

# ANNALS & MEMOIRS OF THE COURT OF PEKING

(FROM THE 16TH TO THE 20TH CENTURY)

BY

E. BACKHOUSE AND J. O. P. BLAND

AUTHORS OF

"CHINA UNDER THE EMPRESS DOWAGER," ETC.

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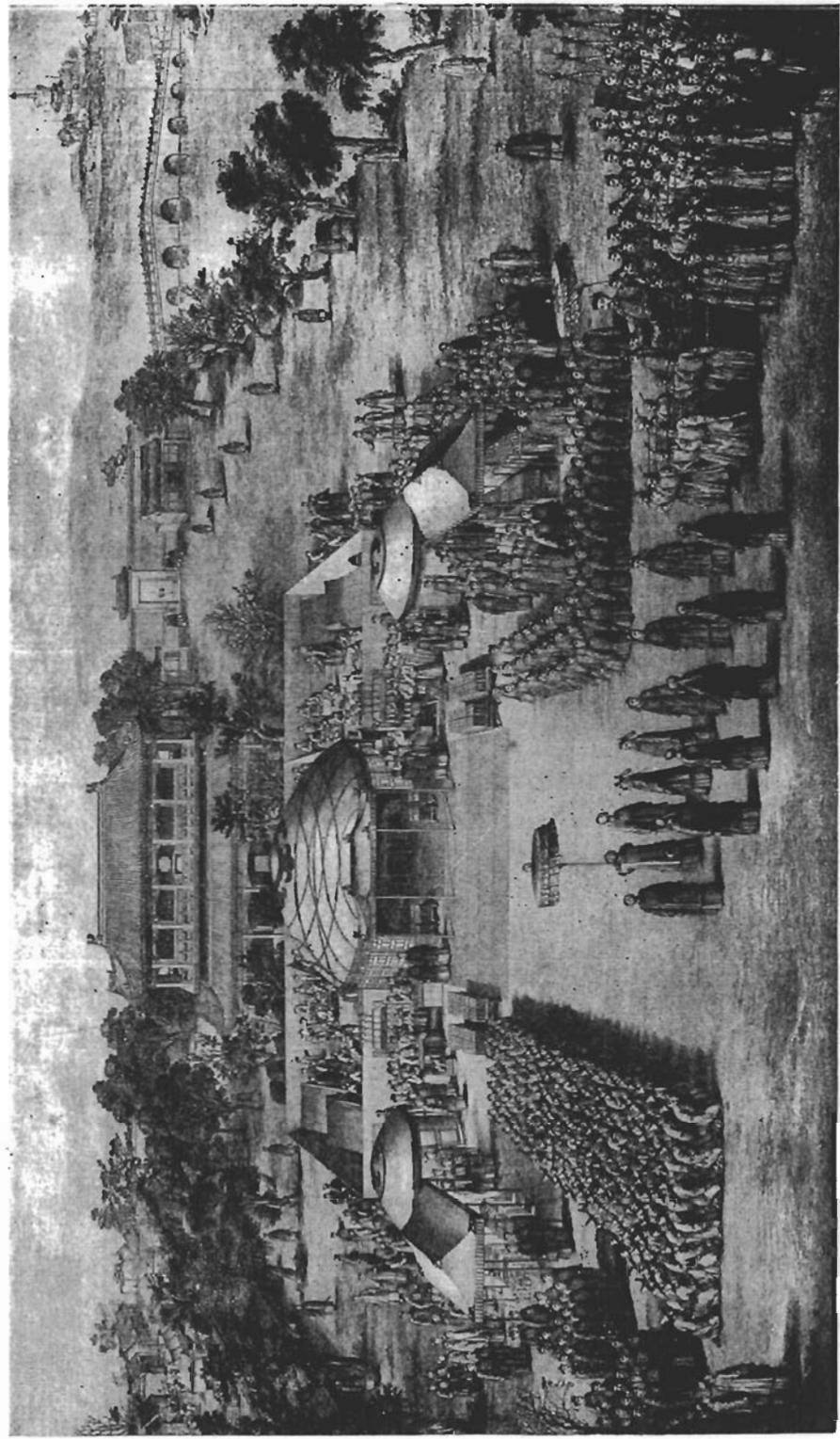


