ever succeed in bringing the political and ethnological frontiers together. And his State, by virtue of its location, would be the very last to be disgorged, just as it was the first to be swallowed. On the other hand, China, who had deposed him, might think better of it and reinstate him. It was possible but unlikely. Altogether a

gloomy prospect. He did not want to take sides politically. He tried to keep on friendly terms with both, and, like all who steer a middle course, stood to be shot at by both. He had enemies in both camps; and it was not difficult to create an atmosphere of suspicion against him in the one as in the other.

He was living all the time on a volcano, and was quite aware of it. The ultimate danger was from the Lhasa side if she should finally succeed. The immediate danger was from the Chinese. His person, his family, and his properties all lay within the Chinese zone. In a crisis he might or might not have time to move himself out of reach. Twice already he had had to seek safety in flight. There had been disturbances at the time of the Revolution, and the Chinese, presumably under the time-honoured rule of vicarious responsibility, had endeavoured to arrest him and his brother. They had got away, but his brother, joint-ruler with him in the days of the monarchy, came back, anxious for the safety of his wife and child, and was taken and executed out of hand.

I was instrumental in bringing him back from his second *hegira*. There had again been regional disturbances, and the King, forewarned by the earlier tragedy, had taken refuge in a remote corner, difficult of access, of his former domain. The Chinese wanted him back, and he wanted to come back. But he and his friends

were suspicious. Was it a plot of his enemies to lure him to the destruction which had befallen his brother? Or did the new Governor really want him back, and in office? Would I find out from him and get his assurances direct to myself? I did so, and he returned.

Years passed while he sailed his frail craft skilfully on the stormy seas of high politics. Then came the final crash. It was the Chinese merchants who started the ball rolling this time. They had suffered serious losses, and trade had at times been brought to a practical standstill through the activities of bands of marauders, who derived chiefly from Chantreng, a region lying on the Chinese side of the *de facto* frontier, but inveterately hostile to Chinese interests. The Chantreng situation was an unwanted legacy from the past. A mistaken severity, for which the present Chinese authorities were in no way to blame, had crushed this district with an iron hand and thrust it whole-heartedly into the opposite camp. Devastated and embittered and with nothing more to lose, Chantreng was in constant revolt, lived perforce mainly on the proceeds of raids, and had latterly succeeded in ousting alien rulers. There any movement directed against Chinese interests found active support; and any band of outlaws, Chinese or Tibetan, refuge and a base. Chantreng was, in brief, irreconcilable, and constituted a political factor of considerable importance.

Recently these raiding bands had greatly increased in daring, and had even on one occasion thrown a cordon around and threatened the capital itself. And the Chinese merchants were convinced that the King of Chala was behind them, encouraging them in their depredations. They laid private complaints with the authorities, the latter put a close but secret watch upon all his activities, and at the end of a few months came to the conclusion that he was a danger to the public peace and hostile to Chinese interests.

His arrest was effected through a simple stratagem. The authorities could not afford a slip between the cup and the lip, to let him get away to work the oracle from some secure retreat or perhaps from the opposite camp. Had they sent troops to arrest him, he might have got wind of it and flown, or his retainers might have put up a stout resistance enabling him to slip away in the medley. Instead, Authority sent for him on a routine matter, and once within the walls of the *yamen* he was quietly handed over to a corporal's guard. Escape and resistance were equally out of the question. He was given an apartment to himself in the prison, and allowed two of his retainers to wait upon him.

The blow fell upon him almost out of a clear sky. He knew, of course, that all sorts of accusations, chiefly anonymous, had been filed against him. He was used to that; he was

indispensable, no action would be taken, he would weather the storm as he had weathered others. What he did not know was that he had been watched for months past, and that an inexorable conclusion had crystallized in the mind of authority against him. For the first few days he was confident of an early release. He protested his innocence; it was all the machinations of his enemies. Was this the way to repay his services to the State?

But as the days lengthened into weeks, his early confidence gave way to a juster appreciation of his plight, of the forces arrayed against him. When a crow is sick, its fellows try and peck it to death. And so it often is in human affairs. Other charges were brought against him. He was accused of the assassination of his enemies by the hands of his retainers. One of the latter even confessed that he had slain a man at the King's behest, the paramour of one of his secondary wives—a good riddance, people thought. And when King he had had the power of life and death. Another charge laid against him was that of illegal monetary exactions from his erstwhile subjects—customary revenue had he still been King. If guilty, clearly he had not yet learnt to discard the royal prerogatives.

Amongst the welter of accusation one fact stood out relentlessly—namely, that the authorities believed him guilty of no less than high treason.

All the rest was beside the point. And his motive? It was alleged that it was a matter of policy with him to stir up and encourage disorder, partly in the interest of the other camp, partly in revenge for his brother's execution, and mainly in the hope that the Chinese would despair of the work of administration and hand it over to him. A political motive, in fact.

He had early enlisted my assistance, a message from him digging me up in the middle of the night of his arrest. I was not particularly surprised at his sudden crash, nor was I interested in the question of his innocence or guilt. In the East the great game of high politics is fraught with danger, with sudden change of fortune; and whoever plays in it a prominent rôle lives with a noose around his neck. I had seen other friends of mine, the officials with whom I dealt, topple from their pinnacles; some to re-arise with a new access of power, others to expiate crimes imaginary or real under the executioner's sword. The King's plight presented itself to me in its political aspect. He was a personage of no mere parochial note. How would Lhasa view his fall, his death if it came to that? Might it not rankle in high places, and make the desired settlement of the Tibetan question more remote than ever? What if he were executed out of hand, as his brother had been a decade before? The political situation was delicate enough without regional complications.

And, of course, as a friend of his, I was personally sorry for him. I had come through a course of years to know him very well. He was a man of affairs, a born politician, with an instinctive power of sizing up a situation or a man, of insight into the ramifications of intrigue; a noticeable figure, sturdy of body, with nose slightly aquiline and prominent eyes, and an air, quite unconscious, of consequence which a man who had been a ruling monarch and came from a long line of such could hardly but have. He had been a great hunter in his youth, and now in middle age would try and persuade himself that he had not really allowed himself to get out of condition, as some famous beauty might refuse to admit the ravages of time. There had been a falling away, but from a high standard; and he was still a vigorous man capable of long days on end in the saddle. He indulged in no excesses, disliked wine, and drank it only when it was thrust upon him at banquets; and he eschewed entirely the alien habit of smoking opium, and always spoke severely of any of his countrymen who had taken to it. "Look at him now," he once said to me of a mutual friend, another Tibetan prince; "he is half my age, and I have twice his strength."

I knew even better the stern autocrat by whose orders he had been laid by the heels and in whose hands lay his life and the lives of everybody,

Chinese and Tibetan, in a vast district. He was dining with me a few days later, and I broached the matter. No, the King of Chala would not be executed out of hand; in fact, he would not be executed at all. He also was sorry for him, but he could not have done otherwise. The King had brought it all upon himself.

The King's enemies were clamant. They demanded his head, and their impatience turned gradually, as the weeks passed, to fear. Was it possible that he was going to get out of his predicament, be pardoned and perhaps reinstated? Then woe betide those who had dared to come out openly against him. They tried to force the autocrat's hand, to play upon his temper and rouse him to drastic action, by starting the rumour that an armed rescue was being prepared by the King's outlying adherents. They even went above his head, reporting to his distant and purely nominal superior, the Governor-General of the province. But all to no avail. The hard-bitten old soldier had made up his mind. He would leave the King in prison until the storm blew over, and then deport him somewhere, where he could be kept under an easy surveillance and out of politics. But it never came to that. Fate or the King's temperament took charge, and hurried him to an unexpected end.

To him life and liberty were synonymous.

How long must he languish in detention? For ever? Through the two retainers allowed him in the jail he now arranged an escape. They got into touch with the Muru-wa, the people of that tucked-away corner of his former domain with whom he had in his two previous flights taken refuge, and who, by virtue of their country being at once unimportant and difficult of access, had always been left by the Chinese largely to their own devices. They had remained all along loyal to their King.

All was in due course ready for the attempt. A dozen Muru-wa came down, unkempt nomads, free denizens of the wilds, to the capital with their horses, and passed unnoticed in the constant stream of caravans going to and fro. The room the King occupied opened into a yard surrounded by a high stone wall, the outer wall which separated the jail from the open country. Every night his door was locked. He was to bore a hole through the wall of his room, while they outside made a hole through the outer wall. They would then be in the open country, horses would be in waiting half a mile away, and would carry them out of reach of pursuit before the flight was even discovered. In that part of the world there are no railways, telegraphs, telephones, or motor-cars. It is the open country, and the fastest horse wins; with half an hour's start pursuit is hopeless. The arrangements now

made allowed a wider margin than that, from midnight to dawn.

It was all so simple, but it miscarried. The King, with one of the two retainers allowed him in the jail, and his nephew, who had been brought in to replace the other, bored the hole through his wall and emerged into the courtyard. The night warders, two decrepit old men, had been put out of action by a generous gift of wine the same evening, which they received unsuspectingly as a natural compliment from prisoner to guards. They spent the night hopelessly drunk, and paid forfeit for it with their lives.

The prisoner was out of his cell, but found that his men outside had not succeeded in their task, the boring through of the outer wall. Progress was slow, obviously too slow—in fact, hopeless. They were, though they did not know it, boring a tunnel through the ground, being unaware of the difference of level inside and outside the wall. Something had to be done. The King could not wait for the morrow to reveal the attempt to escape. There was another way out of the courtyard—a scramble on to the roof of the jail, then over the tiles of a couple of adjoining buildings, a drop into a lane, and an easy climb over the broken-down city wall, and thus the open again, a bare hundred yards in all as the crow flies. The buildings were all of one storey, and there was nothing physically impossible about

this avenue of escape, but hardly a cat could have done it on those loose tiles without rattling the sleepers below into awareness.

And that is what happened. The sleepers awoke and shouted "thieves," and the alarm was completed by one of the Muru-wa outside accidentally letting off his rifle. They decamped forthwith. Soldiers and police turned out with rifles and lanterns.

The fugitives, however, succeeded in getting out into the open country, and could easily enough have got away. It was a pitch-black night, and the oil lanterns of the searchers illuminated little save themselves. But the King's strength had given out. He had not contemplated this sort of escape and was physically unfit for it. Though by no means old, not yet fifty, he was no longer the vigorous man of the early days of our acquaintance. Latterly he had lived too much in the town, and the five months of confinement had done the rest. Further, he was burdened with a number of articles, distributed about his body, which weighed in the aggregate some sixty pounds—a pistol and ammunition, and miniature shrines and sachets containing small Buddhas and other sacred things. For he was a very religious man, a devoted son of the Church, spending half his substance in her service.

The excitement and the physical exertion were

too much for him. He staggered like a drunken man, and the horses were a mere hundred yards away. But it couldn't be done. He was dying, and he knew it. He swallowed an elixir, not of life but of transmigration, a treasured possession he always kept on his person, to assure his soul a rapid passage through purgatory to reincarnation. He ordered his nephew, co-heir with his son to the realm, and both mere boys, to make good his escape, which he easily did. The retainer remained with him, half-dragging, half-carrying him, and thus they went forward falteringly until he collapsed and died. The man, loyal to the end, then made good his escape.

The body was found at dawn. The autocrat went down in person to identify it. He had protected the King at no little expense of public odium, he had not intended his death. But Fate had taken the matter out of his hands. The pity, the folly of it all. He was visibly affected. He then and there authorized, enjoined upon, the family to bury their dead in all honour and pomp according to their rites.

The funeral made a deep impression upon the people. The Living Buddha officiated, and a rainbow spanned the route from home to grave, the sign of the passing of a Saint. Public opinion accepted it; he was innocent, though hardly a soul had thought so. And was he? Or was the God he worshipped an anthropomorphic deity to

THE NYARONG MAGISTRATE'S ESCORT OF TIBETAN MOUNTED INFANTRY.

SCENERY IN THE FORMER CHALA DOMAINS.
THE MAIN ROAD TO LHASA THROUGH MENYA.

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whom his human sins were of no moment relative to his lifelong devotion?

I was again approached, by a family in deep sorrow. Would the Governor permit the son and nephew, his co-heirs, to return? He would; he told me to tell them it was not only his wish but his express orders, and he issued instructions that the late King's property should devolve to them intact. Death, unexpected, deplored, had closed the King's account.

The Magistrate and I were talking of the tragedy a few days later. "Tzu Wen," he quoted, "was three times Prime Minister and was not elated, and thrice deposed and was unperturbed." "The King of Chala," he went on, "was the antithesis of this. He was avid of power, and consistently usurped a part of my functions. He was bound to come to grief." I disagreed. "In this world," I said, "men are as often ruined by their qualities as by their defects. He was steadfast, and refused to reconcile himself to the loss of his kingdom. A King is not like a commoner. He is in bondage to the past and to the future." "It is as well he didn't get away," he replied; "he might have raised the whole countryside."

CHAPTER IX

THE ENTHUSIAST

He was a very young man when I first met him. The students of Shanghai and Peking were just beginning to make themselves felt; and he had come down, the accredited envoy of the metropolitan body, to rally and animate the students of the province I happened to be in, and link them up with a movement which promised to become a political factor of considerable importance. He was, at that time, a difficult man to get on with. Between him and first contacts there was something impalpably hostile, especially perhaps when those contacts were European. He was on his guard all the time, suspicious and alert, expecting, it would almost seem, to meet with insult and ready to take it up, even to see it where it was not. Though he was hardly out of his teens, his face was already strained, unnaturally set, revealing him. He was not sure of his ground, had not attained the ease and dignity which comes from stability within. There was nothing natural about him, and in everything he was primarily conscious of himself, of the figure he was cutting,

of what people were thinking of him. He held himself in leash, ready to spring, but a little fearful, I thought, of the possible consequences. Not naturally a ruthless man, this, but capable of anything on the spur of the moment, in an outburst of enthusiasm or if his *amour propre* were stung. On one occasion he had, in a paroxysm of excitement into which he had lashed himself in an impassioned speech before a student audience, cut off the top of one of his fingers, in token of his earnestness, of his readiness to die, if necessary, for the cause. He fainted; and of course was speedily attended to by the doctors. It was an effective "curtain," and raised him once for all to the rank of hero. You did not need, however, to know that story to realize this side of his character. A good judge of men might perhaps sense it direct, and no one could have known him long without becoming aware of it. When he was in that mood, he was quite irresponsible for what he did.

He was pre-eminently *difficile;* that was the outstanding impression he made upon you in those days. In dealing with him you had to feel your way all the time, and however careful you might be you were bound to offend sooner or later, for his alert mind saw shades and nuances in the most innocent of actions and expressions. Intercourse on such a basis was a palpable strain, demanding a constant effort too artificial to be

long maintained, a perfection of tact beyond human reach; and you were likely to be tempted to give him up in despair, to write him off as impossible. But in doing so you would have, in this particular instance, closed a book which, however difficult, repaid the reading. For, in spite of it all, he counted, he was a force to be reckoned with, a portent of our times.

He was not long in that province before he made his mark, attaining a local prominence through a quixotic action crowned with success. A forceful official, who in later years attained one of the highest offices in the State, was in charge of a particular branch of the administration which was still, at that time, more or less independent of the provincial authorities and took its orders direct from Peking. He had just dismissed a couple of employees for alleged misfeasance, quite arbitrarily of course, but that was nothing to him, and, indeed, he was feeling rather virtuous about it; was it not exceptionally lenient of him not to have flung them into jail? They protested their innocence, and our enthusiast prevailed upon them to bring an action in the local court for wrongful dismissal, wherein he would appear as their attorney. Such a thing had never been heard of in those parts, and the official concerned at first thought it was an impertinent joke, but he had reckoned without the satrap, who, having no love for him, was suddenly impressed with the

majesty of the law. Appealed to to stop this nonsense, he replied that the judicial authority was, according to the provisional constitution, independent of the executive, just as the official's own position was, as he had been good enough to point out more than once, independent of him, the Governor. The law must therefore, he said, take its course. The judge, one of his own men, took the hint, and the case was a nine days' wonder, and ended in the triumphant vindication of the principle of equality before the law. The incensed official was dining with me one evening while the case was on. He was exceptionally sore, having been half the day under cross-examination by our enthusiast, and made no bones about expressing his opinion of him. "A whippersnapper who ought to be bambooed," he said. "A worthless fellow who is sure to come to a bad end." There were quite a number of people present, and I felt that the remark, being addressed to me, required some answer or other. So I replied evasively, "Did not the Master say that we ought to respect the young, withholding judgment of a man until he has attained the age of forty without achieving anything?" "The Master also said that rotten wood cannot be carved," was his laconic answer. There was a general laugh, and the topic was dropped.

It was, of course, a biassed opinion, old China stung to the quick by the new. Our enthusiast

was anything but a worthless fellow; he belonged, anyway at that time, to the long line of idealists who have made our liberties the world over. His soul was set on high purposes; the turbulent and unamiable surface of him was but the measure of the ferment within. He had been born too late to take part in the Revolution, was but a schoolboy at the time, and had grown to manhood in an atmosphere of unrest, of revolt against the ideals and the inhibitions of the past, of destruction and emancipation, wherein nothing that had been could be right. But what was to take the place of the shattered beliefs was not yet plain. Sufficient unto the day to question, to wreck.