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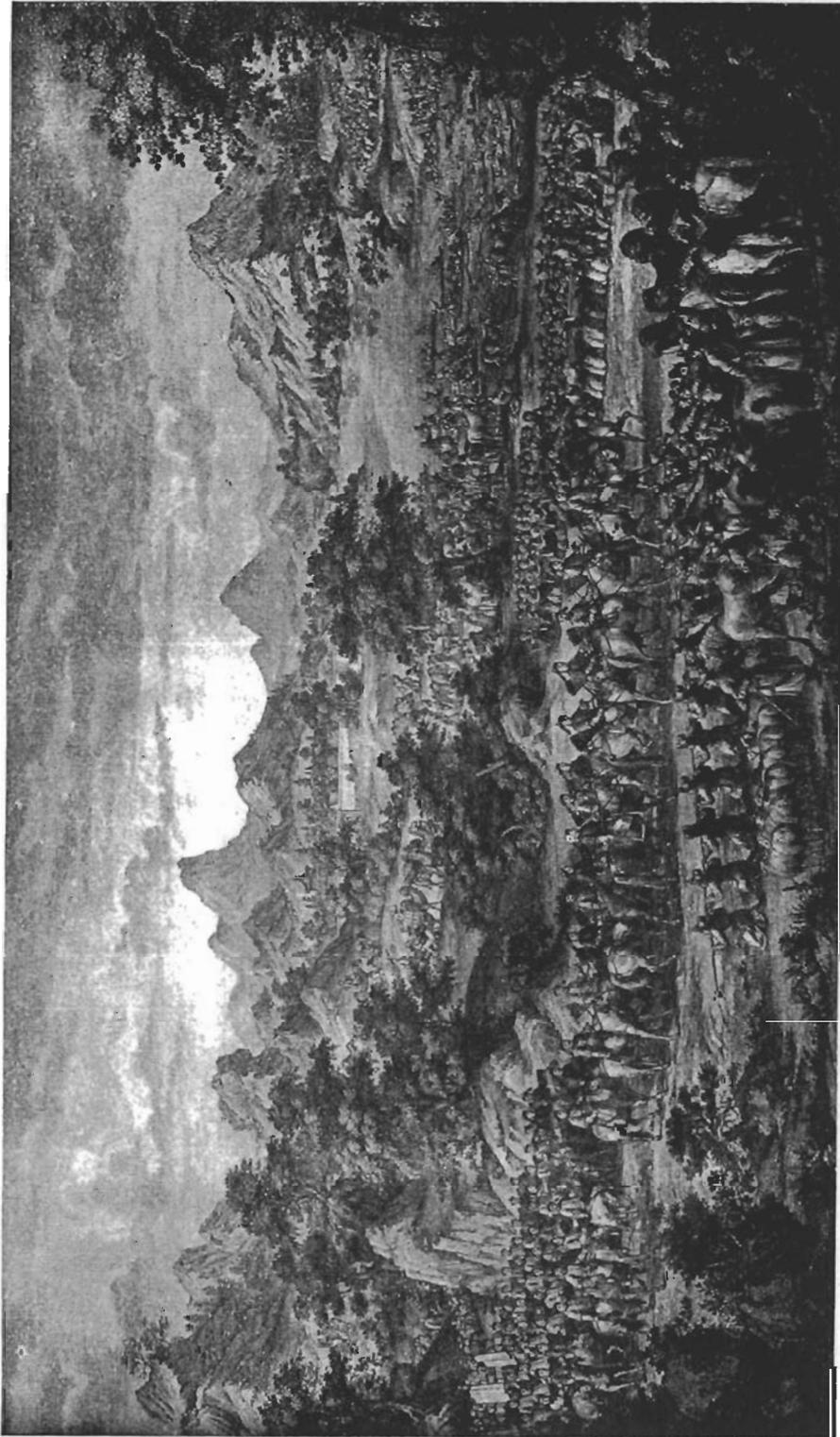
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(From the Imperial collection of pictures commemorating H.M. Cih'ien Lang's victorious campaigns in Sungaria.)