The promise of his boyhood petered out in the university in an absorption in politics, a subject, the science of government, which requires for its intelligent pursuit a maturity of experience and judgment necessarily denied to youth. He was, of course, lost in this wide sea, and clung to a spar or two of heady catchwords coined by politicians who knew their value or, anyway, their use. However, he had the gift of oratory, and he could, as we have seen, work himself up into frenzies of impassioned verbiage. He attained prominence and learnt nothing.

Of his own subject he might have found in the analects of the sage of his own country one of the ablest expositions of all time, but Confucius belonged to the past, was discredited. He had

no use for the classics, indeed could not read them intelligently in the original, having never been taught the language, the literary form, in which they are written. I discovered this one day when, oppressed by the chaos of his philosophic make-up, the platitudes and the paradoxes he gave vent to indiscriminately, I took down a volume from my bookshelves, one of the slim books written by the philosopher of another of my portraits, and asked him what he thought of it. He studied it for a moment or two and then confessed that he could not read it; he knew the characters, he said, but could not make out the sense. And it was characteristic of his school of thought that when a great Indian philosopher whose ideas are given a respectful hearing the world over, even by those who disagree with him, came to the capital and expounded his philosophy, they howled him down. They did not want to retrace their steps, to find refuge in an indigenous philosophy, peace in the genius of their own race. He was, forsooth, an agent of Imperial England, sent to stem the tide of progress, to rerivet the shackles of a dead past, of stagnation, upon the living present. China for the Chinese, yes, of course, but not the old philosophic bent. They did not want us, perhaps, but they certainly wanted our civilization, our material culture—above all, our armament, guns and more guns, factories, and all the paraphernalia of a modern

State. How else was China to be great, feared, and respected in this modern world as it is? How indeed? It is a tenable position. But are not these trappings but the means of power, useless without the spirit that produced them? Could they be effectively transplanted without that spirit, the essence of which is discipline?

Discipline—that is what he lacked. He had no ballast. His mind was a welter of confusion, born of the literature of revolt he read so voraciously. Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell, from the frequency of his references to them, would appear to have been his favourite authors; and he would seem to have read them, not as an Englishman would, critically, detached, but fiercely, taking them for gospel. And he had emerged with the curious belief, which he applied to nations as well as to individuals, that "the great are only great because we are on our knees." Was that all there was to it? To what was Shaw's own eminence due if not to genius supported by a tireless industry? He did not, or would not, see such a simple fact. He had lost, in the indiscipline of his university life, the capacity for sustained effort, for concentration, and was intolerant of it. And what had he gained, or, if you prefer it, what had he saved from the wreck? A fierce resentment against injustice in all its forms, and a genuine passion to raise his country to her proper place in the comity

of nations. That was his driving power, and not any desire for personal success. To this latter he attached indeed no particular value; he had already attained it in his own sphere, was accustomed to receiving the plaudits, how facile he did not realize, of his fellow-students. In brief, he started out with the enthusiasm, the ideals, and the disinterestedness requisite to the rôle he felt himself called upon to play of censor and reformer. But was it his real vocation, and if so, had he the necessary staying power? The question was not long in doubt.

His initial success in the province was followed by a swift crash, wherein he learnt, by personal experience, something of the intricacy of the great game of high politics wherein he had thought to take a hand. He had, though he did not know it, fallen amongst thieves. He was not a leader of men. Compared with the strong men who were contesting power in that province he was hardly more than a baby; or, to change the simile, he was as clay in the potter's hands. It happened that the Governor-General of the province was about to initiate a campaign to oust the particular satrap in whose realm the enthusiast had just distinguished himself, and the presence of the latter suggested to his astute mind a procedure till then novel in that part of the country. Why not a student agitation in the satrapy directed against one or other of the ills

it was heir to? It would distract the satrap's attention while the campaign against him was being prepared, or, in the alternative, would cramp his reaction to it. The enthusiast, innocent, of course, of the plot, was in his element, and was on the high road to fame when the blow fell. The satrap had reacted in a totally unexpected way. He was not the sort of man to quarrel with schoolboys. Who was behind them? He unravelled the plot, made immediate war upon the Governor-General, and had him out of the saddle within a couple of months. The student agitation died a natural death in the light of these more stirring events, but not before the leaders, including, of course, the enthusiast, had been roped in by military press-gangs to carry loads for the troops. There was always a shortage of transport on occasions such as this, and these young men were clearly bursting with energy. Why not allow them to work it off in a useful way? The turbulent enthusiast found himself in a sphere where naked force and brutality were commonplaces. It showed, no doubt, a certain amount of fortitude to cut off one's finger, even if one were in a transport of ecstasy and within range of medical attention; but there was a world of difference between that sort of thing and the hardness of men to whom it was a bagatelle to shoot a recalcitrant porter or thrust a bayonet through him. He lasted a few days, and then

was left for dead on the roadside. A fortnight, however, in a mission hospital set him on his legs again, and he hastened out of the province, back to Peking.

Very likely this experience was the turning-point in his life, or perhaps it was followed by other knocks of fate I never heard of. Certainly when I met him years later in the metropolis he was a changed man. The raw youth had given way to a self-possessed man of affairs, a secretary in one of the Ministries, quiet, dignified, receptively friendly. But was the metamorphosis complete? One evening he and I were talking of politics—it was still his subject, the first love of his youth, and now a serious study. There had been a recent upset. The Christian General, leaving the Manchurian war in full swing, had swept down upon Peking, and we had all wakened up one morning to find his soldiers posted throughout the city, bronzed stalwarts from the tented fields, dusty, tired, bivouacking on the broad side-walks, masters of the capital. His erstwhile superiors, the President of the Republic and the Generalissimo in the field, found the ground cut from under their feet, and the former, his bodyguard disarmed, had become a prisoner in his own palace. The Government had scattered, those " wanted " by the dictator had most of them succeeded in making good their escape, but not the President's confidential

adviser. He had been surprised in his bed and hauled off to the camp, to be executed later on on the public highway which leads past the Temple of Heaven; his foreign contacts proved no protection to him. Other men in high positions well-known in foreign circles were in flight or hiding. Yet a turn of the wheel and the old clique might be back again, or some new combination replace the men in power. The ex-enthusiast sat on one arm of a big chair, and I on the other, while we watched the dancing, and the chair positively shook with the tattooing of his foot. So his self-possession was only skin deep, a mask concealing the same old instability within. The head of his own Ministry was in flight. It was not safe to talk in public. He might have changed the topic, but he did not; it fascinated him, he could not get his mind off it. He knew, could not but have known, a great deal about the situation from the inside, but he talked vaguely, aimlessly, feeling his way, off his pedestal, patently nervous. It was, however, the nervousness, I think, of a high-spirited horse not yet broken to the trap. Will he succeed in adapting himself, or will he one day kick over the traces? I imagine the chances are about even. His mutilated finger is sufficient evidence of the volcanic fires within him, but he would appear to have lost his pride in the heroics whereof it is his lasting memento, for I heard him one day

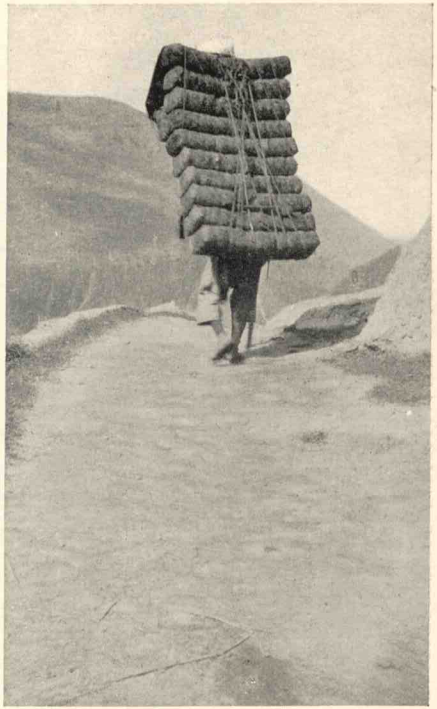
ascribe it to a prosaic accident. It may have been modesty; more likely it was something deeper, the first stage of the process through which kindly nature distorts the past for us, so that we may forget what we do not wish to remember.

CHAPTER X

THE MAGISTRATE

He took life very philosophically, ruling his county largely by letting it run itself, wherein, as in most things, he was strictly orthodox, following in this particular case no less illustrious an example than that which the Chinese sage held up for the guidance of posterity when he said of the Emperor Shun, who reigned some forty centuries ago, that "doing nothing, he governed well." The idea was that the ruler should leave the people as free as possible of State interference, setting them, however, in his own person an example of right conduct and right living. His duty, in fact, was rather *to be* than *to do*. Unfortunately, however, human nature is hardly built on these lines. There would appear to be something in all of us which impels us to be up and doing whether we like it or not, and an official of course finds his natural safety-valve in devising some new form, usually numbered, of mitigating our wretched existences. Very few

THE MAGISTRATE
MI *CHIH-SHIH* OF HUAI JOU HSIEN (NYARONG



CHINESE PORTER CARRYING BRICK-TEA
FOR THE TIBETAN MARKET.

Facing p. 124

people seem capable of sustained inaction, and still fewer shine in themselves with such effulgence that we hasten to change our spots and imitate them. It was inevitable, therefore, that the ideal, however excellent in itself, should fail to achieve in practice what was expected of it. And whether it was that the rulers did too much or were too little, it remains that dynasty after dynasty crashed all down the ages until finally the Republic came and scrapped both the theory and the men who were its contemporary exponents. And this is the story of the passing of one of them.

He lasted longer than most of his fellows, largely by virtue of the geographical location of his post. He was the Magistrate—that is, the ruler—of Huai Jou Hsien, one of the new counties established on Tibetan soil in pursuance of the effort the Empire made in the last decade of its existence to convert that country into a Chinese province. The enterprise failed, but a number of the counties into which Eastern Tibet had been cut up remained in Chinese hands, one of them being his, which comprised the former Tibetan province of Nyarong.

I may as well say at once that the old-world methods he followed seemed to work in his case. In the few months which elapsed between the establishment of his county and the outbreak of the Revolution he succeeded in winning the confidence of his people to such effect that

Nyarong remained quiet when almost the whole of the rest of Tibet reacted normally to the situation that ensued upon the fall of the Empire. The Nyarongese or—to use the more graceful Tibetan word—the Nyarong-wa could have thrown him out with the greatest of ease, for his military support, a battalion of Chinese troops, promptly withdrew to take part in the struggle in China. But they refrained. Evidently Nyarong appreciated him, the more so, perhaps, in that his immediate predecessor, the Tibetan Governor under the former *régime*, had been an exponent of the directly opposite method of a minute and iron control. He replaced the departed garrison by fifty mounted infantry he raised amongst the people themselves more as a ceremonial escort than as a military force; and for the rest carried on as usual, relying for the maintenance of order and the suppression of brigandage upon his Tibetan headmen and their local militia. And thenceforth until the end of his tenure of office he ruled his county, an area as large as Wales, without the support of a single Chinese soldier. A few years later his policy was again vindicated, when the armies of Lhasa inundated the frontier in the hostilities of 1917-18 and Nyarong again stood out, rejecting the overtures of their fellow-countrymen in arms.

His methods were no less effective in the maintenance of internal peace and order, an

especially notable achievement in view of the reputation of the Nyarong-wa for fighting amongst themselves and raiding their neighbours, which has indeed passed into a local proverb. "Are the Nyarong-wa after you?" is a remark commonly made on the frontier to anyone who appears to be in an excessive hurry. On a frontier where no one is particularly soft they share the palm for violence with the Chantreng-wa who would skin you as soon as look at you, especially if you happened to be a Chinese official, and the equally inconsiderate nomads of the independent Golok country. None of these districts were considered safe to travel in, and I was strongly recommended, alike by the Chinese and the Tibetans, to leave out Nyarong in a journey I made in the winter of 1913-14, but the attraction of breaking new ground proved irresistible. No white man had travelled down the Yalung River through Nyarong, and only one had ever set foot in the country at all, the French explorer, M. Bacot, who, however, failed to reach its capital. I found the country perfectly quiet and safe, thanks to the change the Magistrate had succeeded, even in those early days, in bringing about. It was on that journey that I first met him, afterwards renewing the acquaintance from time to time on his infrequent visits to the frontier headquarters of Tachienlu.

He was a highly cultured man of the world,

courteous and dignified, and with an air about him of consequence, a man accustomed, it was evident, to the exercise of authority. His manners were perfect and his self-possession complete. Good form was his sheet-anchor, and he never allowed himself to deviate from the rigid code of conduct which was his heritage as a Chinese gentleman. I doubt if he could have committed a solecism if he had tried, and whatever emotions he felt were seldom permitted to break through the polished surface of politeness he presented to the world. Even in the back of beyond where he was, he habitually dressed as formally and carefully as if he were in the metropolis. It was second nature to him, and I remember the striking first impression I had of him as he rode up, clad in his Chinese silks and satins, in the midst of his picturesque Tibetan escort of mounted infantry with whom he had come out to meet me. Six years later he went to his execution equally well groomed and with unruffled composure, and no one saw anything incongruous in the fact that he wore the decoration of the " Excellent Crop " a grateful country had bestowed upon him not so very long before. He represented, consciously, a civilization he was firmly convinced was the highest attainable by man; and there was something indefinable about him that seemed to say as much. He was, in brief, a typical Chinese gentleman, the product

of as good a mould as any, perhaps, the world has devised.

It was his duty to show his people, in his own person, what his civilization stood for. But though he did his best, he made no particular impression upon them in that regard. They were perfectly content with their own civilization, and —incredible though it seemed to him—genuinely considered it to be as superior to his as he thought his to theirs. In their eyes the Chinese were too attached to material things, which is much the same criticism the East in general passes upon the West. However, he was free to set any example he liked, so long as he did not seriously interfere with their institutions.

That, of course, rather limited his scope, but nature will out and he found a number of outlets for the energy within, for, in spite of the traditions of government to which he conformed, he was no less afflicted than any of us with the incorrigible liveliness mankind shares with the grasshopper. For one thing, he built a row of shops at his capital to constitute what is in Western China termed a *Kai*, the Chinese equivalent of our High Street. What was a town without a *Kai*, indeed a whole county without a retail shop in the accepted sense of the term? It was, however, a shortcoming the Nyarong-wa bore with equanimity, having got along quite comfortably since the dawn of history with their own methods

of doing trade; and his shops remained empty, there being no Chinese population at his capital to attract Chinese shopkeepers thereto. Even if he had merely had a garrison of Chinese troops, with their various requirements, all would have been well with this innovation of his, and no doubt in time his Tibetans would have caught the devastating habit of buying things not because they are needed but because they are there. But, as we have seen, he had no Chinese troops. More than one effort was made to saddle him with a battalion of them, but he successfully stood out. He was better without them, he maintained, and thereby offended the military element which was soon to dominate at frontier headquarters; and possibly this did in fact contribute, as was freely said at the time, to his ultimate downfall. In truth, he had the old-world Chinese contempt for the profession of arms, and, in the backwoods he was in, failed adequately to appreciate that such an attitude was not only out of date but perilous.

Another innovation of his was the construction of a model jail to replace the appalling dungeons of his predecessor. It consisted of a spacious hall, with a small room opening into it for the warders, and a large open courtyard for the prisoners to take exercise in. There were but two prisoners in it when he showed me round, the one a robber and the other a half-witted murderer.

The former looked like a man who could take care of himself, but it occurred to me that even he could hardly feel comfortable about sleeping in such company, and I put the question to the Magistrate. He, however, hadn't thought of that, but the prison's sole warder, a decrepit old Chinese yamen-runner who had been with him for years, spoke up: "He sleeps in my room," he said, "and we bolt the door." The Magistrate nodded approvingly. "Old Chang," he said, meaning the warder, "was never at a loss."

But what struck me most about his jail was that there were only these two prisoners in it. The routine was that major cases only were sent to him, other offenders being dealt with by the headmen of each district; but even so, such a small quota for a whole county was remarkable. One would have liked to have seen in this the confirmation in practice of the very modern theory he held that leniency lessens crime, but a more likely explanation presents itself, namely that his headmen, distrustful of his kindliness, dealt with everything themselves, merely sending him a stray case now and then to save his face. If so, he must have known of it, but was unperturbed, being fully adequate to ignoring what he preferred not to see, a gift which, while not without its value, can easily be abused, as he was to discover to his cost. For he equally ignored the misfeasance of his confidential clerk who habitually

sat at the receipt of customary bribes. In due course complaints were filed against the Magistrate, and a new Frontier Commissioner who knew not Joseph cashiered him and ordered him to headquarters to stand his trial. The real culprit, the clerk, promptly pleaded guilty by taking to his heels, and is still, as far as I know, at large. The Magistrate might have, had he so desired, done likewise, but that was not his way. His old-world conscience was clear, and though of course he was technically responsible, his offence in his own eyes was nothing more than that the example of personal rectitude he had set his subordinates had not prevailed upon the innate cussedness of this particular clerk. Unfortunately for him, however, the cast-iron soldier who was his judge and master had a *penchant* for making examples of offenders who came to his personal notice; and, anyway, he did not believe the Magistrate's hands were clean. It was evident, however, after his execution that they were. He died practically without means, indeed left insufficient to provide a decent coffin to be buried in.

It is pleasant to be able to relate that his friends came forward and buried him in all dignity and honour. And even the autocrat relented and was understood to admit that this particular example of his had been somewhat unfortunate, but somehow or other he failed to advance to

the philosophic conclusion that it is repellent to make one man pay an undue price *pour encourager les autres*, an unpleasing distortion of the theory of which his victim had been a lifelong exponent.

CHAPTER XI

THE ICONOCLAST

He was a revolutionary by nature, and his formative years had been passed in a revolutionary *milieu*, an environment free of many of the inhibitions of ordinary life, and with standards all its own. His had been anything but a humdrum life, and he had lost sympathy—if he ever had it —with the prosaic ideals which inspire the bulk of men in an ordered existence. Peace and quiet, individual security, domestic happiness, prosperity, even life itself, these things made no immediate appeal to him; they were all very well in their way, but a consideration for them must not be allowed to stand in the path of the political regeneration of his country, the future glory that was to be hers. When that had been attained, all else would come of itself; in the meantime, everything should be subordinated to this goal of endeavour. It is hardly exact to say that the death and devastation wrought in the wars he fought were nothing to him, but he certainly bore it all with equanimity. It was a time of travail,

and all the suffering of the moment would be forgotten in a glorious and not too distant future. That is how the situation presented itself to him, consciously; and it was a tenable position, which he once compared to me with our attitude in the World War.

But was that all there was to it in his particular case? Was he a cool-headed statesman pursuing a considered course with the singleness of aim of a ship's captain in a storm or of a surgeon in an operation? That was indeed, and unmistakably, the attitude of the politician of another of my portraits whose associate he was. *He* knew his own mind, had his emotions under an iron control, and played for a definite stake. But our iconoclast? Was it not, in his case, but the manifestation of some impulse within him, some innate instinct accentuated by his early experiences and finding scope in the storm and stress of revolution, yet concealed even from himself by that other instinct we all have of finding a logical reason for our actions to justify ourselves to our own consciences? It looked like it. "He is careless of the people's welfare," a retired official of the old school once said to me. "He fights for nothing but his own aggrandisement, and has never done anything constructive." I demurred. It was not that, but something deeper. "The cock crows," I quoted, "and the dog barks, but no one knows why the one does the one and

the other the other, nor why they do it at all." He was no more a free agent than is the swallow migrating, let us say, from South Africa to its summer quarters in our English countryside. He could not help what he did. He was—like most of us—the sport of his character, of hidden complexes he neither knew of nor could control, which yet determined in advance the action he would inevitably take in each situation as it arose. Few indeed are those who, like his friend the politician, have such self-knowledge and dominion over themselves that they can play the game of life as men play chess or bridge. Yet he was every whit as strong a personality as the other; he was compact of dynamic force, but he squandered it where the other had his directed to definite ends. He had too much imagination, and had not attained a set philosophy of life. His mind was in a whirl, beset with philosophic doubts, in perpetual and fruitless search of the meaning of life, "in wandering mazes lost." In a more suitable environment he might have attained distinction as poet or philosopher. He looked that part to the life, with his broad forehead, sensitive mouth, and dreamy eyes. It was difficult to imagine from the look of him that he was one of the most ruthless of the soldiers who are making history in the storm and aftermath of revolution; and it was a tribute to his force of character that he attained

high distinction even in this, to his nature, alien *milieu*.

He was handicapped by not knowing really what it was he wanted, but whatever it was, it was something dynamic. There was some instinct in him which impelled him to constant movement, perpetual change. He was always dissatisfied, eternally experimenting, rejecting this, destroying that, like some spoilt child rapidly tiring of a new toy; or, to be fairer to him, like a philosopher sifting hypotheses or an inventor remorselessly scrapping what failed to work to his satisfaction. To him, whatever was, was wrong. On with the drama, forward to the next stage, for ever onwards, progress or, anyway, ceaseless movement, like the restless waves of the sea. He was, though he did not know it, a destroyer of things; or perhaps it was that he was inspired with that divine discontent with things as they are, that reaching out towards perfection, through which mankind, struggling forward throughout the ages, has attained the heights it has—relatively, anyway, to the monkey world.

Perfection—that was what his soul craved for, what he demanded with all the force of his subconsciousness, the inner will which, according to the Nancy School, can achieve miracles. But it cannot achieve the impossible. This is an obvious fact we all learn in our infancy, and it is a rare child who develops a complex because

he cannot have the moon. Yet it may be that the man who grows out of that very child will stand out amongst his fellows, building or destroying according to the channel of outlet of the explosive energy generated by the conflict within. Our iconoclast was destroying. Would he ever change and build? Would anything ever occur to bring about a revulsion and set him off on another track?

He repressed all this inner turmoil, presenting to the world a face set in the rigid lines of a mask, palpably a mask, the mien of a man held in conscious self-restraint. But the real man he was came through, irrepressible, in his actions, in some chance remark, some tell-tale outburst of undue vehemence, some strange incident wherein you could see no rhyme or reason. He took life immensely seriously, was in revolt against everything equivocal, and was curiously intolerant of the thousand and one foibles which express our shallowness. He would not suffer fools gladly, hated weakness, and chafed at pretence in all its forms. I once heard him shut up, needlessly I thought, an amiable old gentleman who was guilty of nothing worse than a little self-glorification. "Don't talk about what you can do, but go and do it," he interrupted. Such acid remarks were by no means rare with him, and he was no respecter of persons in making them. I remember a tense moment at one of my dinners, where the

guest of honour was a newly-appointed Governor-General, who, uncertain of his reception at the provincial capital, had dallied rather long in the particular satrapy we were in. Our iconoclast was distinctly heard to say that the Governor-General was a poltroon—he had fifteen thousand troops, and why hadn't he gone ahead long since? Fortunately that particular General was a man remarkably slow in the uptake, and before he had fully realized the astonishing fact that he was being gratuitously insulted, the satrap himself, the politician, got up and explained that his brother General was but a blunt soldier, without much appreciation of the other factors that go to make up a political situation, and, anyway, the Consul's wine had passed as freely as usual, and everybody was properly drunk as guests should be. It was rather lame, and the iconoclast made no effort to help him out, but the satrap's personality carried the day. He was not a man that the Governor-General or anybody else cared to come up against unnecessarily. His short speech reminded me irresistibly of the dignity of Cæsar at Pompey's feast. "Strong Enobarb is weaker than the wine," I thought aloud. "Though his capacity for it is unsurpassed throughout the province," added my French colleague, a general favourite with the provincial leaders. The tension relaxed and the incident passed, leaving, however, the two protagonists enemies for life. The iconoclast

was unconcerned. An enemy more or less, however powerful, added to the host of them he made in his wars and in his administration was nothing to him. Like all of his fellows in high office, he was "riding the tiger," but he had no fear of the future, of the results of a fall. He had prepared no funk-hole in a foreign country or a foreign concession. What was security to such as he? It was one of the homely aspirations he despised. He rode *his* tiger with a whip, and if it threw him, which it had not done as yet, he would dispatch it with a sword-thrust.

He had no political sense, and I doubt if he could have attained high office in any but a time of revolutionary upheaval. Perhaps the fates were against him; anyway, they set for him the only stage whereon he could have played a leading rôle in the great drama of high politics. He threw himself heart and soul into the revolutionary movement. Away with the effete dynasty which stood in the way of the glory that ought to be China's! And what was an alien, the Manchu, doing on the Dragon throne? Here indeed was a concrete idol to be smashed to atoms. His zeal and force of character soon raised him to prominence in the revolutionary party. For years he was engaged in dangerous enterprises where detection meant an ignominious death under the executioner's sword, or, perhaps worse still, an old-world jail; but nothing daunted him, and he

was as careless then and thereafter of his own life as he later proved to be of the lives of others.

It was at this period that he formed the great friendship of his life, the dominant influence of the days to come, the one sheet-anchor of his storm-tossed soul. Without it, I doubt if he could have long survived the shifting quicksands of the post-revolutionary period. But it was more than that to him; it was a psychical necessity. Men of his type can seldom stand alone, their iconoclastic zeal is often but the measure of their groping towards a prop, and they die, nearly all of them, in the arms of a priest. In this case it was a friendship between equals, who, the hard-headed politician and the impetuous dreamer, had in common the attributes of courage and ruthlessness, but were in other respects so dissimilar that some natural affinity, perhaps that of opposites, must be invoked to explain a tie which has stood the test of time and circumstance.

The Revolution succeeded, and the idol was deposed; not so much smashed, however, as shifted. Our iconoclast and many other leaders were far from satisfied. The Emperor—or rather his advisers, for he was but a child—yielding to *force majeure*, had grandiloquently resigned his sovereignty to the people, but had retained his title and remained in the palace, Emperor of a puppet Court. It would seem that the throne, enshrouded in the incense-laden mists of the old-

world capital, hardly realized the feeling against it in the provinces; and it remained for the "Christian General," years afterwards, to shake the Court to the realities of modern China. He had left a war to look after itself—to collapse in his absence like a house of cards—had swept down upon the capital and put the President under arrest. The disposal of the ex-Emperor, now grown to manhood, was, of course, but a side-issue in affairs of greater moment, but it is eloquent of the unreal world in which the Court passed its days that when the dictator's Generals repaired to it, they were denied an audience, and had to deliver their message through the Court Chamberlain—the palace must be evacuated within three hours. Over toppled the brave effort to preserve the shadow of a lost majesty, a bitter lesson which, however, brought nothing but a smile to strong men the country over and satisfaction to those who were themselves bitter.

With the establishment of the Republic our iconoclast's occupation was not gone. In an imperfect world there are plenty of windmills to tilt at. It was some time before he got into his stride, the abortive second revolution and a period of exile intervening, but in due course his opportunity came, and he fell upon the sheep, importing, by his vehemence, a new note of bitterness into political rivalry. It was all the aftermath of revolution, the inevitable reshuffling,

the struggle for place and power, the conflict of ideals and systems and ambitions, the destruction of the old and the reaching-out towards the new. His first major engagement was a shambles. Up till then the internecine warfare in that particular province had largely been an affair of manœuvring, of the display of resources wherein numerical strength was given due weight, and silver bullets were almost as decisive as the other kind, of wins on points, of wire-pulling. Hardly more blood was shed than at our own early elections to Parliament. He was outmanœuvred in this prosaic way, and his men, outnumbered, fell back in the approved manner. He rallied them and swept down, with rifle and bayonet, upon the enemy, who, astonished and incensed, fought like cats for their very lives. He was, on this occasion, signally defeated, himself wounded to death's door, and his army routed.

He was, indeed, as often defeated as not in his campaigns. He was of the type which the Chinese sage, two millenniums ago, condemned as unsuitable for military command, the kind of man "who would attack a tiger unarmed, cross a river without a boat, sacrifice his life without a moment's regret, and embark upon an enterprise without anxiety." His reckless impetuosity, however, won him more than one signal victory. One of them was the turning-point in the long and bitter struggle of the province for its freedom

from an alien domination, the province next door. He and his soldiers, stark naked, fell one night, with bayonets and pistols, upon the foe, encamped around the provincial capital, and put them to utter rout. It was a curious incident. Why naked? It must have been most uncomfortable to do battle in that condition. Was it a sort of variation of burning one's boats, victory or death? Or did he think the enemy would be shaken by such an unusual procedure, and would jump to the conclusion that they were being assailed by devils? Perhaps it was that he had been reading of Zulus or Dervishes, or merely that the fancy came to him to stage, as appropriate to the crisis he was in, as faithful a scene as he could of hell let loose.

It was often let loose, though this particular stratagem was not repeated. He was constantly fighting; hardly was one campaign over when another opened. What it all meant in tragedy to the people was evidenced by a gesture of desperation, a fanatical movement of revolt which arose in one part of the province. Bands of peasants with nothing more to lose except their lives, precarious anyway, and fortified by certain magic rites which were supposed to make them invulnerable, threw themselves, armed with spears and farm implements and talismans, upon the military, and cleared their particular region of them. The movement was pregnant with promise or with danger, according to your point of view,

for the " Divine Soldiers," as the peasants called themselves, really believed they were invulnerable, were the instruments of heaven, and the rank and file of the troops, themselves mostly but peasants in uniform, were scared of them. Faith can move mountains, especially if the mountain has a bad conscience. Our iconoclast destroyed this new idol with the unanswerable logic of modern armament, but all his usual ruthlessness was absent. Had these poor dupes of faith born of despair struck some chord in his own soul? It looked like it. He crushed the movement with hardly any loss of life, and the incident would seem to have made an impression upon him, for I heard him refer to it more than once, and sympathetically. What was it that made these very ordinary men go fearlessly into battle where they hadn't even a dog's chance? Just despair and folly?

Soon afterwards the politician extended his sphere of operations to the wide canvas of all China. Years passed, and I lost personal touch with him and the iconoclast, but I heard of them continually. They were no longer provincial but national figures, but what interested me most, in the case of the iconoclast, was the rumour that he had taken to mysticism, had become a patron of the age-old cult of divination, lately revived, and now a political factor of considerable importance. Campaigns have been known to be brought

to an abrupt conclusion by a few archaic characters traced, planchette-wise, in the sand by a suspended stick. The politician's interest in this development needed, of course, no explanation. But the iconoclast's? Was it a matter of policy with him also, or had he found his ultimate refuge? A mutual friend, who spent hours each day sitting in a rigid attitude, breathing deeply, and emptying his mind—without, I believe, undue difficulty—to make room for the influx of the cosmic spirit, assured me that he was a true believer. I doubted it. Was it credible that the old fires had gone out under a handful of sand, that the impetuous soldier, the reckless revolutionary, the ruthless enemy of shams, had given his soul into the keeping of a couple of mediums, at worst charlatans, at best exponents of an obscure method of tapping the subconscious mind, their own? "It is simply a new experiment with him," I replied, and, as it proved, I was right.

I met him once more. He had come up to the metropolis on affairs of state—there had been a fresh upheaval, and the President was ousted—and I came across him at a meeting of a society for the amalgamation of the "six religions," Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, and the two main divisions of Christianity. Speeches were made by representatives of all of them—the usual platitudes, rendered the more banal by the atmosphere of restraint, the palpable straining

towards an unnatural synthesis, the constant and conscious effort of the speakers to steer a middle course between the Scylla of heresy and the Charybdis of affront. What was the explanation of this sort of thing? Self-advertisement? Hardly, for they were, most of them, men of undoubted sincerity. Rather some exhibition-complex which drove them, willy-nilly, to try and show they were not as ordinary men, but broad-minded, cosmos-souled. I looked across at our iconoclast. A few years ago he would have toppled over such a house of cards with zest. But he sat quiet, a little bored, I thought. The years and success had told on him, his cheeks had filled out, and he looked almost sleek. Was he going to develop the exterior of a prosperous burgher? I thought of the night attack, and of the Divine Soldiers. We went away together. "What do you think of it?" he asked. "An interesting study in human nature," I replied. "Always the same. Do you never change?" he said, and then, with a touch of the old fires, "Before the religions of the world can be synthesized, they must individually be destroyed." So his complex had not yet petered out. "More idols?" I asked. He looked at me uncomprehendingly, and we switched off on to politics. When was the politician going to be President?

CHAPTER XII

THE MYSTIC

THE first impression he made was not entirely favourable. I was calling on the Magistrate, and he came in. A soldier obviously, though he was not in uniform. He was somewhat shabbily dressed in ordinary Chinese civilian clothes, and he wore a foreign cloth cap tilted unbecomingly. His straggly thin moustache added to the impression of untidiness, of dinginess. But withal there was an expression of authority about him, the indefinable something men long used to command acquire. But its dignity was marred by another expression, something more than mere self-consciousness, a sort of "*nemo me impune lacessit*" expression. A man on his guard, not quite sure of himself, or rather of his public; uneasily aware of a dignity that he must not allow to be impugned. Cyrano de Bergerac must have had this air. And many Chinese officers have it.

They are proud of their profession, and yet sadly aware that things have come to such a pass that in many parts of the interior the people hate the sight of a uniform. Whose the fault? That

is another problem. *Pace* public opinion, it is not the fault of individuals; human nature has not changed in a decade. It is rather the aftermath of revolution, which has broken up the old machine of government, and as yet created no effective substitute.

We exchanged the usual banalities that pass between strangers, and I found the Colonel, for such he was, very friendly and natural when he found his armour was not required. And we got to know each other very well in after months, slipping imperceptibly into years. We talked of the usual subjects when East meets West, and we drank the usual toasts on festive occasions. Our tongues were loosened, and banalities flowed the faster—that was all. Until one day. We had got in the meantime not only to know each other, but of each other. I had found that his equals liked him as a good fellow; his soldiers respected and obeyed him, and he was popular with the people. The only criticism of any importance I heard of him was in itself a compliment; he was, a cynic in high office told me, not sufficiently self-assertive to go far.

One evening he called on me, one of many visits. I had been out all day on the hills shooting, had bagged a serow, and was now lazily sitting before a cosy fire thinking of a book I had finished the day before, a book about Mahatmas, called "The Initiate by his Pupil." There are

apparently people in our midst who are semi-divine; they have occult powers; live to help others on to the path; and live as long as they desire to. Some are five hundred or more years old, but none looks older than he wishes. The book is the record of a small slice, seen by the pupil, of such a man's life and ideas. I had opened the book in high expectation. Which of us does not wish to meet a Mahatma, or to learn enough to be able to recognize one when you meet him? Who, in his senses, would turn aside from proved Divinity in human form? I read that two of these Mahatmas resided in the "far distant fastnesses of Tibet." Whatever "far distant fastnesses" may mean, I had been to Tibet, with eyes and ears open for marvels physical and metaphysical, but never a being exactly of this nature did I meet. And now I learnt, from the book, the reason why. Common clay such as yours and mine could never recognize a Mahatma if we met one. You must first yourself be initiated into esoteric mysteries. The sign from Heaven is again withheld, and the cynic wins again. These preachers really make it very difficult for us, with the best will in the world, to down the cynic.