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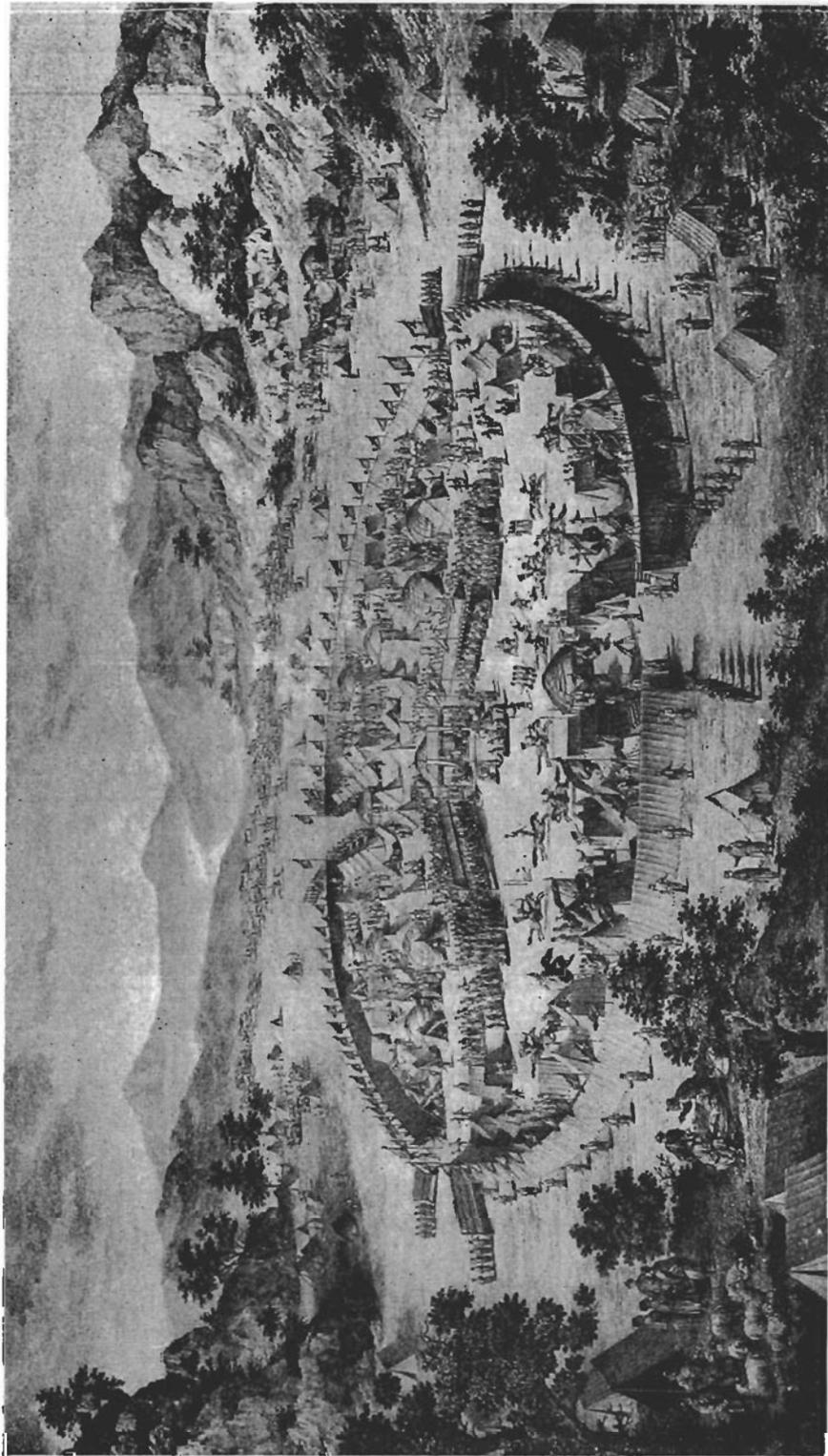
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SUBMISSION OF THE TUNGUS TRIBES.

(From the Imperial collection of pictures commemorating the victorious campaigns of H.M. Ch'ien Lung in Sungaria.)