I was thinking lazily along these lines, when in came the Colonel. Our conversation was in this wise. I said: "You are looking very depressed. What's the matter?" He replied:

"There's going to be fighting and great disorder in these regions three months from now." "How do you know?" I asked. "You've heard something? Everything is quiet, and there are no immediate signs of hostilities." He said: "No, there is no news, but I've had a premonition. I sometimes get these premonitions, and they have never been wrong." This from a man I had hitherto known simply as a convivial fellow and matter-of-fact military officer. I naturally thought that this was merely a method of giving me a hint of coming trouble.

The chain of thought, however, which his arrival had interrupted recurred, and I decided to turn the conversation into those channels. It was curious, however, that he had given me such a favourable opening. I said that his premonition was very interesting. I had just been reading a new book about Mahatmas. Did he know anything about the subject? And he pronounced himself on the matter without further prompting or support. In brief, it was as follows: Mahatmas are adepts: they possess great powers; they know the future, their own, and others; they will not reveal it to the purely curious, nor will they reveal it at all except for good purpose; they live in this life as long as they wish; they are poorly clad and unprepossessing; they neither desire nor do they accept this world's honours or success. He himself was learning, was studying. He had

known one adept who left this world at his own appointed hour. Many persons were learning, trying, some without knowing it—this last he repeated. Mastership was immensely difficult to attain; it cannot be attained until the heart is freed from impurity. A learner whose heart is bad, or whose motives are material, never reaches the goal, but goes mad.

It was all in astonishing agreement with the book I had just read. Was I myself, as he seemed to hint, on the path? Was he teaching me, or was it all mere unconscious telepathy from me to him? His last remark above made me think, after he had gone, of Semele, and of the modern spiritualist, and the dictum of the sage: "To treat with awe and reverence the unseen Powers of the Universe while avoiding undue familiarity with them, that is Understanding." Happily for the district but sad for my tale, the Colonel's premonition did not come true. He is now a General.

GROUP OF CHINESE FRONTIER OFFICIALS.
THE SECOND FROM THE RIGHT IS GENERAL P'ENG JIH-SHENG,
THE FRONTIERSMAN OF THIS CHAPTER.

CHINESE GOLD-WASHERS ON THE FRONTIER.

Facing p. 153

CHAPTER XIII

THE FRONTIERSMAN

THE general disruption which was the aftermath of the Revolution in China, while it brought him a virtual independence, yet left him high and dry in the vital matter of supplies. Independence is all very well if you have the wherewithal to support it, but if you haven't? He hadn't, and he made every effort to maintain the connection whence the sinews of war were properly derivable, but all to no avail. Fate had evidently decided that he was to be a satrap, and a satrap he became in spite of himself. The domain which was thrust upon him was agreeably extensive in area, roughly half the size of England, but it had the serious disadvantage of lying in the back of beyond, beyond the confines of his own country, to wit: in Eastern Tibet. He was thus an alien in his own realm, governing a vast area Tibetan in population and claimed by Lhasa as an integral part of Tibet.

He had originally come to these regions in the days of the Empire with a minor command in a contingent of troops brought up from his

distant native province, famous for the martial spirit of its people, to take part in a forward movement designed to convert China's hazy suzerainty of Tibet into a definite sovereignty. It was all a matter of high politics wherein the Empire was led into a campaign of unprovoked aggression by the mistaken idea that Tibet was bound to be swallowed sooner or later by somebody or other; and by whom with greater right than by the country which had been for centuries her bulwark against the outer world? One or two considerations of importance, however, were overlooked. How was it, for instance, that the Tibetans in spite of their military weakness had maintained their independence since time immemorial? The difficulties of the terrain, the strength and resilience of the Tibetan character, or the protection of the gods? The enterprise, commencing well since the Tibetans were taken by surprise, failed as it was bound to do sooner or later, the quicker in this particular case in view of the collapse of the Empire itself in the Revolution of 1911, which the Tibetans construed as the judgment of Heaven upon a Court which had dared to persist in its evil ways in the teeth of the swift retribution of 1908 when the Emperor and the Empress Dowager affronted the Bodhisat Avalokitesvara, incarnate in the Tibetan sovereign, in insisting that he kneel in their presence at the audience they granted him in Peking whither he

had repaired to avoid the British expedition of 1904 and to enlist the support of his then ally, Imperial China. Whether they dropped dead at the audience, as the Tibetans believe, or died suddenly a month later, as history relates, the principle is the same; and no Tibetan was surprised to see the Empire itself go down in ruin when neglecting this warning it committed a couple of years later the further sacrilege of sending an army to the Holy City itself and causing the flight of the Bodhisat to India. Seeing we had ourselves been guilty of an equal temerity a few years before it is comforting to reflect that history is susceptible of a more prosaic reading; and anyway we happily explained ourselves to such effect that when our own crisis came a decade later we had the goodwill of all Tibet, and prayers were recited for us throughout the country, a contribution to our success entirely sincere and of more value in Tibetan eyes than anything they could do in a material way, though they offered us that as well to the limit of their resources.

The Revolution threw the Chinese position in Tibet into the melting pot. Its chief prop, the Viceroy of Szechuen, who as Warden of the Marches had originated and directed the forward movement aforesaid, was beset by the revolutionaries at his provincial capital. His successor and lieutenant on the frontier left his charge to look

after itself while he hastened with all the troops he could collect to his master's relief—an impossible task as it proved. The Viceroy was killed, the relief force, pitiably inadequate anyhow, being lost in the maelstrom and dissolving of itself, its commander retiring into an honourable oblivion to re-emerge a year or so later as the author of a book wherein he expounded the policy and the achievements of his patron and recommended the Republic to carry on the good work. The then Governor-General was good enough to write a preface to the book in which he likened the author to the heroes of old equally potent with pen and sword, a description his entourage promptly noted was apposite rather to the Governor-General himself, the cynics riposting that it was so meant.

The reaction to the Revolution of the Chinese troops at Lhasa was equally unfortunate. A new era had dawned, the authority of the Imperial Resident and of their officers had lapsed with the fall of the Empire, everybody was as good as anybody, and a rich town lay apparently defenceless at their mercy. Sick of exile and generally disaffected they kicked over the traces and fell upon the unoffending capital, with the inevitable result that the Tibetans rose in self-defence and set about to cast out the alien from their midst. For them, too, the Revolution altered the whole situation. What was this new-fangled thing, the

Republic of China? The connection of China and Tibet was nothing but an alliance of Church and State, respectively the Tibetan Hierarch and the Chinese Emperor, and with the latter gone, the relationship lapsed of itself. The troops at Lhasa were driven back into their barracks and there besieged, to be later extricated by the diplomatic intervention of the Nepalese Minister and repatriated via India. Outlying garrisons were overwhelmed, or, in a few cases, cut their way out to the Chinese frontier. The Chinese edifice in Central Tibet collapsed like a house of cards, and Eastern Tibet would have gone the same way had it not been for the action of the satrap-to-be who was then commandant of the important garrison post of Chamdo, a town about half-way between the Tibetan capital and the Chinese frontier headquarters of Tachienlu, a month's journey from each. His reaction to the crisis was characteristic of his solid worth. He neither lost his head nor allowed his men to lose theirs, maintained the old rigid discipline and stuck to his post, though the road behind him was then open and he might have withdrawn to play elsewhere a rôle in the drama of high politics with all it promised to anyone who disposed of military force, whereas by staying he courted annihilation. He stayed, and withstood a siege of several months' duration wherein the garrison, so numerically inferior to the enemy, was in constant danger of

being carried by storm and in ultimate danger of being starved out. Those were the old days, however, when the Tibetans had no other armament than sword and matchlock and no troops but untrained militia. Nevertheless the defence was a notable achievement, successfully holding out until the arrival of a relief expedition from Szechuen, which raised the siege and re-established China's position in Eastern Tibet. Supervened a period of armed truce on the frontier while a solution of the general question between China and Tibet was sought in the sphere of diplomacy, and the Chinese military leaders, absorbed in their own civil wars, increasingly lost interest in their country's outposts of Empire.

The garrison commandant, now General Officer commanding the troops on the actual frontier with headquarters still at Chamdo, found himself left more and more to his own devices. It would appear to have taken him some time to tumble to the fact that no one cared whether he was dead or alive. He was China's shield and buckler *vis-à-vis* Tibet, and surely, whatever the internal situation might be, his country, which meant in this connection the successive occupants of the posts of Frontier Commissioner and of Governor-General of Szechuen, would not leave him bereft of supplies? But somehow or other they did not appear to regard him in that heroic light. To them he was simply a military com-

mander like themselves; if, as he claimed to be, at his last gasp, then negligible, and if not, a potential rival. In neither case did he present himself as a suitable recipient of the sinews of war they themselves were so deficient in. Why should they part to him any more than he to them? They were all in the same boat, he had his domain, let him live on it, and he was better off than they were in that his sphere, being where it was, was unlikely to be coveted by any military rival. True enough, and had that been all there was to it, he might have been a satrap to this day. But Fate decreed otherwise. A will-o'-the-wisp crossed his line of vision and, seeming to show him a way out of his difficulties, led him to destruction.

It came about like this. In the summer of 1917 a fatigue party of his men was out cutting grass for the horses of the Chamdo garrison in the Yeh Chu River valley at Mara-Geka on the very western edge of his domain. A few miles away, over a pass, was the nearest outpost of the Tibetan army and from it there descended a couple of Tibetan soldiers to discuss with the Chinese foraging party the grass-cutting rights to the valley, were overpowered and arrested by the Chinese, who sent them off to Riwoche, the nearest Chinese garrison post, and then went on with their job. A few nights later the Tibetan outpost, unaware that the prisoners had already been

sent away, detailed a body of troops to effect a rescue, and the Chinese were awakened at dawn by a fusillade from the hillsides and found themselves surrounded in their camp, a grazier's hut bounded by cattle stockades, the one and only building for miles around. The besieged fought their way out under cover of the following night and regained the safety of Riwoche, whereupon the Tibetan Commanders demanded of that post the surrender of the captives, the Chinese replying that the whole matter had been referred to their General at Chamdo, with whom the Tibetans should take up the matter direct; this they then proceeded to do, and the fat was in the fire.

The matter had, in fact, got by now into that parlous state of affairs wherein a serious clash could only be averted by the exercise of considerable tact on both sides, a quality in which, however, our satrap was conspicuously deficient. He was a rough soldier of the old school, bred in an atmosphere of violence, a coarse, hard-drinking man, inured to hardship and danger and careless of risks, and with little or no experience of the amenities or the comforts of life in a softer environment. In this latter connection I remember the conversation at an official dinner progressing from the bitterness of the climate to the subject of baths and someone asked him how often he indulged. "How often do I take a bath?" he guffawed. "Exactly," and left it at

that. He could stand as much liquor as any man I ever met; and happily when he was in his cups his face flamed red, a sign in Chinese eyes that a man is a decent fellow at heart, whereas if you go pale . . . well, it seems to me rather an arbitrary way of separating the sheep and the goats. However that may be, there did not seem to be anything wrong with his heart physically or metaphysically. He had his faults, of course, but they were suitably balanced by his qualities; and physically he was as hard as nails, a man in his prime who had lived an outdoor life, somewhat cadaverous perhaps in appearance and lean, but active and wiry, a typical campaigner, veteran of many a frontier engagement.

Such was the man upon whose tact the situation now depended. A happy outcome was hardly to be expected even if he had been, as he was not, left to himself. Unfortunately his right-hand man, the senior Colonel in his army, was one of those curious creatures who enjoy a pet pose which they consider they must live up to in all circumstances *coûte que coûte*. There are plenty of such asses the world over, especially in the security of official life, and, unlike Balaam's, they often take their masters a pretty ride before, if ever, they are seen through. The reputation the Colonel sought to live up to was that of a fire-eater, a strong, ruthless, no nonsense, shoot-them-all fellow; and that it was a pose, not something

natural to him, the sequel showed. He of course advocated stern measures, and his advice was reinforced by an altogether subtler influence, a serpent if not of wisdom at least of a considerable persuasiveness, in the form of a Tibetan prelate of the pro-Chinese party. According to him the Tibetans were disaffected with their government, viewing its policy with alarm, and desired nothing so much as the re-establishment of the former connection between China and Tibet, fearing lest their country, left unprotected, should fall a prey either to the tiger in the south or to the bear in the north; wherefore, the General had merely to advance to be hailed by the Tibetans themselves as their deliverer, and such opposition as there was would crumble to pieces.

The General may or may not have been entirely convinced; anyway, it was a gamble after his own heart. If he won, he would be a national hero, and incidentally would have exchanged an obscure satrapy, whose resources were barely sufficient to feed his army and were quite incapable of providing it with anything in the nature of military equipment, for the wide dominion of all Tibet. And if he failed? Time enough to consider that when and if it occurred. He was not the sort of man who anticipates failure or is worried about what may or may not happen in a problematical future.

The question of the disposal of the captives was dealt with in a way highly characteristic of the General's outlook on affairs. The Kalon Lama's simple request for their rendition was at first ignored, and when repeated elicited a reply which took the emphatic if barely mentionable form of an envelope filled with dung, and orders were given for the transfer of the two men to headquarters, the Tibetans getting wind thereof and attempting a rescue at Riwoche which failed, and the men were executed at Chamdo and their heads sent back to Riwoche and there exposed on posts.

The General followed this up with a letter to the Kalon Lama to the effect that Tibet was a dependency of China, that he was about to move forward to Lhasa to restore that relationship, and that he, the Kalon Lama, should hold himself at his disposal. The fire-eating Colonel was put in command of the vanguard and sent forward to eat his fire, and hostilities were soon in full swing, whereupon a famous image of the Buddha in the temple at Riwoche wept in pity of it all and became still more famous. The ruts made in its cheeks by its copious tears were pointed out to me when I visited Riwoche two years later, and I was happily able to gaze upon the miracle with all due composure, reflecting that some of the highest intellects in Europe believe in such things in so far, anyway, as our own religion is concerned.

The Colonel, by virtue of the Tibetans being taken unawares, had an initial success or two and then the tide turned. The Chinese columns were driven back, Riwoche and other outposts taken, half the General's army captured in the field, and Chamdo itself invested. The Tibetan people so far from rising against their government showed themselves to be whole-heartedly with it. The serpent, in fact, was found to be an ass, and the gamble was already over. The General composed himself to face another siege, more hopeless even than that he had successfully withstood half a decade before. Things had changed greatly in the meantime. He was no longer opposed by untrained levies with primitive arms but by organized Tibetan troops equipped with modern rifles. They even had a few field-pieces, not their own but captured from him; and of course the numerical superiority remained as ever with them. In the circumstances how long could he hold such a place as Chamdo, entirely unfortified and dominated by the surrounding hills? Nor was there any chance of ultimate relief, Szechuen—the only province which might have sent it—being itself in the throes of civil war. And even his army was not what it had been in the old days. The old homogeneity had gone, and though his veterans, who were used to tight places and hardly believed any situation was past hope, formed the major portion of his troops, there was now quite an

appreciable leavening of new men whose outlook on life was by no means so heroic, who had in fact little stomach for fighting what was apparently a losing battle.

This element had to be reckoned with, and indeed the siege had hardly started when it made itself felt, the General's second-in-command, an officer of the new school, sending over to the Tibetans and offering to negotiate the surrender of the town. The enemy agreed, and swarmed down to the barricade at one of the bridge-heads, the cease-fire being sounded by the aforesaid officer's orders. There was a moment of tense confusion, but the General showed himself equal to the situation, sending his bodyguards to arrest his subordinate and going down in person to the bridge-head to set the ball rolling again, wherein, however, he had already been anticipated by his Tibetan coadjutor, the prelate, who, acting with even greater promptitude, had caused his own retainers to fire upon the enemy.

There was a sharp struggle in the *yamen*, the bodyguards of the second-in-command endeavouring to prevent his arrest, but they were cut down and he was taken, trussed up and shot out of hand on the open piece of ground which lies between the town and the banks of the Mekong and is reputed to be haunted by the souls of the unfortunates who have been executed there, it being commonly used to that purpose. There is

even supposed to be something sinister, as I learnt when I lived in it, about the only building which overlooks it and is, incidentally, the best house in Chamdo apart from the new buildings in the monastery, and was placed at my disposal during my stay in Chamdo. While therein we all suffered from headaches which the Tibetans unhesitatingly ascribed to these occult influences. What was the good of aspirin or anything of that kind in the circumstances? However they swallowed it politely, and, sad to relate, were duly confirmed in their belief.

The siege went on for a couple of months, by which time half the garrison was dead and supplies practically exhausted. The General was for going on to the bitter end but was overborne. The new leaven prevailed and the town was surrendered on the understanding, which was duly honoured, that the garrison would be spared and repatriated. The General was left to face the music, for nothing had been said of the fate reserved for the responsible leaders; it was hardly necessary. The Colonel, preferring to choose his own method of passing out, drowned himself in the Mekong, but the General stood firm, giving his fate a final chance. He was led into the presence of his victor, the Kalon Lama, who asked him to explain his unprovoked aggression. He replied that he had been led astray by his subordinates, a little unheroic perhaps, but natural

enough and true as far as it went. He had, in fact, been misled, but he would hardly have taken the advice he had been given had it not been in tune with his own inclinations. The psychologists tell us that even in the extreme form of persuasion which is hypnotism you cannot prevail upon a man to do anything his inner nature revolts against. The Kalon Lama replied swiftly and to the point: "You executed your second-in-command for advocating peace, why not the others for advocating war?" And the General, recovering his dignity, left it at that, making no answer. He had lost. What was the good of trying to explain himself? The price of his failure was his head, just as, if he had won, he would have taken the Kalon Lama's. His stoicism, however, or his personality carried the day; his life was spared, and he was sent to Central Tibet as a prisoner of war, to be later released and allowed, at his own request, to remain there, preferring, it is said, to live in exile rather than risk what might happen to him were he to return to his own country; though, as for that, there does not seem to be any particular animosity against him in responsible Chinese circles on the frontier, a high official at headquarters once expressing the general opinion of his case in an apt quotation from the classics: "Courage without understanding, in a man of consequence, is a danger to the State."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PARIAH

It was the only time I know of that my friend the autocrat tried the experiment of incorporating brigands into his army. The idea was not his, but his staff's. He was in a tight corner. The particular province in which his domain lay was famous for its intolerance of outsiders, and he was the only remaining satrap in it who was not a native of it. One of the periodical wars, staged by the politician of another of my portraits, had just come to an end, and the provincial leaders, in conference assembled, had divided up the province amongst themselves, allotting this particular satrapy to one of their number; and the latter, with the support of his fellows, had opened his campaign to take possession. The hornets, in fact, were upon the hard-bitten old soldier with a vengeance.

He was short of arms and ammunition, and had no sources from which to draw or renew supplies. Men he could, of course, recruit in any quantity he liked, but what was the use of recruits he could not arm? Why should he not enlist

brigands, who had their own arms and ammunition? Everybody did it. Indeed, the particular enemy at his gate had a whole brigade of them. And even if the brigands he took on should prove to be impossible, their arms would be useful. He could disband the men and arm decent recruits with their rifles; every rifle meant a soldier. This was indeed the real plan. He disliked the whole idea. Finesse, artfulness, or, to put it bluntly, deception, was alien to his character. True, the intended victims were only brigands, people beyond the pale, but still there was the principle of the thing. It went equally against the grain with him to have any truck with the powers of evil and disorder. He had suppressed brigandage in his own area with an iron hand; but, of course, if he wanted brigand recruits, they were available in any numbers, they could be got from neighbouring satrapies. He was, as I have said, in a hole, was tempted and fell, and was immediately stung, as though his guardian angels did not intend to encourage an honest man in chicanery. Other men had been allowed to do it with impunity, indeed, with conspicuous success, but not he.

It was a case of diamond cut diamond, the brigands being in this particular instance as artful as his advisers. He had made a commencement with a band which had been giving a lot of trouble on one of the frontiers of his domain.

They must have been vastly astonished when he offered to take the whole band, whatever their strength might be, into his army. However, his word was reliability itself, and they also were in a difficulty : their arms were antiquated, and they were running out of ammunition. They had no particular desire to be brought under the iron discipline of a martinet famous for his severity and his attachment to law and order. But why not join up for a brief moment, be fitted out with modern rifles and ammunition, and then take to the hills again with a new lease of life?

Their arrival in the capital created a great deal of mirth. The people were not exactly accustomed to laugh at anything in which the autocrat was concerned, but the spectacle of these scarecrows, two hundred strong, armed with matchlocks and a few old carbines, filing through the streets to the *yamen*, to be pardoned and taken unto the autocrat's bosom, was apparently irresistible. The whole town came to its doors to see the sight for itself, and broad grins soon gave way to hearty guffaws and ribald remarks, by no means lost on the brigands, who were in the highly sensitive condition of men who are not quite sure of their ground. Was this the way to treat people who might lack perhaps the outward polish of comfortable townsmen but still were not monkeys, the welcome to give men who were, anyway as far as the public knew, turning over

a new leaf? It was not an auspicious opening to the experiment; and the autocrat, gazing irately upon the coveted arms, his thirty pieces of silver, experienced a revulsion of feeling. He could, of course, curse his advisers, and did so heartily, but what was to be done with the brigands? Disband them? He had given his word that they would be incorporated into his army, and incorporated they must be. They had not been guilty of any deception; he had taken it for granted that they had decent arms. And perhaps the merriment of the populace had something to do with it. Well, they would see. It had never occurred to people before to *laugh* at anything he had done; tremble or applaud, yes, but grin, hardly. Anyway, he was not the sort of man to admit defeat. He would see what his drill-sergeants could make of these tatterdemalions. Needless to say, he did not issue them rifles. He had more good men and true than rifles to arm them with, and would have died sooner than give a decent weapon to these rogues, and it was nearly a month before he could bring himself even to issue them uniforms. The popular tendency to be facetious in the matter was increased by an incident which happened a day or two after the brigands' arrival. A high civil official, accompanied by two escorts, happened to ride past their barracks; a word of command rang out, and the sentries at the gate levelled their rifles at him, whereupon he

collapsed from his horse with a howl of dismay, and his escorts ran for their lives. It transpired that the commander of the brigands, now given the respectable title of captain of infantry, feeling no doubt that he ought to do in Rome as the Romans, had ordered the guards to salute officials as they passed, but had failed to instruct them, even if he knew it himself, in the way to do it.

In general, the play opened as a comedy, but it ended in tragedy. It happened that these men were real brigands. They were not mutinous, disbanded, or defeated soldiery who had taken, willy-nilly, to the hills, driven by the stress of the moment, by the *force majeure* of circumstance, and anxious to be readmitted into the official fold, but brigands by instinct, robbers and cut-throats, enemies of society, natural Ishmaelites. They had no desire for a quiet life; it was not in them to settle down, and their homes were closed to them by crimes which no pardon or amnesty could delete. Of them was apposite the saying of the Chinese sage: "He who has sinned against Heaven, it is no use him praying at all." They were indeed, had put themselves, beyond the pale.

That they were men of this nature gradually became apparent, and the merriment of the people soon gave way to alarm. No wonder, with two hundred desperate characters in their midst clad in the inviolate garb of military authority. They petitioned the autocrat to disband them, but he

was adamant. Perhaps the early ribaldry still stuck in his gullet, and, anyway, he was not a man of yielding nature. Like D'Artagnan and the Chocolate Soldier, he never withdrew. I believe, however, he would have been glad if the earth had opened and swallowed up this annoying problem. "What would *you* do with them?" he once asked me, half in earnest. "Chuang Tzu tells us," I replied, "that a monkey dressed up in the robes of Chou Kung will be miserable until it has torn them off. If these men really have the nature of Chê the robber, they can hardly be comfortable in the rôle of pillars of the State." As it happened, I had had at one time a somewhat analogous problem of my own, a wolf cub growing up to maturity. It had been a playful little thing as a pup, and I was reluctant to shoot it. On the other hand, I could hardly keep it chained up for ever, and if I released it into its natural haunts, it might easily become a dangerous raider, seeing that it had lost, through familiarity, its natural timidity of human beings. However, it solved the question for me by dying of its own volition. The autocrat's problem was not so simple; his brigands were hale and hearty, and he could not very well shoot the lot just as a precautionary measure. Though, indeed, a satrap in another province who had been converted, somewhat too suddenly perhaps, to Western ideas of hygiene, made a literal holocaust of all

the lepers of his region, and seemed pained at the uproar the incident created. Was not his procedure more efficacious than mere segregation, and what use had these miserable wretches for their lives anyway?

The ex-brigand captain was, from all accounts, a curious fellow, with a lurid past of twenty years of outlawry, and I was wondering if I would see him before the situation dissolved itself, as it must do sooner or later, and he disappeared from the stage. The New Year came and the opportunity presented itself. It was the local custom at that season for the troops and the poorer elements of the populace to form acrobatic troupes and perform, for a solatium, at the houses of officials and notables. His two companies raised a very good troupe, which gave an excellent show of acrobatics, sword-dancing, and the Lion-lamp act. When they came to my Consulate, he, for some reason or other, came with them. Perhaps it was just curiosity, that he wanted to see what a Consul looked like. I received him cordially, as a captain of the army, and he sat with me over a bottle of brandy while his men performed in the court-yard outside. He was by no means the first brigand I had met, but he was a new type. He differed, for instance, from the brigand of another of my portraits, in that he was a hardened sinner, a professional, whereas the other was an amateur, a man forced to the hills by a rash act for which

he was not entirely, or rather solely, to blame. My visitor had what the Chinese of that province, where brigands are very numerous, call brigand's eyes, a curious swivel effect as though he was looking everywhere at once. I had heard of this alleged sign of a hardened brigand, but had disbelieved in it, imagining it to be *ben trovato* rather than an actual fact; however, there it was, very noticeable in him. His eyes hardly rested on anybody or anything long, his glance darting jerkily here and there, to the left and to the right and behind him, alert and a little uncanny—the *qui vive*, no doubt, of a man, both hunter and hunted, who had passed all his manhood with a price upon his head, his hand against every man's, and in constant fear of the trap and of betrayal, even by his own comrades.

He was very quiet, and had practically nothing to say. His mind appeared to be occupied with other matters, for I had to repeat almost everything I said before it reached his consciousness and drew an intelligent answer. It was certainly not that he was slow in the uptake; those telltale eyes were evidence sufficient to exclude that explanation. Rather he seemed to be revolving something in his mind; and he gave one the curious impression that he was listening all the time, was waiting for something that had nothing to do with the room he was in, the intentness on one thing and the detachment from others of

a wild animal stalking its prey. He drank nothing. When, in accordance with the social conventions of our environment, I drank his health and pressed him to empty his glass, he just raised it to his lips and put it down untasted. No, it was not that he was a teetotaller by conviction, but merely, he said, that he disliked wine.

Inevitably conversation flagged. We had, or found, no point of contact. I believe that there was only one topic that could have aroused him to interest—the life of the hills—but I did not like to raise it, vaguely feeling that the particular circumstances made it taboo. I tried this or that other topic, but all to no avail. I felt he had written me off, that nothing I could say could arouse any interest in him, that my presence meant no more to him than that of the table we sat at. I got up with a spasmodic movement, intentionally, and he was all attention for a brief moment; I sat down again, and he relapsed. He showed no signs, however, of boredom; and the long silences were apparently in no way irksome to him, for he could have left at any moment he liked, yet he stayed on. He seemed unconscious of the passage of time, and we sat like that for over an hour, when, at long last, he got up and took his leave. He had enjoyed his visit, he said conventionally, and hoped to repeat it.

After he had gone I wondered if he had not really come with something definite to say, had

been revolving it all the time in his mind, but had found, or I had given him, no opening, no channel of approach. He knew of my efforts on behalf of the other brigand—it was history in that province—and perhaps he had come to enlist my assistance, had some half-formed plan to start life over again and abroad. I dismissed the idea as chimerical. Whatever he was, he was not that sort of man, he must have long been past such a conventional aspiration. But what kind of man was he? His was a strong personality, that much was evident, for I felt his presence even after he had gone. I had a curious sense of oppression, a vague feeling of unrest, of impending tragedy, and a ceaseless watch and ward against it. If, as some maintain, thoughts are able to impress themselves upon material surfaces, the cage of a hyena might well oppress one in some such way as this. To shake the influence off I took up Ernest Bramah's "The Wallet of Kai Lung," an inimitable burlesque set in a Chinese *milieu*, and had just opened it at a favourite passage when the Magistrate was announced, and I read it to him, to his evident appreciation. He chuckled with delight, and then abruptly switched off, for no apparent reason, on to the pariah. Was it that the influence of the man was still there, and that he also had sensed it in some vague way? The oppression returned. What was my opinion of the man, he asked. I told him that he had just

been with me for over an hour, and I went over his visit, confessing myself at sea. "Criminals condemned to death are often like that," he replied, clarifying the situation from a wide experience of a phase of life the man in the street can have no knowledge of. Yes, that was it—he was under sentence of death, not actually but subjectively. That was the great difference, which had escaped me, between him and my other brigand. And I wondered vaguely whether it was the auto-suggestion of a bad conscience, or a subconscious knowledge of events to come. Coué or Osty, which was it in this particular case?

Another month passed, the tension increasing perceptibly. The ex-brigands kept to themselves, the inexorable process of auto-suggestion which largely makes us all what we are setting them apart as well from the other troops as from the people. There were a few incidents, a case or two of extortion and violence, which were dealt with by the autocrat with his usual severity; and, for the rest, they were left more or less to their own devices, even the attempt to make soldiers of them, to drill them, being abandoned. Then came the *dénouement*. They were not wanted, they had not been, never would be, given rifles. Very well, they would take them for themselves, and other loot as well, and return to the hills. It was a simple plan. One day they left the town in small parties, unnoticed, came together far out-

side it, and fell upon the next town, which was held by a handful of troops and the Magistrate's armed police. It was a surprise attack, and it succeeded as far as that town was concerned, but unfortunately for the brigands their departure from the capital had quickly been revealed by their empty barracks, and they had been followed up. The troops came upon them while they were in the midst of looting the town they had taken, and hardly a man of them escaped, the majority being killed in the running fight which ensued, and the rest taken and executed. Amongst the latter was the ex-captain, and his head and theirs were brought back to the capital and there exposed on poles outside the gates. The uncanny watch and ward was at an end.

CHAPTER XV

A FRONTIER INCIDENT

THIS is the story of how a high Tibetan official, the Kalon Lama, met an unexpected crisis in his and his country's affairs. It was one of those cases where a decision one way or the other had to be made, where inaction were as positive as action, and a wait-and-see policy out of the question. Nor was there time to refer the matter to superior authority. The responsibility for whatever was done or not done was his and his alone. He was called upon, in fact, to make an immediate decision in a matter of high policy. He did so, throwing in his lot, as was his wont, with the angels, and he perished utterly. Or perhaps that is rather begging the question. In life, or anyway in high politics, things are hardly as simple as that. However, we can say that he did what he thought was right regardless of consequences, which is as near as any of us can get to right in the abstract. And he passed on, but whether *propter hoc* or merely *post hoc* will probably never be established to the complete satisfaction of the people. Public opinion in that

particular part of the world has it that it was the former, and, indeed, it is more in consonance with artistic values, with our sense of the fitness of things, that it should be this and not the prosaic other. Man must pay for his flights into the empyrean. What sort of world would it be if you could be heroic with impunity, if Semele were not consumed with fire or Belgium devastated? But happily life and our conception of what is fit and proper do not always tally, and so it is quite likely that it was merely *post hoc* after all.

He was one of the four members of the Council of State or Cabinet, and concurrently Governor-General of the great frontier province of Kham, and Commander-in-Chief of the army upon which Tibet relied to maintain her historic sovereignty, recently reasserted with effect throughout the length and breadth of the land with the exception of a fringe of frontier territory still in the hands of her great neighbour, China, who, moreover, continued to claim an ultimate suzerainty over the whole country. He was, in fact, in the most responsible post a subject could occupy, and he held the confidence, indeed was the right-hand, of his august master, the Bodhisat Avalokitesvara, embodied in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Divine Ruler of Tibet.

Impregnably entrenched in the regard of deity incarnate and in high office, he appeared to

be a man beyond the reach of the shafts of chance and circumstance. But Fate knew otherwise. Working out her inexorable purposes, she set him a nice problem delicately attuned to the man he was. To a man of a different type, one of narrower vision or less scrupulous a sense of responsibility, it would have been no problem at all. If the wind is tempered to the shorn lamb, so also are there loose rocks about to keep the mountain goat intrigued; in other words, we are all of us happily provided from time to time with the particular difficulties and assuagements we require for our due development. There was no particular reason why the clouds should have gathered just then, unless it was that Fate had decided to drench him. The Tibetan question was for the moment dormant, and neither side desired or were in a position to press their claims and contentions by force of arms. The armistice which had brought to an end the hostilities of 1917-18 had been scrupulously observed on both sides, and responsible opinion on the one side as on the other seemed to agree that the general question between the two countries was not susceptible of a military solution. The political horizon was clear, peace reigned and nothing of particular importance was coming through the oracles, which seem almost to be the form the shadow of coming events takes in that part of the world. Then Fate took a hand, or it may have

been *Terang-gungchi*, the sprite of mischief whom the Tibetans believe to play quite an important rôle in human affairs. However that may be, the chaos which is China of a sudden stretched forth, octopus-like, a tentacle, and he was in the coils.

It was like this. In the aforesaid hostilities which were happily brought to an end through the mediation of my predecessor on the frontier, the Tibetan armies had recovered a large slice of their lost territories, ousting the alien claimant from the Lama states of Riwoche, Chamdo and Draya, the kingdoms of Derge, Hlato and Lintsung, the provinces of Markham and Gonjo, and the Thirty-nine Banners of Jyade. As a result they found themselves in possession of a new north-eastern frontier in the form of a salient which lay athwart the lines of communication, between the Chinese frontier outposts of Jyekundo in the north and Tachienlu in the extreme east. That in itself was not of much consequence. Commercial intercourse was in no way interrupted; and of political and military co-operation, to which of course the wedge could not but be an obstacle, there was normally little or none between the places concerned, each being under a virtually independent satrap who took no particular interest in his distant fellow. Soon afterwards, however, the Central Government of China decided to send by this route a consignment of arms and ammunition and funds to the

Tachienlu satrap, or—to give him his proper title —the Occupation Commissioner (that is, Civil and Military Governor) of the frontier area, who, unlike most of the military leaders in the province in which his satrapy lay, was sympathetic to the party then in power at Peking. It was a small consignment but still large enough, it was thought, to prevent his political extinction, a matter of definite moment to Peking. Large enough also, however, but that could not be helped, to constitute too tempting a morsel to the various satraps through whose domains it would have had to pass if it had been sent by the ordinary route. Indeed, the latter had actually been tried and the consignment had been swallowed almost before it had got under way, gobbled up, in fact, by the first commander who saw it—like some worm spotted by a lucky chicken. Hence the tremendously circuitous route chosen for the second attempt, a route which had, however, the advantage of lying entirely within regions controlled by men who still took orders from Peking, apart, that is, from the last stage which lay through Tibetan territory, the wedge aforesaid. Its passage through that was unavoidably left for the Commissioner himself to arrange as best he could and if he could.