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THE CAMP AT ALCHUR.  
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PART II  
THE MANCHU DYNASTY

## CHAPTER IX

### THE EMPEROR SHUN CHIH

THERE is comparatively little material in contemporary annals and memoirs which bears upon the life of the Sovereign and his Court during the first reign of the Manchu dynasty, that of the Emperor Shun Chih. The fact is readily explicable in several ways. In the first place, although the history of Shun Chih's reign covers a period of seventeen years from the date of his accession to the Throne of China, he was only twenty-three years of age when he passed from the scene. During the Regency of his uncle, Prince Jui, and until the latter's death in December 1650, the Lord of Heaven was only a little lad, interested in hunting and in hearing the day's news of the Manchu army's victorious progress through the central and southern provinces, carefully tended by his mother and the Imperial tutors. When, three months after the death of the Regent, he assumed nominal control of the business of the State, he was an intelligent youth of twelve, but the high spirits which had marked his childhood had already given place to the contemplative and serious temperament which became intensified with each succeeding year. One of his first edicts, after assuming the actual direction of the Government, prescribed certain regulations for controlling admission to the priesthood and supervising the training of candidates. He concerned himself actively, too, with public education and the revision of the system of examinations for degrees. The

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## CHAPTER X

### K'ANG HSI AS A FATHER

THE character of this famous Emperor, his wise government, his prowess in war and sport, his deep learning, multitudinous paternity and kind heart, all these have been described in the works of the Jesuit fathers, who until towards the end of his reign, held positions of dignity and influence at the Court of Peking. Naturally enough, many of these descriptions suffer from the theological bias of class, but, generally speaking, they are the work of broad-minded and sympathetic men, and show the Emperor K'ang Hsi in a kindlier light than that which usually beats upon a Throne. Indeed, kindness of heart seems to have been his most prominent quality, combined with a very clear perception of the truth that China's ruler must be firm. From the account of five voyages into Tartary,<sup>1</sup> on which the French Jesuit Gerbillon (mandarin of the third class) travelled in the suite of the Emperor between the years 1691 and 1697, the student of history may gather much to explain the revival of art and literature which distinguished this period, and learn to admire, at close range, the character of a Monarch truly great. Jean François Gerbillon, mathematician and writer, shared with the Portuguese, Anthoine Péreira, a degree of Imperial favour as high as that which His Majesty had previously given to Verbiest, the astronomer

<sup>1</sup> See *Histoire Générale de la Chine*, par le Père Mailla de la Société de Jésus, Vol. XI. (Paris, 1780.)

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to private audience to-day was due to his great intimacy with Yün Jeng, and I had certain questions to put to him. It is not my intention to order his arrest, since, notwithstanding his close relations with his elder brother, he has not encouraged or abetted his pernicious designs. In fact, he assures me that he has frequently admonished the ex-Heir Apparent to forbear, but without success. I believe he is telling the truth, and I am fully acquainted with the facts. I have been greatly upset by these events, and my heart is disquieted within me; hence my omission in the previous decree to reassure your panic-stricken minds and to bid you be at peace for the future."

On the following morning K'ang Hsi, who was now on his way back to the capital, summoned his Court and the Manchu Grand Secretaries to his travelling tent, and thus addressed them: "I have always been guided by my historical studies and the lessons which past dynasties afford, and have refused to allow pretty women to have free access to the Palace. In the same way I have never allowed good-looking youths to minister to my wants and attend my table, because I wished there to be no flaw in the jade of my good name, and to keep my body in subjection. Among my hearers at this moment are Kuan Pao and Wu Shih, both of whom have attended me since my childhood; they know all my goings out and comings in, and are aware that what I say is true. But this business of the ex-Heir Apparent has come as a terrible blow, and I have not slept for six nights." At this point the Emperor burst into loud weeping, and the courtiers, affecting an equal distress, responded: "Pray control yourself and be pleased to consider the sacred duty Your Majesty owes to the State and to your ancestors. It is essential that you take care of your health."

K'ang Hsi then proceeded: "I have now reigned for nigh fifty years, and have won many new territories for my Empire. I brought the Eleuths to their knees,

although they had never before acknowledged allegiance. I may be getting old, but if I may say so without boasting, I am still thoroughly capable of ruling with a statesman-like mien. Your love and loyalty for my person are, I am convinced, sincere; I have always treated my officials with kindness and have never unjustly inflicted corporal punishment on my attendants.