He proceeded to do so. He detailed a battalion of troops to proceed to Jyekundo to take delivery of the said supplies, wrote to the

Kalon Lama requesting him to allow it right of way across the salient, and at the same time sent up two deputies with full powers to arrange the necessary details of procedure, transport and so on. He took it for granted that the Kalon Lama would accede to his request. His proposition was, in his own eyes, eminently reasonable; all he wanted was his supplies, his convoy would merely cross the salient like any merchant caravan, pick up the consignment and bring it back, a matter of a month or two at the most, and then everybody would be as they were before. He had no military or territorial designs, no ulterior motives, no anything save a fixed determination to get those supplies of his, upon which his political survival depended. His enemies—not Tibetans, but his own fellow-countrymen and military rivals—were beating at his gates, he was short of arms and ammunition and money, and his only hope of maintaining his position lay in getting in these supplies. There was of course nothing illicit in the matter, they were his, consigned to him by the government of his country. He was entitled to them and he must have them or go under. The whole thing was a domestic matter, of no concern whatsoever of the Tibetans; it was merely a geographical accident that the route of approach passed through their territory, and all they had to do was to let his convoy through. He was not even raising the major

question, namely whether the Tibetans were in rightful occupation of the salient at all. In his eyes they were not; a brief year ago it had been part of his own domain, but it was not his purpose to complicate a simple issue by digging up that aspect of it. As far as his present proposition was concerned that particular question could remain in the abeyance to which it had already got accustomed, lulled to sleep, like some fierce dog, by the measured periods of diplomacy.

It was all very considerate of him, and no doubt he felt that such an attitude of sweet reasonableness could hardly but bring its own reward. Moreover, he conceived himself as giving the Tibetan authorities an opportunity of conceding of their own volition what he could, if he liked, exact by force of arms. But could he? It can be said that he was convinced he could. Nor was he, in his own view, asking anything impossible of the Tibetans. What possible objection could they raise? Immediate compliance was their proper rôle. Like all of us, anyone who has happily provided himself with a fixed idea, he could see no flaw whatsoever in his case. As far as this matter was concerned, he was in a pulpit, made, like all pulpits, for one.

Things had reached this stage when I returned to the frontier after an absence of several years, and immediately set forth on a tour which developed into a comprehensive journey, lasting

some eight months in all, throughout the length and breadth of Eastern Tibet. The Commissioner, an old friend of mine from my previous term of service on the frontier, took the opportunity to request me to support his proposition *vis-à-vis* the Kalon Lama, but I had to be non-committal. Possible difficulties and objections were of course obvious to me, and, anyway, the whole thing had nothing to do with me, except in so far as it might endanger the peace of the frontier. It had been agreed that the Tibetan question should be settled by negotiation between the three countries concerned, Tibet, China and Great Britain, who all desired that the situation should not be complicated by regional developments, most important of which were, of course, anything in the nature of a renewal of hostilities on the frontier.

I reserved my opinion and set forth. About a fortnight's trek brought me to the farthest Chinese garrison post, on the very edge of the salient, where I found the two delegates kicking their heels. It appeared that the Tibetan authorities were not prepared either to discuss the Commissioner's proposition or to receive his delegates on their, the Tibetan, side of the frontier. An impasse, in fact. I crossed the *de facto* frontier and in another fortnight reached the Kalon Lama's headquarters at Chamdo, a town situated on the right bank of the Mekong

(there known as the Dza Chu) at the point where that river is joined by its affluent, the Om Chu. I was received by the Governor-General with the greatest ceremony and courtesy. He had sent officials to meet me, the oracles were consulted to discover the most auspicious day for my entry into his capital, and on the date thus happily fixed I rode in escorted by his own bodyguard of twenty-five cavalry, flags flying and bugles blowing, in all a gay display which the whole town, of course, turned out to see. My comings and goings were in general thus ceremoniously marked throughout my wanderings in Tibetan territory. Wherever there happened to be troops they paraded, and all the available sources of display were put into use, processions, flags, bugles, bagpipes, lama orchestras, bonfires and so on, all helping to lend a gala air to these occasions. It was all in strong contrast to the experiences of travellers in Tibet in the old days, when our prestige in that country was not what it is now.

The Kalon Lama lost no time in putting me in possession of the Tibetan point of view regarding the Commissioner's proposition. The flawless case proved, when viewed from the Tibetan standpoint, full of flaws, the greatest of which, like Aaron's serpent, swallowed up the rest, namely that Tibet could not permit the passage of Chinese troops through her territory. That the

accommodation the Commissioner required was temporary only, that he had no ulterior purposes, was raising no other issues, and was in a desperate plight, all this made no appeal whatsoever to the Tibetan authorities. They were quite as sure as the Commissioner whose was the rightful ownership of the territory, and moreover they were in possession of it, *de facto* by force of arms and *de jure* by, *inter alia*, the terms of the armistice signed by the Commissioner's own plenipotentiaries. And, what would have stung him most had he been aware of it, they were entirely and unaffectedly indifferent to his woes. A beetle on its back could scarcely have aroused less emotion in them. The colossus before whom men trembled in his own domain had become, viewed from this distance, invisible to the naked eye. They decided, however, after mature deliberation, that his letter might as well be given a reply as not, and the Kalon Lama was good enough at my suggestion to couch it in the terms of a *non possumus* as being less provocative than the blunter *nolens*. And so the matter rested for the moment while the imp of mischief thought again.

I had not previously met the Kalon Lama but got to know him pretty well in the months that followed. We necessarily saw a great deal of each other, crowding into a few weeks what would have been the normal intercourse of years

under different circumstances, so that what our acquaintance lacked in point of duration was amply made up for in concentration. He was a man of great dignity, imposing presence and outstanding force of character, no ordinary man this, no nonentity pitch-forked by favour or circumstance into high office, but a born leader of men —that stood out all over him. He was a vigorous man in the prime of life, tall, large-boned and heavily built and obviously of great physical strength, hirsute, virile, massive, with a dominant air about him of authority. The heroes of old must have been, one imagines, like this, and the Moor of Venice. Othello to the life—that was the impression he gave one, but there was no Desdemona in his case, for he was celibate, a priest. Astonishing in any country but Tibet that a priest should hold the offices he held, or that such a man as he should be a priest at all, but the Tibetan priesthood is *sui generis*, not, as in other countries, a body of men more or less cut off from secular employment and confined to religious duties, but rather of the nature of a special order of men, the elect of heaven, permeating the body politic and engaging, many of them, in mundane occupations, almost as though it were imagined that religion was not a thing apart from everyday life. In Tibet, in fact, Church and State are not so much allied as one and indivisible, and the sovereign of it all is a priest.

THE KALON LAMA, COUNCILLOR OF STATE AND GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF KHAM.

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The Governor-General and the priest were in no conflict in the soul of the Kalon Lama. In serving his god he was serving his country and *vice versa*, and he bore with ease and dignity his dual, indeed his multiple, burden, for he was soldier and politician as well. Dignity, the outward manifestation of a soul at peace, was the salient characteristic of the man. Like Sir Galahad, his heart was pure; and he was absolutely sure of himself. He had Deity behind him, Infallibility, and all he had to do was to obey orders to the letter. I doubt it ever occurred to him that a case would arise, as it was now to do, where that prop would be out of his reach.

He was tremendously placid, I do not remember ever seeing in him any signs of boredom or impatience, to say nothing of the fidgets, even at those interminable feasts we had to sit through together lasting for hours on end and for three days in succession in each case. Conversation at such functions inevitably flagged, confined as it practically was to him and me by the Tibetan convention which forbade his inferiors from speaking in his presence unless they were spoken to. Ever and anon he or I would make a remark which would run its poor course to die prematurely in an atmosphere of courteous assent. Then silence while another bright thought germinated, only to meet with the same fate. It was not that we had nothing to

say; on the contrary, in our private conversations he talked fluently and to the point, marshalling his facts and presenting his views with skill and vigour. But under the appalling conditions of these banquets it was impossible to carry on a conversation at all. Animation was sapped at its root. An English hostess if a party of hers were to go like this would feel like screaming, and no wonder. But there was nothing to be done, and we just sat on our raised dais and bore it all hour after hour while dish followed dish slowly and endlessly. I was in a better position than he, for I could fortify myself with the wine and smoke all the time, both of which indulgences were denied him by his cloth, and I wondered if he was as bored as I and hoped I showed it no more than he did, if, that is, he was bored at all. If he was, there was no sign of it. His massive face wore throughout an air of courteous composure as though he found nothing oppressive in the alternation of long silences and desultory remarks.

In truth, self-restraint was second nature to him, hedged about as he was in his high office like a divinity. High ceremony, which has given way with us to democracy where even monarchs can mix with their people like ordinary mortals and presidents more or less have to, is still in all its pristine vigour in Tibet. The most punctilious respect was his daily portion and there was never any respite for him from it. All who came in

touch with him, officials or private citizens, high and low, never for a moment forgot the deference which was the due of his office. His subordinates, even where they were Generals or civilian officials of equivalent or still higher rank, invariably stood in his presence, with head slightly bowed, while he gave his orders or discussed official matters with them, and when the interview was over they withdrew backwards. Officers in uniform would salute him smartly in our own manner, but with body bent double, a queer combination of the formalities of two conventions. When he went abroad horsemen would dismount and all and sundry draw aside, many of the people dropping on to their knees or even prostrating themselves as his cavalcade went by. He had no privacy at all. Wherever he went, whatever he did, even when he slept, there were always retainers in attendance upon him. They missed nothing, anticipating his every need, a motion on his part to rise or to sit and they sprang forward to assist; when he mounted his horse ready hands held the bridle and stirrups and helped him up, and when he dismounted helped him down, and supported him across the courtyard as though he were old and infirm instead of being a more powerful man than any about him. He could not even drink a cup of tea, the national beverage, without a cup-bearer dropping on his knees and lifting the cup up to him ceremoniously with both hands, for all

the world as though Cæsar was being offered a crown. In the circumstances he had of course no recreations or relaxations of any kind, being precluded from some of them by his cloth and from all by virtue of his position, the veneration which set him on a pedestal, a being apart.

Somehow or other, in that *milieu*, and with a man of his almost majestic presence, one missed the incongruity of it all. It seemed natural, he fitted the rôle so perfectly and everybody, including himself, took it all for granted. I often wondered if he did not find it irksome, but if he did he gave no indication of it. Clearly he had long got used to the restraints and the limitations of his position and very likely looked upon them as the price he paid for his office and the veneration of the people. *Noblesse oblige*. Lesser men have their comforts and their pleasures as children have their marbles. He had pomp and power, though I doubt if these made any special appeal to his mind, for he did not appear, nor was he reputed, to take delight in them. His dignity was marred by no trace of pomposity and his mind seemed to be set on his duty, what he owed to God and man not on what others owed to him. His days were full, his time absorbed by the manifold details of his administrative work from which his only relaxation was found in the religious exercises of a Tibetan priest, prayer and mystical meditation.

After two or three weeks at Chamdo I made a round trip to Jyekundo and back, a journey of about a month's duration which broke a certain amount of new ground in the geographical sense, especially as regards that part of it which went through the nomad lands of Hlato. At Jyekundo I found that the Commissioner's supplies, the *fons et origo* of the crisis that was threatening, had not arrived. Had they been swallowed *en route*, another chicken rewarded for its powers of observation? Were the clouds destined thus to remove themselves, the whole thing to go up in smoke? It looked like it, and I fervently hoped so, but alas it was not to be. If the consignment had been swallowed, it was in due course regurgitated and we were again as we were. But I am anticipating.

Returned to Chamdo I found further letters from the Commissioner and his delegates, burdened with the same refrain, in reply to which the Kalon Lama reiterated his *non possumus*, and I pointed out that the alleged supplies were not at Jyekundo at all. I then went on another round trip, this time to Riwoche and the actual scene of the incident which gave rise to the hostilities of 1917-18, the valley of Mara-Geka on the confines of the Thirty-nine Banners of Jyade. Then back again to Chamdo where I found the Kalon Lama suffering from a recurrence of an old complaint of his which seemed to be the gout, a natural

enough affection, it would almost seem, to a man of his bulk and habits, for he really needed much more exercise than the circumstances, as we have seen, permitted him to take. His left leg and foot gave him a considerable amount of pain which he bore with his usual composure, indeed ignored, carrying on as usual, and there was nothing to indicate that he was in the throes of a disease he was to die of in the brief space of a couple of years, that is, if die of it he did. Medicinal treatment and dieting were reinforced in his case by the ministrations of the priests, to wit, prayers and the imprinting upon the swollen parts of seals bearing the mystic formula *Om Mani Padme Hum*. He asked me how we treated such a complaint in England, and while I had to confess my ignorance I suggested iodine lotion. I gave him some, he tried it, politely commended its efficacy and I enthusiastically gave him all the rest I had, but I doubt if it did him any good.

A further interchange of letters with the Commissioner and his delegates, and I set forth on another trip, for Atuntzu in the extreme south, a round journey which took with halts upwards of two months. Here again my travels broke new ground, it being my good fortune to be the first and still the only white man to travel down the Salween River at these latitudes (29° and 30° N.). There is something exhilarating in being the first

in such matters and I think all travellers will agree with me that it has nothing to do with getting one's name into guide-books as Ruskin in the preface to the second edition of "Sesame and Lilies" would appear to imagine. Rather it is the lure of the unknown, the subjective satisfaction of the pioneer in anything, which finds, I should imagine, its intensest expression in the realm of scientific discovery.

The situation came to a head while I was on this trip. The Commissioner's supplies duly reached Jyekundo and he wrote to the Kalon Lama, repeating himself to me, that he was sending his convoy to collect them without further ado and that if the Tibetans opposed its passage the responsibility for the renewal of hostilities would be theirs. The Tibetan garrisons need not even, unless they preferred to, evacuate the road; it was enough if they refrained from hostilities and allowed his convoy to pass in peace, and so on. I replied to the Commissioner immediately, from the place his letter reached me on my travels, pointing out that it was an act of war in itself to send troops across a frontier and that, hence, if he did so, the responsibility for whatever occurred would be his and not the Kalon Lama's. The latter, for his part, reasseverated his position and warned the Commissioner in effect that if his convoy was sent forward his blood would be on his own head. At the same time he suggested to

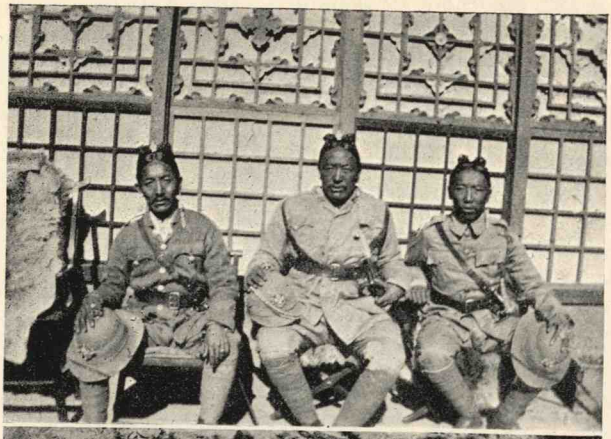
me that I cut across country and dissuade the Commissioner from his evident intention of forcing the passage. However, I could not see my way to comply. Time and space forbade; I was, in fact, too far away to get anywhere in time. Even if it were not so, I had no reason to believe that my persuasion would have any effect on the Commissioner, who was, I knew, desperate for these supplies and who seemed, from this latest move of his, to have tired of the browsing cow of diplomacy which had already taken six months to get him nowhere. Seemingly a clash was inevitable. *Que faire?* It may have occurred to you that, since the difficulty lay in the passage of Chinese troops through Tibetan territory, a solution might have been found in having the supplies brought through by a merchant caravan, but, unhappily, that was impossible, for every band of outlaws in Eastern Tibet, to say nothing of adventurous amateurs, would have made a bee-line for such a dainty morsel as twelve hundred rifles and many thousands of rounds of ammunition, with money to boot. Then why not have the consignment escorted through Tibetan territory by Tibetan troops? Exactly. That was a card the Kalon Lama had up his sleeve but had not time to produce, the situation in its final stages moving too rapidly for him. And anyway I doubt if the Commissioner would have agreed to it, would have consented to entrust his precious

supplies to anyone at all, especially in view of the sad fate of the first consignment.

Clearly there was nothing to be done. I continued my journey, and in due course was back at Chamdo, where I found the Kalon Lama prostrate with his gout, if it was gout. He was as composed as ever though now in constant pain, the sciatic nerve being, it would appear, involved. Nevertheless, and in spite of my protests he insisted on rising from his couch to receive me, and when I made the usual sympathetic inquiries he answered as briefly as possible and hurried on to other matters, feeling, it was obvious, the distaste of sympathy common to men of forceful character. Sick or well he was his same dominant self, his presence had lost none of its impressive dignity or his voice its tone of quiet authority. If illness is, as is often asserted, curable by ignoring it, he surely of all men should have recovered, and, indeed, he appeared to do so for he was able the next year to make the long journey on horseback to Lhasa and back. It was only thereafter that he relapsed and died—in harness.