“But this year I have had to deplore the loss by death of many trusted officials. You do not know of the tears which I have shed in secret. Now you beg me to take care of my health, and I naturally feel bound to comply with your request. Ever since the beginning of the year I have had an apprehension of coming calamity, and I have mentioned my fears to the ex-Heir Apparent. When the incident of the mad priest, who claimed to have found the Ming descendant, occurred the other day, Yün Jeng remarked that my prophecy had come true. But at the time I told him that there was further trouble ahead, though I never anticipated the present misfortune.

“You remember when my grandfather defeated the Ming armies, in the third year of T'ien Ts-ang (1629), and appeared in person outside the gates of Peking? His Generals then urged him to seize his opportunity and take the city. ‘Now is your time,’ said they, ‘to found a dynasty. The city is yours; why not take it at once?’ My grandsire replied: ‘Peking, it is true, can easily be captured, but it behoves us to wait for the mandate of Heaven. The time is not yet ripe.’ Fifteen years later, as you know, the capital fell into the hands of rebels, and the Princes and clansmen captured it for my father without trouble. The Empire became ours and in due course descended to me. Our dynasty has now ruled for two generations, and if the people are at peace it is due to my obedience to ancestral tradition and my ceaseless labours.

“On occasions of drought I have fasted three days in

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## CHAPTER XI

### THE TRIBULATIONS OF YUNG CHENG

IN December 1722, being then in his sixty-eighth year, the Emperor K'ang Hsi was seized of a sudden illness whilst engaged in a hunting expedition in the Imperial Park to the south of Peking. He made haste to return to his favourite retreat, the Garden of Bright Spring, close to the Yuan-Ming-yuan Palace. At first he seemed to be getting better, but was unable to perform the winter solstice sacrifice at the Temple of Heaven, and therefore deputed his son Yin Chen (Prince Yung) to officiate in his stead. The Prince proceeded to the Hall of Fasting to prepare for the solemn ceremony, but had scarcely arrived there when there came urgent messengers to inform him that the Emperor was dying, and that he must hasten to his bedside. When he came to his father's presence, he found there assembled, by the Emperor's command, seven of his brothers, and K'ang Hsi's brother-in-law, Lung Ko-to. The dying Monarch, without wasting many words, communicated to them his last mandate, that Prince Yung was to succeed to the Throne. "My fourth son is very like me," he said, "and ought to make a good Emperor." At these words, Yün Ssü (unquestionably the ablest of all K'ang Hsi's sons), who until then had never abandoned hope of securing the Throne, was so overcome with mortification and wrath, that, simulating intense grief, he left the bedchamber. The Heir-designate proceeded, as custom required, to array his dying father

again impeached for not repairing the ancestral temple in a seemly manner, and for not constructing the ancestral tablet of K'ang Hsi with due reverence. On this occasion Yung Cheng hysterically complained that these cares were rapidly driving him to distraction. He followed up this complaint with a decree attributing the inclemency of the weather to Heaven's dissatisfaction with his erring brethren.

Yung Cheng now learned that his Commander-in-chief, Nien Keng-yao, who had deserved well of the State for his many victories over the Eleuths, was conspiring in the interests of Yün Ssü. Gratitude was never characteristic of the Manchu rulers, except possibly in the case of the Old Buddha. The Emperor, greatly perturbed, decided that Nien Keng-yao must be removed at all costs. He was therefore charged with "indulging in wicked behaviour," with having ill-treated the inhabitants of Kokonor, and suppressed all reference to a famine which had raged there; he had shown "excessive zeal in slaughtering," and generally misled the Throne. Yung Cheng first transferred him to the sinecure of Tartar General at Hangchow, but every one knew this step was merely preliminary, and that his final despatch was only delayed because the Emperor feared to act precipitately, lest he should bring about a revolt of the troops. But the wretched Commander lost nothing by waiting, and, meanwhile, the fact that the armour of his troops was reported to be falling to pieces, afforded an opportunity for more criticism of the unlucky Yün Ssü, who, as head of the Board of Works, was responsible for its condition. "It is only too plain," wrote the Emperor, "that Yün Ssü acts deliberately in not providing my army with proper armour. Our relations are like those of fire and water, or like two countries at war. His fixed idea is to be in the right himself and to put me in the wrong. My father knew his real nature as well as I do. When his foster-mother's husband, Yachi-pu, was beheaded

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ing his loyal sincerity. We raise absolutely no objection to the fact of his having omitted to send a mission on this occasion, and are graciously pleased to accept his offerings. In addition, We bestow upon him the following mandate: Your nation is inaccessible, lying far beyond the dividing seas, but you sent a mission with a memorial and tribute to pay homage at our Court, and We, in recognition of your loyal sincerity, conferred upon you our mandate and valuable gifts, as evidence of our satisfaction. Now, O King, you have again prepared a memorial and offerings, which have been conveyed by your barbarian vessels to Canton and transmitted to Us. Your reverent submission to Our person is manifest. Our Celestial dynasty, which sways the wide world, attaches no value to the costly presents which are offered at Our Court: what We appreciate is the humble spirit of the offerers. We have commanded Our Viceroy to accept your tribute in order that your reverence may be duly recognised.

“As regarding Our sending of a punitive expedition to Nepal, Our Commander-in-chief marched at the head of a great army into that country, occupied the chief strategic points, and terrified the Ghoorkas into groveling submission to Our majestic Empire. Our Commander-in-chief duly memorialised Us, and We, whose Imperial clemency is world-wide, embracing Chinese and foreigners alike, could not endure the thought of exterminating the entire population of the country. Accordingly We accepted their surrender. At that time Our Commander-in-chief duly informed Us of your having dispatched a mission into Tibet, with a petition to Our Resident, stating that you had advised the Nepalese to surrender. But at the time of your petition Our troops had already gained a complete victory and the desired end had been attained.<sup>1</sup> We were not obliged to trouble

<sup>1</sup> The Chinese expedition against Nepal was commanded by Fu K'ang-an, Ch'ien Lung's ablest General. It started from Kokonor in

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your troops to render assistance. You allude to this matter in your present memorial, but are doubtless ignorant of the precise course of events in Nepal, as your tribute mission was on its way to Peking at the time of these occurrences. Nevertheless, O King, you entertained a clear perception of your duty towards Us, and your reverent acknowledgment of Our dynasty's supremacy is highly praiseworthy.

“ We therefore now bestow upon you various costly gifts. Do you, O King, display even more energetic loyalty in future and endeavour to deserve for ever Our

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the 2nd Moon of the Emperor's 57th year (1793), and entered Tibet *via* the Tant-la Pass (cf. Abbé Huc's *Travels in Tibet*), where a fierce wind usually blows, but Fu K'ang-an reported that on the occasion of his troops crossing the pass the weather was bright and there was no wind. In gratitude to the spirit of this mountain for having vouchsafed such good weather to the expedition, Ch'ien Lung ordered that the Tant-la should be included amongst the mountains of the Empire which are entitled to receive an Imperial sacrifice.

In July of that year the Chinese forces marched into Nepal, invading it from three sides. The Ghoorkas sent a mission to seek aid from Great Britain, whereupon Cornwallis dispatched an officer to Khatmandu to act as peacemaker. But by the 7th Moon the Imperial troops had defeated Nepal in six battles, and when they were only one day's march from Khatmandu the Nepalese tendered an abject submission. The Chinese did not linger in Nepal, the season being far advanced, but returned to Tibet in the 8th Moon, after exacting an undertaking to bring tribute to Peking once in every five years in the form of tame elephants, horses and musical instruments. The Nepalese had invaded Tibet at the request of the Red Priesthood two years previously (1791) ostensibly on the ground that the duties imposed on salt at the Nepalese frontier were excessive, and that the commodity was adulterated with earth. On this occasion the Commander of the Chinese forces, Pa Chung, had declined battle, and had induced the Tibetans to promise the Nepalese an annual subsidy of 15,000 ounces of silver if they would withdraw. At the same time he reported to the Throne that he had defeated the Nepalese and that they had accepted Manchu suzerainty. In the following year, 1792, the promised subsidy of 15,000 taels not being forthcoming, the Nepalese again invaded Tibet. Pao Tai, the Resident at Lhasa, made no preparations to resist them, but conveyed the Panshen Lama to Lhasa, abandoning Hou Tsang to the invaders, who sacked the sacred city of Tashilhunpo and conveyed its treasures back to Nepal, at the same time leaving a strong force inside the Tibetan frontier.

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