We plunged into discussion of the situation which had, just before my arrival, taken another, its final, turn. At the eleventh hour the Commissioner had abandoned his project of sending the convoy across the salient. While confident of his ability to force the passage if necessary, he was genuinely anxious to avoid if possible a clash on

this, his western, border which could not but weaken his already precarious position *vis-à-vis* his rivals in the east. He realized from our letters that such a clash would inevitably ensue if he sent his convoy by the route proposed, which was held in strength by Tibetan troops. A way out of the difficulty presented itself through his delegates' discovery of an alternative route which ran for most of the way through the nomad lands of the independent Goloks and crossed the salient only in its extreme corner where, moreover, there were no Tibetan troops in occupation. Compared to the other this road or rather track had the great disadvantage that no supplies would be available *en route* and the convoy would be exposed all along to the attentions of the hardy Goloks, a congery of tribes notorious for their raiding propensities. On the other hand, no clash need occur with Tibet unless the Tibetan authorities moved up troops, that is, went out of their way to seek it, in which case, from the Commissioner's point of view, the responsibility for the renewal of hostilities would be theirs. It was rather thin, of course, but we must bear in mind that all this territory had been, a brief year before, part of his own domain and that he considered the Lhasa authorities to be in wrongful occupation of it. His change of route was in his eyes a compromise in the interests of peace, and the best he could do, there being no third route available. He was



MODERN TIBETAN GENERALS ON THE FRONTIER.

THE ROPE BRIDGE OVER THE MEKONG AT HORI-DRUKA.

SALWEEN VALLEY. CROSSING A PASS IN THE SNOW.

not prepared to argue the matter, but sent forward his convoy without further ado, warning the Kalon Lama to leave it alone. The convoy duly crossed the frontier, and the Tibetan Generals in the field petitioned the Kalon Lama for orders to move forward to the attack.

The Kalon Lama was in a quandary, his problem was upon him. It would have been much simpler for him if the Commissioner had stuck to his original plan. That matter had long since been referred to Lhasa and he had his orders to maintain his position *vi et armis*. But the present situation was entirely different. What action should he take? Whatever he did or did not do, he was accountable to Lhasa, and at Lhasa political opinion was divided into two main schools, the one, which we may term the modern or nationalist school, intolerant of the Chinese connection and in favour of bringing the ethnological and political frontiers of Tibet together by force of arms, of recovering, that is, from China all Tibetan-inhabited territory still in her hands, and the other, the conservatives or reactionaries, anxious to put the clock back and to see the former relations of China and Tibet restored. From the point of view of this latter school Tibet was too weak to stand alone, and the Chinese connection presented itself to them in the light of a bulwark against the infiltration of European influence which they conceived to be

subversive of the civilization of their country. In fact they regarded our ideas of life much in the light we regard Bolshevism.

These two schools, of which the army and the new officialdom generally was roughly the stronghold of the one and the priesthood of the other, were of almost equal political influence, and policy swayed between them, the one or the other prevailing in this or that matter according as the sovereign threw his weight into this or that scale. The Kalon Lama, like his master, was identified with neither the one nor the other party.

The frontier crisis which had now materialized could not but present itself to the extremists of the first school as a heaven-sent opportunity to recover the unredeemed territories. Chinese troops had crossed the frontier, a *casus belli* had arisen unsought by the Tibetans, thrust upon them by the Commissioner's action. The chance must not be lost. They looked to the Kalon Lama to do what they conceived to be his duty, and the opposition, of course, was prepared to rend him if he construed his duty in that light. It was even deeper than just that. Such a clear-cut issue is hardly the rule in Oriental politics. What if it should suit some powerful clique in the one party or in the other that he should do the very opposite to what their policy seemed to demand? There would be repurcussions, he would be judged by results. Suppose, for

instance, he took the heaven-sent opportunity to push forward the frontier, and China, stung at last to vigorous action, recoiled in force and re-established herself in Tibet? Or suppose he refrained, and fell from power to make way for ambition?

A pretty fix altogether. Whatever he did, the storm would break over him. Even if there had been time enough, he could not in any event have divested himself of the responsibility and thrown it on to his sovereign in a matter so bound up with odium and faction as this. At the most he might have privately discovered His Holiness's wishes and carried them out, bearing the brunt himself. As it was he had not even this prop.

What *ought* he to do? As a Buddhist priest he was, on principle, opposed to war, but that did not prevent him waging it when it was thrust upon him. It was he who had commanded the Tibetan armies in the successful campaign of 1917-18. He had done his best to avoid those hostilities but the Chinese General concerned, instigated by a Tibetan prelate of the pro-Chinese party, had repelled his overtures of peace, and believing that he had only to advance to find widespread support amongst the Tibetans themselves opened his campaign to restore the Chinese position in Tibet.

On that occasion hostilities were forced upon the Kalon Lama, but was that the case now?

Surely there was no parallel between the two cases? A few weeks at most and the Commissioner's convoy would have gone and everything would be once more as it was, always excepting, of course, the opportunity lost. Was he justified in plunging the frontier into hostilities, in bringing upon the people all the horrors of war, in casting the Tibetan question once more into the melting pot, just for that? He came to the conclusion that he was not, but decided, before committing himself irrevocably, to see in what light I regarded the matter. I was the local representative of the third party to the Tibetan question and I would be able, in my detached position, to give an opinion independent of all considerations alien to the strict merits of the case. I had not at that moment yet got back from my trip south, but I was due in a few days. He withstood the pressure of his entourage and provisionally instructed his commanders in the field to take no action pending further orders which would shortly be forthcoming.

He put the matter to me immediately I arrived and I told him I thought the convoy should be ignored. He was greatly relieved to find my opinion was identical with his own, confirmed his provisional orders, and the incident dissolved itself in peace, to the infinite relief of the people of Eastern Tibet.

It was afterwards asserted that I was

responsible for the whole thing, that I had overruled the Kalon Lama and prevented him from taking the opportunity the *casus belli* afforded, but this reading of the situation reveals an entire misconception both of the Kalon Lama's character and of the nature of my position. The Kalon Lama was not an easy man to move, nor had I any concrete authority in the matter at all. My position on the frontier was simply that of a neutral, friendly alike to the Chinese and to the Tibetan authorities, somebody they could consult or use as a channel of communication if they so desired; but there was no obligation whatsoever, official or moral, on the Kalon Lama or the Commissioner to take my advice in anything at all. In brief, I was simply a political convenience, representing the intangible spirit of mediation, of which they could avail themselves if they chose.

My advice, however, in this particular case did in fact dominate the situation; for, as it afterwards transpired, had my opinion been in favour of military action or even if I had refused to give an opinion at all, the Kalon Lama would not have been able to withstand the pressure to which he was subjected, but when he found that I was in favour of peace he was able to remove that pressure and at the same time to divest himself, by shifting it on to me, of the responsibility for the course of action he desired to follow. It was a master-stroke of policy which extricated him

from a quagmire without putting anyone else into it, for I was presumably beyond the reach of political factions.

But did it extricate him? It was not long before the storm broke, and after a visit to Lhasa he passed, as I have said, from the scene. "Poison," said the people. If it was, the only explanation I can think of is that he was so firmly fixed in his sovereign's esteem that his enemies, whoever they were, concluded that death alone could remove him from power. "It was not poison," said a Tibetan notable to me, "but occult influence." Magic—I had heard of cases of it and of the process, the long incantations through which fiends are invoked and set to work upon an objective. It takes some doing, of course, and as often as not the spirits refuse to come from the vasty deep at the theurgist's call, but once they come they must have a living organism to obsess and the only hope of the unfortunate objective is, by suitable counter-incantations, to deflect them from himself into his live-stock, an equally laborious and uncertain process. "Surely," I replied, "Heaven could have protected his servant?" "Not if his course was run," was his answer, and I thought of the death of another of the divine ruler's lieutenants, shot through a tent-flap at a banquet. "I have had," he went on to say, "ten thousand prayers said for you in the lamasery." I could not quite

see why I should be involved, but thanked him and added that if my course was run the incantations were, according to what he had just said, useless, and if it was not, presumably the demons could not make it so, to which he replied that a curse was not necessarily concerned solely with death. His prayers on my behalf were generally considered to have been effective, for during the next few months I had a remarkable series of unexpected casualties amongst my live-stock, losing no less than two cows, a pony, two bear-cubs, a wolf-cub, a dog and a number of rabbits and chickens, and what explanation more logical than that they absorbed the fiends intended for me? I cannot say that I rejoiced particularly in this happy outcome; on the other hand I have sometimes found myself wondering if a fiend or two didn't perhaps get left behind after all.

It seems to me very doubtful that anybody ever went to the trouble of laying a curse on me, but that one was laid on the Commissioner and his delegates would appear to be indisputable, a prophecy coming through a famous oracle that within three years all three of them would be dead. One of them, the King of Chala, died within the year in tragic circumstances, as I have related in my portrait of him; and the people confidently expected him to be followed by the other two, one each year. They bore, however, their sentence of death with complete composure, and

survived. "The talk of children," the Commissioner said to me with his grim staccato laugh; and, thinking of the hundreds of men he had sent to a violent death, I felt he had quite a basis for his confidence. Surely if spirits had any power he would have been dead long ago. There would, indeed, appear to be a sad flaw somewhere or other in this theurgy business but, to be honest with the persons who believe in these things, I may as well say that of the five of us concerned in this incident two are dead and the other three prematurely out of office.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DIPLOMAT

It was appalling to think of the amount of sheer hard brain-work he must have put in. He was a classical scholar of his own country, was fluent in three foreign languages, had been called to the English Bar, bore the title of Doctor—of letters, I think, or it may have been of philosophy, conferred upon him by an American University—had to his credit a number of abstruse technical pamphlets on agriculture, and withal was a busy and distinguished official.

He had been some ten years in all abroad, in Europe and America, and had returned to China a few years before the Revolution to find that the Empire had no particular use for him, with or without his attainments in foreign scholarship. Office did not apparently come that way in spite of the sage's dictum that a ruler should search out and promote ability. The world is hardly built on those lines, or perhaps it is that ability is so common that it gets you nowhere without the support of influence, or, failing that, of push. He had no influence to speak of, and he and his

fellows in like plight started in to push, and pushed the Empire over, an epitome, if you like, of the world-wide struggle between the *haves* who will not yield an inch, and the *have-nots* who will not go without. However that may be, the Empire had only itself to thank for its demise. It presented a brick wall of inertia to capable men who saw that if China was to be great she must first be modern; it found no outlet for the energies of men who had qualified themselves, at home and abroad, to take the lead in all the various activities of modern endeavour; and it saw no other solution of the economic stress of the country than suppression. It created, in fact, an artificial over-population, such as we would have in England if we had no other resources than those of a century ago.

He had, with his pen, contributed in no small measure to the success of the revolutionary cause. He knew his own country and the world outside it, and was well aware, by comparison, of what was wrong with the former; and he was a master of literary style, with a wonderful skill in conveying to a sophisticated public a meaning at variance with the apparent surface innocence of what he wrote and in driving his points home with a wealth of simile, allusion, and classical quotation. Literature was obviously his *forte*, and in any other country he would, no doubt, have taken to it and made a fortune, but this profession does

not as yet in China bring much worldly profit. Instead, he took office under the Republic, being rewarded for his work with the post of Commissioner of Foreign Affairs in his native province. Or rather, as he himself would prefer to put it, he placed his abilities at the disposal of his country in a sphere wherein he was especially qualified to serve.

It was while he was in that post that I first met him. The impression he made was entirely favourable. He looked what he was, a scholar, an intellectual, all through. He gazed out upon the world with a benign and detached expression through a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, which somehow or other seemed to fit his personality. A calm, courteous, good-natured, highly intelligent man: that was written all over him. And it did not take one long to realize that he was a man in whose make-up there was neither violence on the one hand nor meanness on the other. A pleasant man to get on with socially, but that did not mean that he was, in official life, a *facile vis-à-vis*. Far from it. As far as foreign interests were concerned, he was an obstructionist pure and simple, patently conceiving it to be his duty to fight every case *à outrance* whether the right lay with him or not. "My country—right or wrong," might well have been his motto. This attitude fell in also with his temperament. He was not a man of action, but essentially a critic,

and it came naturally to him to think not how to do a thing, but how to avoid doing it.

He had *in excelsis* what some people term, I don't know with what justice, the legal mind. He could see all round any subject that came up, could build a mammoth out of a single bone as easily as, Samson-like, destroy your edifice by removing a pillar or two. He knew our much-maligned treaties as well as any Consul ever did, was a master of *tu quoque*, and had a disconcerting command of comparison and analogy culled from his wide reading of European affairs, ancient and modern. His reputation of being a match for the alien, of ability to deal with him suavely but effectively, was already established with his own people when I first met him, and I remember the delighted laughter in which he joined wholeheartedly, when I once referred to him at a banquet, by altering a character of his Chinese title, as the Commissioner for Obstructing Foreign Affairs.

To him and his school of thought, which comprises practically all articulate China, the privileged status of the foreigner in their country is an anomaly in itself, an affront to the national consciousness, and an impediment to progress. It was a legacy from the Empire, which had failed in their eyes as strikingly in the conduct of the country's foreign relations as its internal administration. They looked upon the

imperium in imperio, with which the Empire's incompetence had saddled the country through the concessions and privileges it had granted the alien, as an obstacle to the political and social evolution of the country second in importance only to the Empire itself and the antiquated mechanism of government it stood for. They had scrapped the one; it was now their duty to abolish the other. This was an axiom with them, and though on the surface they appeared to be always ready to argue the matter interminably, marshalling their facts and data in battle array, you soon found that your counter-arguments, however sound and logical, had no effect whatsoever upon them. You were, in fact, up against something that would not yield to logic, was not really open to argument, a set attitude which had all the strength of an instinct. It was a road on which there was no half-way house of compromise, a conflict in which one or the other side must ultimately give way.

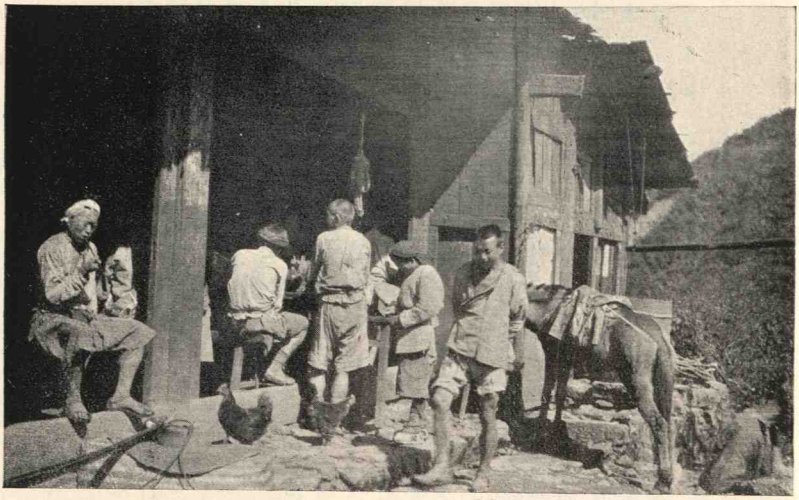
All their arguments boiled down to this, that the alien is not entitled to better treatment than the people of the country he is in, even, in fact, to as good. It is, of course, a tenable position, a principle, indeed, inexorably enforced in all the sovereign states of the world.

But the treaties? I will say this for him, that he endeavoured to the best of his ability to carry them out to the letter, though not, however, to

the spirit. He construed them in the narrowest possible sense, admitting nothing that was not expressly laid down, and rendering them almost meaningless by the construction his acute mind put upon their terse provisions. Still, he recognized them. His legal mind revolted against the attitude of the extremists, who were all for tearing them up. They were in his eyes a component part of international law, and as such were binding until they were abrogated by the contracting parties. For himself, he hated them, and once in a land case wherein conflicting interests had caused a deadlock, said to me, "Sooner or later, if we don't revise these treaties, public opinion will insist on their being scrapped altogether." That was years ago, and events have borne him out, the extremists having now, in this regard, the bulk of opinion behind them.

He was always courteous, and I found him, when we got to know each other well, very frank and communicative. His arguments sometimes reminded me irresistibly of the pleadings in a law-suit wherein mutually contradictory contentions are cheerfully advanced as alternative lines of defence or attack. We were one day discussing the political situation while the bullets of an assailing force were actually flying over the town. There was nothing, he maintained, radically wrong with China; it was merely the aftermath of the Revolution, and even as it was the country

TRAVELLING IN THE INTERIOR OF CHINA.
THE AUTHOR'S FOUR-BEARER SEDAN-CHAIR, AND RIDING MULE IN FRONT.



CHINESE TRANSPORT WORKERS. HALT AT A WAYSIDE INN IN SZECHUEN.

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was more peaceful than either Ireland or Mexico. The Customs returns showed there was no basis for the contention of the foreigners that their trade was suffering; on the contrary, each year showed a substantial increase in it. And finally, the foreigner's losses were a mere bagatelle compared to the people's. Why should the stranger within the gate be any better off than the Chinese themselves? "The defendant's nose," I replied, "is not red, or if it is, that is due to indigestion, not alcohol, or alternatively to a blow from the plaintiff." He was, as I have said, a barrister-at-law, saw the parallel, and chuckled happily.

On another occasion he was at my Consulate when an agitated clerk came round to tell him that the military press-gangs had dragged off all the outdoor servants in his *yamen*. He rapped out, in the vernacular, a string of imprecations, and then, seeing my amusement, recovered himself and said that, after all, it was better than our conscription in war-time, which took not only one's servants but one's own self. "Come, come," I said; "this is politics, not war." And I added that conscription with us was carried out in accordance with the law, whereas the military press-gang was an entirely illegal and arbitrary instrument. He agreed without demur. That was just the difference, he said. The greatness of England, he went on, lay in the respect of the

people, high and low, rulers and ruled, for the law. "The law is your god," he said, "and happily so, for it is more effective as a social force than religion, which inculcates an ethic it cannot enforce." "You have both Confucius and Chuangtzu against you there," I replied. "The one said the law was the lowest basis of government, and the other, that if you developed the moral sense of the people, you could do without a penal code." "Well, let me put my meaning a little differently, and say that the greatness of your country lies in the moral sense which produced both the law and the general obedience to it."

His admiration for England was perfectly genuine, born alike of his temperament, his cast of mind, and of his experiences in our country, but it did not extend to the political sphere. He saw in us a very definite obstacle to the immediate realization of China's aspirations, the principal bulwark of foreign rights in China, though he admitted that it was the very quality he so admired and associated with us, our sense of law and order, which informed our cautious attitude. We are prepared, indeed anxious, it has been authoritatively announced times without number, to yield up our rights without stint *pari passu* with the progress of China along the path of internal reform and modern organization. No privilege, in fact, will be sought to be retained

a moment it is feasible to relinquish it. And one of the leading elder statesmen of China recently, in effect, bore us out, though that, of course, was not his direct purpose, when he came out with a message to his own people to set their house in order, and the privileged status of the foreigner would automatically dissolve. His statement that what is not good enough for the alien is not good enough for the Chinese struck a responsive chord throughout the country, and has become historic. But his *pronunciamento* does not seem to have had much effect on the campaign for the recovery of sovereign rights. The Chinese would appear to have read it not as an endorsement of our point of view, but rather as an arresting way of driving home the lesson that the most vital need of China is internal reform.

Indeed, our diplomat had years before answered a similar argument from me by comparing China to an old house and the foreign *imperium in imperio* to a tree which had grown up through the floor. How could the new owner set the house in order if he were not permitted to cut down the tree? Consular jurisdiction—extra-territoriality—which placed the citizens of the Treaty Powers beyond the purview of the Chinese courts, and the settlements and concessions wherein the Chinese writ did not run, constituted, according to his view, the most serious of obstacles to that co-ordination of

activity which is the mechanism of a modern State, in that the Chinese Government had no control over foreign finance, credit or persons, and even Chinese capital and individuals could, and did, place themselves out of reach by the simple expedient of moving into this or that foreign governed area. "They go to them," I said, "because they find there security for life and property. Did not the Master say that where a State is well governed people will flock to it carrying their babies on their backs? The very men who denounce the concessions take refuge in them themselves when they are in difficulties, and many keep their money there all the time." "Mere common-sense," he replied. "You sit in a sedan-chair, but that does not imply that you think it a proper or even a humane method of getting about. If there were no concessions people would have nowhere to go to; and finance, the most powerful individual factor in any modern State, would have no choice but to reform the country or perish."

As a lawyer, extra-territoriality especially outraged his sense of the fitness of things. The Chinese legal code, he maintained, was as good as any in the world; the trouble lay in the administration of it, which was admittedly imperfect, but this was due to the ignorance of the people. They were much too tolerant of misrule, expected next to nothing of their rulers,

did not know their rights, and consequently did not enforce them. Could I not see that if extra-territoriality were abolished reform would come quickly of itself, seeing that the foreigners would not tolerate administrative and judicial abuses, and their example would educate the bulk of the people to a proper realization of what government should be? "You mean," I said, "that we should help you to fight your battles?" "Why not?" he replied. "You are always protesting that you are here not for your own good, but for that of China." "Only the missionaries say so," I said. "The rest of us are out for a decent living." "Well, make a commencement with the missions," he replied. "They could do China a real service in the rôle of martyrs to progress. Their lead would be followed by so many thousands of our countrymen that misrule would soon be a thing of the past." I confess I hardly saw it in that particular light, but I could think of nothing effective to reply at the moment—it was a new idea to me.

He saw in extra-territoriality also the basis of what he termed the race prejudice, the contempt for the Chinese, of the foreigner in the East, and he was convinced that if the alien were made subject to Chinese jurisdiction, a complete change over his attitude would rapidly come about—as it did so, in fact, in Japan. "Extra-territoriality," I said, "will be the very last thing the foreign

Powers relinquish. It is the very basis of our position in China." "You will have to give it up soon," he replied, "or your activities in this country will be brought to a standstill."

It can readily be imagined that he was a difficult man to transact official business with. The ultimate say, however, the real power did not lie with him, but with the military Governors and satraps. These latter were men of action, practical men who, while not attaching any particular weight to the treaties, were usually—at least I found them so—ready to agree to what they thought reasonable in itself. And more than once he was effectively over-ruled by their simple *fiat*. This sort of thing must have been heart-rending to him, and he finally retired in result of a case of this kind, the Governor-General for the time being having given away in a friendly gesture a principle for which he had fought successfully for years.

He left the province for the metropolis, where I renewed his acquaintance some years later. He was out of office, and on the waiting list for an appointment abroad as Minister, the title whereof was all the immediate reward he had been given for his years of strenuous service. But if he felt any chagrin, he did not show it. He bore himself with the same placid dignity as of old. Equanimity was in fact the salient characteristic of the man, and during the whole of my acquaint-

ance with him I can remember one occasion only when he let himself go in an emotional outburst, and that was in connection with the Shanghai tragedy of May, 1925, wherein the municipal police had fired upon a mob of students and others in the act of rushing a police station. He was furious. "Would it ever occur," he said to me, "to the London police to fire on unarmed demonstrators?" It was all, he went on, part and parcel of the contempt of the alien in China for the Chinese, and the English inspector who ordered the firing ought to be hanged. Did he think Chinese were dogs to be shot at pleasure? He was racial prejudice personified, and so on. "His wife is Chinese," I said quietly, and I have seldom seen a man so taken aback. "Then what is the explanation of it all?" he asked after a pause. "The impact of two civilizations," I replied, "wherein the individual is of no account, is submerged like a drop in the ocean, a conflict of interests and systems which can be and must be reconciled, or civilization goes under sooner or later." The violence of the students, I added, was no contribution to the eventual solution that must be found in peace and amity; they had been taken advantage of by the Bolsheviks. "I sometimes think," he said, "that what we need in China is a Bolshevik upheaval. It would rid us of the militarists as well as of our foreign shackles. It would wipe the slate clean for us to start afresh."

"You, as a member of the ruling class, would hardly survive to take part in the revival," I replied. "What does that matter?" he said. "I am thinking of my country." "It would not be a clean slate," I went on. "There is no such thing in the inexorable continuity of evolution. You would merely have an extra red smudge on it, perhaps indelible." He demurred. "The surgeon's knife leaves a mark, but that is of no consequence if the patient recovers."

CHAPTER XVII

THE PHILOSOPHER

He was famous with the sword before he took to the pen. This is not a mere figure of speech. One day he and a few stalwarts rushed the Viceroy's *yamen* through a salvo of firing by the latter's bodyguards, and hauled the old man out to the execution ground. It was the last step in the Revolution in that particular province. They were all young and excited. In the turbulent pell-mell the Viceroy fell, and his head was severed then and there by, it was said, our philosopher's sword. I mentioned this story to him in after years, and he denied it. He was but one of the storming party. It was very sad that the Viceroy would not accept the inevitable, and had forced them to such violent measures. The taking of life was a sin against God; and we slipped peacefully into discussion of that which interested him most, religion.

Could a man who had played such a leading rôle in political life as he had, who had perhaps done more than any other individual to make the

Revolution in his province, who had been Governor of it, could he really forget the past, the dynamic motion, the danger, the power and pomp and glory of it all? Was this a genuine case of psychic sublimation, or was he merely lying low to make his re-entry in due course? And I fell to recalling my first impressions of him, and the many stories I had heard of him. No Machiavelli he, like our politician of another portrait, but a bluff soldier of commanding presence, great bodily and mental vigour, hard-living, fearless, open. He lived and used his life as he thought fit; he had risked it more than once for the Revolution, and was to risk it again; his strength, he clearly thought, was given him for use, not for conservation; and he obviously had no respect for stereotyped convention. He lived his life in the open, and his sayings and doings were discussed everywhere, and most of all in camp and tea-house. One day he would be the life of an uproarious party in public restaurant or theatre, the next he might be preaching from a pulpit. People gaped and marvelled, and his enemies tried to make capital of it all against him, but the army loved him. On one occasion the opposition came out into the open, and roundly accused the Governor of living a lurid life; he was too fond of actors, of wine and women; his life was a scandal; he ought to get out, and so on. He paraded his troops, read, with hearty guffaws, the offending

THE PHILOSOPHER.
GENERAL YIN CH'ANG-HENG (THE TALL FIGURE IN THE GROUP),
FIRST REPUBLICAN GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF SZECHUEN.

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diatribes to them, said he was a soldier, they knew everything about him, and did they want him as Governor or the sort of creature responsible for the attack.

Long afterwards he was, in fact, eliminated, but by finesse. It was the question of provincial autonomy. He came up against the master-craftsman who sat at Peking vainly endeavouring to reunite all China under central authority, his own authority. But *was* he of Peking a master-craftsman? His enemies say the foreigners dealt him all the trumps, and he bungled from error to error to final catastrophe. But the hand he played against the Governor was an easy one. He might, had he wished, have put his cards on the table. Soon our philosopher saw ambition turn old comrades into competitors, aspiring to his place and power. They progressed step by step, and the end was sure when they got him to leave his capital on a military wild-goose chase. But not quite sure. He came back once, and there was a hush while the provincial lion made up his mind what to do. Fight, send old comrades after the Viceroy, defy the autocrat of Peking?

The philosopher overcame the soldier. He would go himself to Peking and talk to the President. They were alike leaders of the vanguard of China's progress, and would soon see eye to eye. The autocrat must have been

astonished. Here was his antagonist proposing to walk unarmed into his camp. Well, let him come. Once away from his province and his army he would be helpless, and steps could be taken to keep him so.

Were the President's enemies right after all when they said he had no use for anybody but obedient servants? Sure it is that were but a mere tithe of the political leaders of the world of our philosopher's calibre, we in the West or in the East were not in our present plight. The Governor was well received at Peking. But not for long. How came it that the law suddenly arose in zeal and might, reviewed his Governorship, and flung him into jail under a sentence that should have kept him there nearly a decade?

Our philosopher might have been excused if he got cynical, but he did not. It wasn't anyone's fault; not human nature's, not even the President's. It was the Law, not the sort of Law which had seized and thrown him, but the Law of God. In some previous incarnation he must himself have done something like it. As you do, so shall it be done unto you. And he turned with added zest to his writings, wherein he expounded a sort of theosophy all his own, synthesizing the leading religions, Confucianism and Taoism and Islam and Buddhism and the two main divisions of Christianity.

A few months passed, and then the sins of

a bygone age likewise overtook the President. In some forgotten past he must have driven an Imperial patron broken-hearted to his grave. Our philosopher was promptly released. He had been put into jail and brought out again, almost as though in this world a man's fate, even a Governor's fate, depends less on what he does than on what others do to him. Never mind. Was not that freewill which had been somewhat obviously in abeyance now restored? He would not join the galaxy of ex-Governors happily sinecured at the capital. He would return to his books and his native province. To a philosopher happiness hardly lies in power. Anyway not in that sort of power which is rather like a restive horse, or, worse still, sometimes like a tiger: you simply mustn't be thrown. And I remembered the Confucian maxim, much and agreeably bandied about of late years, "when the times are out of joint, the good man lives in retirement."

I looked across the table dimly. No, it certainly wasn't that. Not nervousness or discretion. I had caught a sudden and brief widening of his eyes characteristic of the provincial lion when the wine has passed freely and long. A signal that the old fires, the revolutionary leader, the reckless soldier, were overcoming the philosopher. I remembered one or two stories of him in this mood, how he had struck this highly-

placed official in the face, and cursed that, the latter a Governor in his own capital. No, discretion was not amongst his qualities. "No heel-taps" again. We drank it, just he and I alone, neat brandy. "Mahatma, why do men drink?" I asked him. "Because they want to. What other reason?" "Chuangtzu," I replied, "says for good fellowship." He laughed, and told me cheerily of an incident of a few days back I already knew, wherein good humour had come perilously near being drowned in wine.

Was this, then, the heel of our Achilles? If so, he shared it with men who have engraved their names on history. A perfect man without it? Yes, but it is all part and parcel of him. Who knows but that something down in his depths drove him to a higher level of action and thought than most men, to keep his own subconscious self-respect? Not drink pulling him down, but its irritant effect on his subconsciousness thrusting him up. Or the whole man, like all of us indeed, simply an outward manifestation of unknown complexes within?

I went home to my Consulate, and found a friend of the old school of Chinese literati waiting for me. Twenty years senior to our philosopher and to myself. He spoke highly of our philosopher. Mad? Not a bit of it, except perhaps occasionally in his cups. He had been Governor, and was still poor. His writings?

Nobody read them; they were above the heads of most people. But few persons had a higher personal prestige than his. I agreed. Our philosopher, whatever the future holds for him, belongs to the great of this world.

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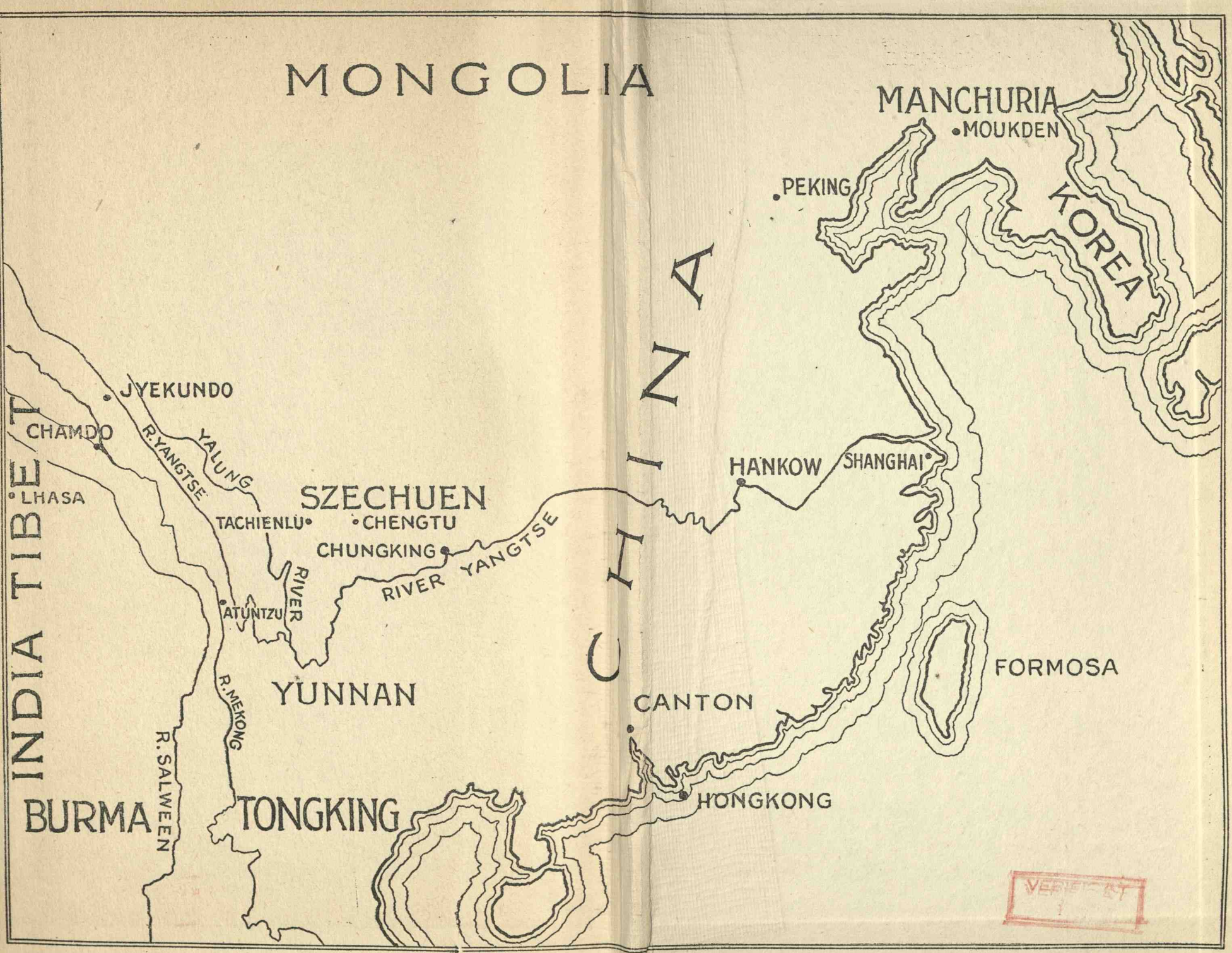
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